
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE SATANIC EMPIRE
THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN ROME

A Study of the Book of Revelation

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PREFACE

Nothing is the subject of more controversy in the world of Christianity today than the interpretation of the book of Revelation. The controversy arises from the fact that no part of the Bible is so misunderstood as this book. The Revelation is a beautiful and fascinating work and serves to greatly build the faith of those who understand its message. However, the road that leads to its understanding must be traveled with caution. An improper interpretation is worse than no interpretation at all. I do not mean to discourage the would-be student of Revelation but merely to echo the sentiment of the Lord Himself. *“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”* (Revelation 22:18-19).

With this divine warning well noted, and in the light of innumerable interpretations by others who are much older and better educated, I now submit this work for the inspection of the reader. I have not studied Revelation for the past forty or fifty years, as some certainly can claim. I hold no degrees from any religious colleges, nor have I ever even attended any religious schools. By what right then do I submit this work for others to read?

I do not think the number of years a person has been studying Revelation is a viable indicator of how correct their interpretation of the book is. You need only look at the so-called “experts” to realize this. Although they have many years of studying Revelation behind them, they hold vastly disparate views as to its meaning. There is a correct interpretation of Revelation and it is the only correct one. When all of these “experts” disagree, one thing can be known for sure: at least all but one of them is wrong! When we find that so many experienced men are wrong, we must dismiss experience alone as sufficient to enable someone to understand Revelation. Certainly it is desirable, but it alone will not suffice.

Education also fails to be a good indicator of the validity of someone’s interpretation of Revelation for the same reason. Most of the “experts” have a list of college degrees as long as your arm, yet they still disagree as to its meaning. Therefore, education is not sufficient to ensure someone is able to properly interpret Revelation.

In this sense, Revelation is no different than the rest of the Bible. There are literally hundreds of different “Christian” denominations in existence today. However, there is only one set of “instructions,” the Bible, so only one way of doing things can be right. Yet we see so many experienced and well educated men disagreeing about just about everything in the Bible.

The only real and important qualification for understanding the book of Revelation, or any other part of the Bible for that matter, is sincerity and open-mindedness. If a person is willing to humble himself and accept what God has to say, regardless of whether or not he likes it, or whether or not he disagrees with what his parents believed, or what his wife believes, or what he has always believed, or what is most popular, or anything else, then, and only then, will he come to a correct understanding of God's word. In many ways, a proper understanding of the Bible is more a function of attitude than aptitude.

I could not, in good conscience, proceed without pausing to give credit where it is due in the development of this work. I have been very fortunate and blessed by God to spend quite a bit of time over the past few years with Brother Harry Cobb, who has helped me in more ways than I will probably ever know. It was from him that I first gained a basic understanding of the Revelation. Although I do not agree with him on every point, we do agree closely on most things. My intention for this work was not simply to record what Brother Harry teaches, but to explain to the best of MY ability what the book of Revelation teaches. Since I feel he is essentially correct on most points, this work will certainly be similar to what he teaches in many ways. Just as his teachings echo those of others who came before.

I must also give thanks to God for everything that He has done to make this work possible. He gave me the time to accomplish it, access to the resources to do the research necessary for it, and the desire to both start and finish it. I just hope that in some way He might be glorified through my small and simple efforts. I have sought only to bring to light the things God has revealed to us for our benefit. I hope that I have at least partially succeeded in doing this.

I now commend this work to the reader for his benefit; not as a source of absolute truth (only the Bible has that distinction) but as a resource to help you study and understand the beauty of God's Revelation to all of us, His children. May your efforts be fruitful, and may the God of Heaven bless us all with a better understanding of His Word.

Tony Whiddon
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INTRODUCTION

Format

This work is a commentary on the Book of Revelation, but not necessarily in the traditional sense. Most commentaries tend to comment on each verse in a somewhat disjointed way. I say this not as a criticism, but by way of contrasting it with what I have attempted to do here. First let me state that Revelation itself is not written like other books of the Bible. Revelation flows eloquently from verse to verse and chapter to chapter. It is impossible to remove most of the verses from their setting and have them retain any semblance of their correct meaning. This is done far too often with the rest of the Bible anyway. The primary reason so many people come up short in their understanding of God's Word is that they make the Bible into a very incoherent book. No one reads a letter from a friend by picking out individual sentences from various parts of the letter and grouping them together and attempting to make sense of them. Yet all of us are guilty of doing just this at times with the Bible. We take a verse from here, another from over there, and finally a third from somewhere else, put them together, and then proudly display scriptural "proof" of our beliefs and practices.

Everyone has no doubt walked into a room for a minute or two where a television was on and some show or movie we knew nothing about was in progress. If someone asked us after we left the room to explain what we had seen we would probably be unable to do so. Since we did not know the characters or the setting, nor did we know what happened before we entered the room or after we left, the brief segment we witnessed would make no sense to us. It would lack something very important: context.

Context is the key to understanding the Bible. Before we claim to understand a verse's full meaning we must make doubly sure we completely understand the context in which it was written. For example, who wrote (said) it, who were they writing (talking) to, what was their purpose in writing (saying) it. What was different about the situation of the author (speaker) and his audience compared to us today? It is very easy for us to assume things that were not assumed two-thousand years ago and vice versa. For example, many well intentioned people will say that salvation through faith only is taught when the Apostle Paul says "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (Acts 16:31). However, such a conclusion is erroneous because the context of the statement is not considered. In our society we would contrast faith in Jesus with not having faith in Jesus. These are the two most likely possibilities. This was far from the case in the first century Roman world. There was a long established tradition of polytheism and idolatry, which the jailer that Paul was speaking to was no doubt intimately familiar with. When Paul told him he could be saved by believing on Jesus Christ, he was not telling him how to be saved, but where. He was telling the man that salvation was of Jesus, the son of THE Living God, and not of Zeus, Apollo, Mars, or any other of the Greco-Roman pantheon of Gods. This is exactly what the jailer would have understood Paul to have been saying. The "how" of being saved came next. "*And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway*" (Acts 16:32-33). After telling the jailer where to be saved, Paul then teaches him how and then baptizes him and his whole family.

The above paragraph is a long, but I believe vitally important, point in Bible study. It is the lack of contextual understanding that has given rise to the vast number of different beliefs and practices found throughout Christendom. Often when we pick up a commentary it is to examine what the author says about a particular verse we are interested in. Generally, the commentaries are written to be used in this manner. Many times, however, we could answer our own question by examining the context of the particular verse.

This book is not meant to be used to figure out the meaning of scattered verses, rather it is meant to illuminate the story told in Revelation. One noticeable difference in this book, as compared to other commentaries, is that the text under consideration is included. I did this so that as you read you will not have to have your Bible open going back and forth from one to the other. Additionally, in most cases where I have referenced other scriptures that have application to the topic at hand I have included the text and not just the reference. This again makes for easier reading and sustained concentration. My intent is more that this book be read from cover to cover than simply placed on the shelf as another reference when needed, although it can certainly serve well as the latter, but much more so after the reader has read the book and is thus familiar with the entire story that God has to tell us.

General Comments

There are a couple of items that must be addressed before we begin our study of the Book of Revelation. First let me state that this book is really not as hard to understand as most people tend to believe it is. The book's main purpose is to give reassurance to Christians throughout the entire age of the Church. Being now almost two-thousand years removed from the establishment of the Church, and the days of the Apostles, it is very reassuring to know God is still in control. The Book of Revelation leaves no doubt about this, as it clearly shows that God knew exactly how history would unfold. He even predicted the exact years when certain significant world events would take place, centuries prior to their actual occurrence.

The subject of this entire book, from the first verse to the last, is the Lord's Church. He tells us about many different things the Church was to go through. About many important world events that were to shape the world in which His people were to live. It is truly a work to inspire and amaze those who will diligently seek to discover its secrets.

There are numerous approaches that people have taken to study the book of Revelation. For the sake of fairness, we will mention the five major ones so that the reader may have at least a basic understanding from which to form his own opinion.

Some take the point of view that Revelation does not symbolize anything. That it is nothing more than a collection of meaningless images and figures, which, I suppose, is meant more to entertain rather than to inform the reader. I find this whole notion to be utterly preposterous. I cannot accept the idea that God would waste His time in conceiving of, the angel's time in delivering, John's time in writing, nor our time in studying, something that has absolutely no practical value to anyone. God never does anything unless He is trying to achieve some purpose. There has to be some reason for God giving us the Book of Revelation.

Others take the view that Revelation does indeed have meaning, but that it is concealed in such difficult images and figures that there is just no possible way man could ever understand it. This viewpoint is just about as bad as the first. Again I must say that God would not waste His, the angel's, John's, nor our time with something that has no real purpose. God had a reason for giving us Revelation and it was not to show us that He could write something too difficult for us to understand. In fact, He clearly states within this book that He does intend for us to understand it. "*Blessed is he that readeth, and they that HEAR the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein*" (Revelation 1:3). The word 'hear' means to understand.

Still others, including some in the Church of Christ, take the view that Revelation was written specifically for Christians in the first century and its symbolism refers to the destruction of Jerusalem. I have several problems with this approach. First of all, the best information we have shows that Revelation was not even written for over two decades after Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70.

Around the year A.D. 175, a Christian named Irenaeus wrote in a book entitled "Against Heresies" that "it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian's reign."¹ The apocalyptic vision he refers to is the Revelation that he was discussing and the person he speaks of is John who beheld the vision. Domitian was the Roman emperor from A.D. 81 to 96. This would place the writing of the Revelation near A.D. 95. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp who in turn had been a close associate of John's for over fifty years. Therefore, there is little reason to doubt the validity of Irenaeus' statement.

While this is only secular history and does not bear the same weight as scripture, it does nonetheless appear to be reliable. If it is anywhere close to being accurate, then it completely precludes the possibility of Revelation having anything whatsoever to do with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Another point is that Christ had already dealt with the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew chapter twenty-four. Why would He then return to write an entire book on the subject later? Still another point is that we find the events

¹ *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 30, part 3. Irenaeus

in Revelation culminating in the end of the world (chapter twenty). The events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem did not conclude with the end of the world. One last point is that the symbols of Revelation simply do not fit with the destruction of Jerusalem.

The fourth approach to interpreting Revelation is also the most popular today. Numerous denominations teach at least some variation of it. It is all tied in with the premillennialist doctrine. Revelation is supposed to symbolize actual events, the majority of which are still yet future. These events are to take place around the time of the 'rapture' and culminate with the end of the world after the millennium is completed. The main problem with this interpretation is that the premillennialist doctrine is false. Scriptures from both the Old and New Testaments have been taken out of context and twisted so as to fit with this baseless notion of a millennial kingdom here on earth.

Then why is this view so popular today? First of all, it sounds good to most people. Since most professed Christians do not even take the time to study the rest of the Bible, they certainly do not study Revelation. This means they will be forced to take someone else's word for what it all means. Adding to the ease with which most people accept this view is the fact that it assumes almost everything in Revelation still lies in the future. This makes it impossible to point out inconsistencies between the symbols and what they are supposed to stand for. As soon as one sees that the premillennialist doctrine itself is false, then you need only realize that anything which is built upon it, namely this interpretation of Revelation, is also necessarily false.

The fifth and final approach (and obviously, by the process of elimination, the one that I will use in this study) views Revelation as a historical view of the entire Christian era. The validity of this approach will be confirmed as we proceed with our study of Revelation. As we see each and every symbol coincide perfectly with world history there will be no room for doubt as to the correctness of our conclusions, nor of the omniscience of God.

There is also a major Biblical argument for this interpretation. The argument is circumstantial but still quite compelling. From the dawn of creation God has been in continual contact with man. God walked in the Garden of Eden and talked with Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:8). He visited Abram in person before going down to see Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18). He wrestled with Jacob (Genesis 32:24-32). He appeared to Moses as a burning bush (Exodus 3). There are many additional references of Him appearing to Moses and Aaron. On down through the age of the prophets after Moses, He always spoke to the people through a prophet. Finally, around 500 BC, the prophets ceased. God was not silent, however; He did not leave His people without guidance and reassurance. He had given them the book of Daniel which contained many prophecies covering the time from the end of the prophets until the coming of John the Baptist and the Messiah Himself. Then the Lord dwelt on earth for about thirty three years until His crucifixion. After that His apostles carried on the work until about the end of the first century. With the death of John, the age of inspiration ended. For almost 2000 years now, God has been silent; or so it might appear. Although God no longer speaks directly to any man, He has once again left us a book of prophecies to cover the period of time when no direct communication is occurring. If we take any other view of the book of Revelation then we are making the Christian era the first and only period in history when God has been completely silent and left man to wonder if He is still there and in control. However, when we study and understand the book of Revelation as God intended, then we see the major events affecting the Lord's Church unfold before us in a beautiful way that assures us that God is still in control. He knew long ago exactly what would occur as the Christian era unfolded. He may not be speaking to us directly, or even through prophets any longer, but He is definitely still speaking to us. The book of Revelation can reassure us and build our faith in God more than any other part of the Bible.

Revelation: A Book of Symbols

The Book of Revelation is a very unique work when you consider the way in which it is written. Unlike most of the Bible, Revelation is written in symbols instead of normal descriptive language. This need not be a cause for concern, but it must be realized before the book's true meaning can be understood. Symbolism is just a way of conveying a message about something, without directly stating that message. When a person who is driving sees a traffic light ahead of him, and observes that it has turned red, he applies his brakes and comes to a stop until the traffic light turns green. No one told this man to stop. There was no sign with the word "stop" printed on it to tell him to stop. In fact there were no words involved at all, only symbols. He knew when he saw the traffic light turn red that he was supposed to stop. He understood what the symbol stood for: the word "stop."

There are thousands upon thousands of symbols in use around us each day, but we rarely notice them as symbols because we are so familiar with them. We automatically associate the intended meaning with the symbol. When the driver saw the red light with his eyes, his mind did not pause to focus on the light, but rather immediately went on to the word “stop.” When we are first learning a new symbol we may have to pause and perform a mental association between the symbol and its meaning, but once we have thoroughly learned its meaning, this process becomes automatic, and for all practical purposes instantaneous.

Now the question arises, what if you encounter a symbol and you do not have any idea what it means? How can you successfully deal with this situation? Well, consider someone from a foreign country, who has never seen a traffic light, driving in the United States. As this person is driving down the road they encounter an intersection with a traffic light. What should they do? The smartest thing to do would probably be to pull off on the shoulder of the road and observe other cars as they approach the light. By doing this they might soon be able to conclude for instance, that a green light means “go” and a red light means “stop.” Although they never saw the words “go” or “stop” in English or any other language, they were able to logically deduce the meaning of the light’s different colors.

Now let us apply this example to the Book of Revelation. Many people become discouraged and give up a study of Revelation, when they begin to encounter symbols that they do not understand. This should not be the case. Rather than give up, we must try to find out what the symbols stand for. This can sometimes be done by looking elsewhere in the Bible. For example, by looking at passages such as Isaiah 2:1-2; 66:20, Micah 4:1-2, and others, it can be seen that the Lord often uses the term “mountain” as a symbol to stand for a kingdom. Then, when we encounter the same term in Revelation, such as chapter six, verse fourteen, we can see if the same definition would fit the symbol there, and it does. This procedure will solve many of the problems encountered in Revelation.

Another avenue to use when the symbol cannot be interpreted in view of other passages of scripture, is to “pull off on the side of the road and see what happens.” In our example of the traffic light, since the driver was unsure what it meant, he sat back and watched what happened. This is precisely what must be done with Revelation. You see, prophesy is a prediction of the future; it predicts events that will transpire at some later time. After those events have taken place, they will be recorded as history. If the prophesy was correct, then it should agree with history when the event is over. By examining world history, we can interpret the parts of Revelation that have already been fulfilled. Why should we care about prophesy after it’s over? For one thing, it serves to reaffirm our faith in God. Secondly, it can unlock some key symbols for us which might aid in understanding the parts that have not already occurred.

Put succinctly, prophesy is history before it happens, and history is prophesy after it happened. To understand Revelation, at least the parts that have already been fulfilled, we need only lay it along side world history, and see what events the symbols coincide with. In our example, we have an unknown symbol, the traffic light, and we can obtain history by watching what happens as others encounter the light. This information is the history we need to unlock the mystery of the traffic light. Likewise, history will unlock Revelation for us, and present us with a grand and wondrous view of the Christian age.

Some will probably ask why God would chose to write prophesy in symbols, and not simply come out and say what He meant. The reason is that God did not want these things to be known until the proper time. By disguising them in symbols, most of them would be unrecognizable until they began to occur. I believe there are a couple of very compelling reasons why God chose to conceal these prophesies for a time. First of all, had He spelled everything out in easily understood terms, people would have went out of their way to either help or hinder the fulfillment of the prophesies. The whole purpose of these prophesies is to show that God knew what was going to happen, not to see if He could get people to cooperate in making it happen. He has always written most of His prophesy in such a way that it is nearly impossible to tell what he means until it was occurring or had already occurred. Only those people who were watchful would understand when it began to happen. This way His prophesies benefit His people, but do not interfere with the natural course of history.

Another important reason why Revelation needed to be written in symbolic form is that if it were spelled out in very clear terms, man would have known long ago when the end of the world was to come. God does not intend for man to know this. He wishes for man to have that little doubt in his mind, thinking it possible for the Lord to return at any time.

The Definition of a Prophetic Day

Several times in the Book of Revelation we will notice things predicted and certain lengths of time associated with these predictions. These times are usually given in days but sometimes in weeks, months, or years which can all easily be converted into days. We should suspect something suspicious about this almost immediately. Why, when talking about events covering at least two millennia, would they be described in terms of days? Well, it turns out, that throughout the entire Bible a certain pattern is used to relate time in symbolic prophesy to actual time.

I mention ‘symbolic prophesy’ because it is different from descriptive prophesy. Sometimes when God gives prophesy it is in symbolic language, other times it is given in normal descriptive language. An example of the latter is found in Daniel chapters eleven and twelve. Here a series of events is described exactly as they happened. Although actual names of kingdoms and kings are never given, we are told that we are considering kingdoms and kings, rather than being given symbols that represent these items. In other words, this prophesy is given in descriptive, not symbolic, language. Therefore, we would expect the times mentioned in chapter twelve to be exactly what they are said to be. This is indeed the case. In the situation where prophesy is given in symbolic language, time must be approached a little differently. It would be inconsistent, and just plain wrong, to represent everything else with symbols and then give regular time. For the sake of consistency, the Lord uses a simple system of symbolic time.

The formula that God has chosen to use for time in symbolic prophesy is that of one prophetic day being equal to one actual year in history. This means fifty days in prophesy would equal fifty years in actual time. It can be seen that God did indeed use this pattern by two examples from the Bible. “*After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years*” (Numbers 14:34). “*And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year*” (Ezekiel 4:6). In these two examples God told someone what was going to happen, and then told them the time involved. In each case it was a day for a year. A further examination of prophesy in the Bible will reveal that symbolic prophesies always work out when the day = year formula is applied but never work out if anything else is used.

Sometimes we even find hours mentioned in prophesy. An hour in prophesy is a month of actual time. Unlike modern times when a day is always considered to consist of twenty-four hours, in the past a day was often used to refer just to the twelve hours of daylight. An example of this is found in John 11:9, where Jesus said “*Are there not twelve hours in the day?*”

When a week is given in prophesy it means seven days, or in terms of real time, seven years. A month in prophesy is thirty days. In the Jewish calendary months were reckoned from one new moon to the next. This averages to 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, and 3½ seconds (29.53).² You can see quite plainly that this figure would be extremely unhandy to deal with. To make for ease of calculation, the Lord rounded the number off to an even thirty days in a month for His prophesies. This relation can be seen in the story of the flood. “*In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the waters prevailed upon the earth an hundred and fifty days. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat*” (Genesis 7:11, 24; 8:4). From the seventeenth day of the second month to the seventeenth day of the seventh month would be exactly five months. We are also told this period was 150 days. 150 days divided by five months gives thirty days per month. In reality, some Jewish months had 30 days while other had 29. Today we typically say there are about 30 days in a month if we give a round figure, although the actual number is 30.44 days per month.

A prophetic year is equal to 12 months or 360 (12 × 30) days. This would be 360 years of actual time. The solar year is “365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes, and 46 seconds.”³ Expressing it only in terms of days it is 365.242199 days or approximately 365¼ days. Why don’t we use this value? The Jewish year consisted on twelve months that averaged slightly less than 30 days long. The actual length of a typical Jewish year would be 354.36 (12 × 29.53) days. Since

² *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (New York: Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 1929), s.v. “Calendar.”

³ *The World Book Encyclopedia*, (Chicago, IL: World Book, Inc., 1985), s.v. “year.”

this is closer to 350 how can we rationalize using 360 days in a year? First of all it is closer to the length of an actual year, but more importantly, it coincides with the length you get from 12 months that are 30 days long.

How could the Jewish calendar work if the average year was too short by 10.88 (365.24 – 354.36) days? To account for being off by nearly one-third of a month, the Jewish calendar added a thirteenth month approximately every three years. To be more exact, the thirteenth month was added to the 3rd, 6th, 8th, 11th, 14th, 17th, and 19th years of a 19 year cycle.⁴

Units of Prophetic Time	
Prophetic Time	Actual Time
1 year	360 years
1 month	30 years
1 week	7 years
1 day	1 year
1 hour	1 month

Table I

Significance of the Number Seven

If there is a “special” number in the Bible it must be the number seven. It appears in some 330 different verses of the Bible. What is the big deal about that? Look at Figure I below. It is easy to understand why the number one is the most often mentioned number in the Bible. There are numerous phrases such as “one to another,” “every one,” “one of,” and many others that use the word one in a generic sense. In addition, one is often used instead of the word “a” in phrases such as “*one came and said unto Him*” (Matthew 19:16) and “*one pearl of great price*” (Matthew 13:46). After thinking about it, it is also obvious that smaller numbers are used more. As the value of numbers goes up, the frequency of their use goes down. The graph shows a remarkably smooth decline from one to fifteen, with a few exceptions. In defiance of the trend, the numbers seven, ten, and twelve are used much more than would otherwise be expected. All three of these numbers have significance in the Bible, and two of them, seven and twelve, have particular significance here in Revelation.

The “week” of creation was seven days, including the seventh day on which God rested (Genesis 2:3). This is, of course, the basis for our week, and has been since the beginning of time. We always hear that Noah took the animals on the ark two by two, but this was only for the unclean animals. The clean animals were taken by *to thee by sevens, the male and his female: and of his female*” (Genesis 7:2). After Noah loaded the animals it was seven days before it began to rain (Genesis 7:4). Noah sent the dove out to test for dry land every seven days (Genesis 8:10-12). Jacob served Laban seven years each for Leah and Rachel (Genesis 29). Pharaoh’s dream featured seven kine leaving Egypt the Children of Israel had to eat holy day for Israel was the Sabbath, or seventh, day Israel had to allow their land to lie fallow (Leviticus 25:4). The year after seven seventh year Sabbaths was the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-10). In order to conquer Jericho the Children of Israel had to march around the city seven days, and seven times on the seventh day (Joshua 6:3-4). Nebuchadnezzar was humbled for seven years by God (Daniel 4). I trust I have proven my point, and I never even made it to the New Testament. There are literally hundreds more similar examples. There are seventeen different uses of seven in the book of Revelation alone. More than just occurring in numerous and important places, however, the number seven has a special significance: seven means completeness. Without this understanding, much of the meaning of Revelation will remain unseen. With it, however, the beauty of God’s plan unfolds with ease.



⁴ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Calendar.”

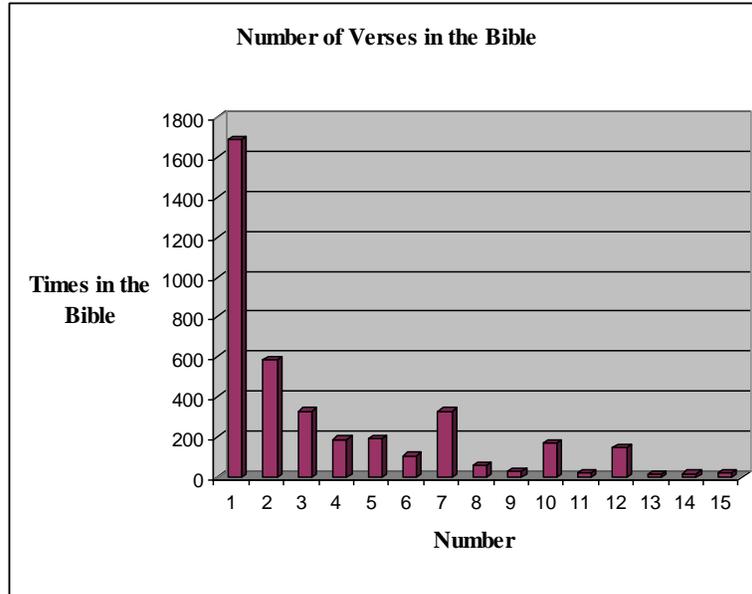


Figure 1
Frequency of Numbers in the Bible

Seven is not the only number ascribed significance by the ancients. Three was the divine or heavenly number. There are three parts of the Godhead: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God repopulated the earth after the flood with the three sons of Noah. God required Abram to sacrifice to him a heifer, a she goat and a ram, all three years of age (Genesis 15:9). Abraham was greeted by a Heavenly trio led by the preincarnate Christ (Genesis 18:2). Pharaoh was asked to let the Israelites travel three days journey into the wilderness to worship God (Exodus 3:18). The Jews were required by God to have three feasts each year (Exodus 23:14). Jesus was in the grave for three days and three nights (Mathew 12:40). Peter's Heavenly vision indicating that access to salvation had been granted to the Gentiles, was shown to him three times (Acts 11:10). As John said, "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one*" (I John 5:7-8). Numerous other examples can also be found throughout the Bible.

Four is the number of the earth. Using the four cardinal directions any place or object can be located. The river coming out of the Garden of Eden was divided into four parts (Genesis 2:10). Most large animals walk around on four legs. Christ's garments were divided into four parts (John 19:23). Once again, numerous other examples could be cited.

When the numbers three (heavenly) and four (earthly) are added the combination yields seven (completeness). If three and four are multiplied the results is twelve, the number of governmental authority. Both Testaments were initiated on the shoulders of twelve men. The twelve patriarchs, or sons of Israel, in the Old and the twelve Apostles in the New.

Historical References

The key to understanding the book of Revelation is world history. Since prophesy is a prediction of the future, the prophesies are easily understood once that part of the future has become the past. When you have history to compare with the prophesy, this will allow you to determine its proper interpretation.

Unfortunately, historical references are not infallible. We can only trust the Bible to be right one-hundred percent of the time. When prophesy is involved, all the answers cannot be found in the Bible, outside sources must be consulted on matters of history. In this work I have endeavored to find at least two independent sources that agree on

an item before I would state it as truth. Where it was possible I have quoted these works, instead of paraphrasing, in order that the reader might make his own interpretation.

For anyone who wishes to perform their own independent search for the historical facts given in this work, I must tell you that a few of these items are hard to come by. This does not mean that they are not true, nor does it mean that they were very minor occurrences in history, which might tend to cast doubt on their being the correct answer to the prophesy. We must realize that history was not recorded for the purpose of interpreting Revelation, but for the purposes of those recording it. Something that you might see as very important, might not prove noteworthy to someone else. We must further realize that much of history has filtered down to us through the Catholic priests and monks, who were nearly the only ones interested in such things during the Dark Ages of Europe. As a result, things that they disliked or discredited had probably fallen into obscurity by the time of the Renaissance. One example is the decree of Emperor Justinian I, that Pope John II be recognized as “rector ecclesiae,” or Lord of the Church.⁵ During the Dark Ages, the Catholic clergy would have scoffed at such, since they trace papal authority back to the Apostle Peter, whom they say was the first pope. This event did occur, but is very hard to find in most accounts of history. Most historians simply do not feel that it’s of any importance. The difficulty of finding certain facts and dates does not make this interpretation of Revelation wrong. In fact, it just might show that we are headed in the right direction. Certainly, Satan will try to obscure the facts that are needed to interpret such a beautiful manifestation of God’s greatness.

⁵ S. P. Scott, *Corpus Juris Civilis (The Civil Law, the Code of Justinian)*, vol. 12, (Cincinnati, OH: Central Trust Company, 1932), p. 12.

SECTION I

Introduction and Opening Remarks

Chapter One

John's Introduction to Revelation

Before beginning with verse one, I think it imperative that I say one thing first. If you are like me in your reading habits, you probably skipped the introduction and moved straight to the good stuff. While that tactic is often fine with most books, that is not the case here. I have included some very important material that will be used as a foundation upon which I will build as the study progresses. Therefore, if you have not read the introduction, for clarity's sake, please do so at this time.

1:1 The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.

The word Revelation is from the Greek “apokalopsis,” which Thayer defines as “an uncovering; properly a laying bare, making naked. A disclosure of truth, instruction, concerning divine things before unknown.”⁶ This tells us that the book of Revelation is a making known of things that God has until now kept to Himself. It is the future that will be revealed. There should be no doubt that God does indeed know the future. “*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure’*” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

“*Which God gave unto him.*” The book of Revelation originated with God, who gave it to Jesus Christ, who in turn related it to John through an angel. John was nothing more than the penman of this book. The words of this book are the words of none other than God Himself. John does not say these things were intended just for him, but for all of God's servants. The servants of God are those who are Christians.

Notice also that this is “a” revelation and not several revelations. Many people incorrectly refer to this book as “Revelations.” This is incorrect since John only experienced one revelation, albeit a very lengthy and detailed one.

The things that were revealed to John were things that he said must shortly come to pass. This does not mean that all the prophecies of this book would be fulfilled soon after the book was written. Clearly, passages in the latter part of the book refer to events that are yet future. For example, Revelation 20:11-15 refers to the judgment. This is an event that certainly has not happened yet. What John meant when he said these things must “*shortly come to pass*”

⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), s.v. “ἀποκάλυψις.”

was not that these things would soon be over, but that they would soon begin to happen. Soon after the book was written, the prophecies began to unfold, but they will not all be fulfilled until the end of time.

“And he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” After God had given the message to Christ, He in turn gave it to an angel who served as a messenger to deliver it to John. John in turn will write it down as he will be instructed to do later so that God’s people will have this message to give them comfort and assurance as they pass through the often troublous times that lay ahead.

The word signified here is from the Greek “*sēmainō*,” which Thayer defines as “to give a sign, to signify, indicate. To make known.”⁷ All it is really saying is that Jesus made this message known by sending it to John through an angel. John’s function will be to write it down and send it to seven Churches listed in verse eleven. From there, other Churches of that day and all in the future would have access to it. Christ told John that “*Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings*” (Revelation 10:11). John never did that in person, but he has done it throughout the ages through the marvelous book he is about to pen.

1:2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

John was chosen above all of the other apostles to receive and record this Revelation. Although there is no biblical proof of it, John was almost certainly the longest lived of the apostles. The Lord waited until the apostolic age was nearly over before He gave this Revelation. He no doubt kept John alive for this very purpose while all of the other apostles had met their deaths much earlier. Just before His crucifixion, the Lord indicated that John would live a long time. “*Jesus saith unto him, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.’ Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, ‘He shall not die;’ but, ‘If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?’*” (John 21:22-23). Obviously Christ indicated here that John would live a very long time. Even if he was only twenty when he met Jesus, he would have been about eighty-nine when he received the Revelation. This is what leads me to believe that the Lord kept John around for the specific purpose of receiving the Revelation. In A.D. 30, He already knew He was going to give the Revelation and He picked John to be the one to receive it.

Next to the Apostle Paul, John was the most prolific writer of New Testament books. He wrote five including Revelation. The others were John, I John, II John, and III John. [Note: in terms of sheer volume John would rank third among the New Testament writers. Paul would be second and Luke would be first. The combined volume of his works, Luke and Acts, being larger than all of Paul’s works combined. (Unless you are of the opinion that Paul wrote Hebrews, in which case he would have written more than Luke.)]

John says he “*bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ.*” The two clauses in this verse are really redundant. When either God or Christ speaks in reality both speak. As Christ said, “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). They are in perfect agreement and therefore one can speak for the other.

“And of all things that he saw.” This just shows us that not everything John will learn will be spoken by the Lord. Some things he will see and then describe for us.

1:3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

Many people erroneously assume that the Book of Revelation is too complex for them to understand. Some will even say no man can understand it. Why would God waste His time developing it, John’s time writing it down, and our time studying it if it could not possibly be understood? God does nothing without a purpose.

In this verse, John pronounces a blessing on those who read, hear, and keep the things he is about to reveal. “Keep” means to watch for the fulfillment of these prophecies and be ready to take action when needed. Obviously a person cannot keep what they cannot understand. Therefore, it IS possible for us to understand it. It is just a matter of taking

⁷ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “σημαίνω.”

the proper approach and putting in a lot of time, but Revelation can be clearly understood! All who do understand it will be blessed, according to John. He further adds that the time is at hand. This simply means that these prophecies were about to begin to be fulfilled. As pointed out previously, this gives no indication as to when all of the prophecies will finally be fulfilled.

1:4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

Why did John address himself only to seven churches in Asia? This question is very important to understanding chapters two and three. This will be discussed at length in verse eleven of this chapter, but a few things can be said here. Should it be a great concern to us that he addressed this book to only seven churches? Does this mean that Revelation is not meant for anyone else? A quick look at the rest of the New Testament will show this idea to be completely off base. If it were true, then we would also have to cast aside most of the other New Testament books. For instance, Luke wrote Acts to a man named Theophilus, and Paul wrote Romans to the Church in Rome. Likewise, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and I & II Thessalonians were all written by Paul to the churches in the cities corresponding with the names of the books. Paul also wrote I & II Timothy, Titus, and Philemon to individuals. Hebrews and James were written to Jewish Christians. I Peter was written to those in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." III John was written to a man named Gaius. The only books that can be considered general are II Peter, I & II John, and Jude. Clearly it should not concern us that Revelation was addressed to specific churches. This does not mean it was not also intended for Christians of all ages.

The seven Spirits spoken of here are mentioned several times in Revelation. As mentioned in the introduction, the number seven has special significance, and we will find it used quite often in this book. Seven always signifies completeness; understanding this will help to clarify many things. The seven Spirits refers to the complete and all-encompassing power of God's Spirit. It is literally everywhere at once. There is only one Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:4), but it is unlike anything in this physical world to which we belong. It is not restricted to being in one place at a time. The significance of these spirits being before the throne of God is that this shows they are subject to God and do His bidding.

"From him which is, and which was, and which is to come." This refers to God and illustrates His eternal nature. He exists presently, He has always existed, and He always will exist. This cannot be said of any other person, place or thing that we know of.

1:5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

Several items are used here to describe Christ. First He is the faithful witness. He described himself as a witness in John 18:37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." Jesus came to the Earth in the form of a man to bare witness to all mankind of the power, love, mercy, and many other attributes of God.

He is spoken of as the first begotten of the dead since He is at present the only person who has ever died and then been resurrected to die no more. The Bible tells of many others who have been resurrected, but they all eventually died again. Jesus is the only one who has been able to conquer death. He is also referred to here as the prince of the kings of the earth. Three times in the New Testament He is referred to as the Kings of kings and the Lord of lords (I Timothy 6:15; Revelation 17:14, 19:16). There is no doubt that He is the greatest ruler and leader the world has ever seen. Whereas there have been many great men to rule mighty empires, those men died and eventually their empires crumbled. Christ's kingdom will never crumble. Daniel described Christ's kingdom this way: "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Daniel 2:44).

"Unto him that loved us." Of the fact that Christ loved man there can be little doubt. The fact that He washes His

people in His own blood is proof of that. *“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13). This is exactly what He did for all mankind.

The word “unto,” which begins this sentence is somewhat confusing. In verse four, John begins addressing himself to the seven Churches in Asia and then states who this message is from. In that verse he names God (the Father) and the Holy Spirit. In the beginning of verse five, he then names Jesus. The intent is quite clear; this message is from the entire trinity: Father, Son, and Spirit. Verse four has already stated that this is being written unto the seven Churches in Asia. It would now make no sense to also say “unto” Jesus, who is the one mentioned in the latter part of the verse. This is another unfortunate translation from the King James. This time, for some unknown reason, the majority of other translations, but not all, roughly agree with the King James.

The Greek work in question is τῷ (to) which is defined by Thayer as “1) the definite article, ‘the’ in its masculine, feminine or neuter gender. 2) the demonstrative pronoun. Examples: ‘this,’ ‘that,’ ‘these.’ Part of Speech: definite article or demonstrative pronoun in all their inflections. The specific part of speech is dependent upon the context.”⁸ Strong’s defines it as the “neuter form, in all its inflections; the definite article; *the* (sometimes to be supplied, at others omitted, in English idiom): - the, this, that, one, he, she, it, etc.”⁹ From this article, the King James translator got “unto him that,” which I believe is completely unfounded. If they had only left the first word out the translation would have been fairly accurate. This part of the verse is just continuing the description of Christ and anything that connects the previous part of the verse with the idea that He loved us would be proper. Here is how the verse should be rendered. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. The one who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.” This way the verse makes sense and says what it was intended to say.

1:6 And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

This verse contains a couple of slight mistranslations in the King James version. The first is the word kings. Most translations render this as kingdom not king. The intent of the verse is to say that Christ made us a kingdom of Priests. All Christians are considered priests, with Christ being their High Priest. *“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession”* (Hebrews 4:14). This clearly shows that there must be more priests. How could Christ be a high priest if there are no other priests? The old Levitical priesthood was not abolished but rather changed. *“For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law”* (Hebrews 7:12). The system where only a few were priests was reformed to a system where all are priests. *“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”* (I Peter 2:5). *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* (I Peter 2:9).

The second area for concern is the phrase *“God and his father.”* Taken literally, this would indicate that God had a father. This verse can be properly understood by keeping the same words but moving the word “his” and putting it before God. For those who may not be familiar with different languages, they invariably put words in a different order than we do in English. In the Greek, the word translated as “his” actually occurs before the word for God. Every verse in an English translation of the Bible will have word in a different order than the original Greek or Hebrew. Even John 11:35, which says no more than *“Jesus wept,”* is no exception. A literal word by word translation would be “wept he Jesus.” Yes there are actually three Greek words there. Translation is no easy task and errors are common. No translation is perfect and there is no substitute for referring to the Greek.

After all of that, we can finally comment on the beautiful expression of Jesus made in this verse. He refers to God as both His God and Father. It reminds me of Thomas, after personally seeing Jesus alive after the crucifixion, saying to Him, *“my Lord and my God”* (John 20:28).

⁸ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “τῷ.”

⁹ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), s.v. “Greek #3588.”

“To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever.” The sentiment expressed here is that Christ is worthy and deserving of continued glory and power. He has proven Himself faithful to the Father, and has shown His great love for mankind. He has humbled Himself and given Himself to be sacrificed for others. Therefore, He deserves to be lifted up and exalted above all others.

1:7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, amen.

This refers to Christ’s return to the Earth at the end of the world. At that time, every person who has ever lived will see Him. Those who have died will be resurrected at this time and will see Him just like those who are still living at His return. We also find that He is to return with clouds. This harmonizes with the statement made by an angel when Christ was taken back up into Heaven after His resurrection. *“And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, 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; which also said, ‘Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven’”* (Acts 1:9-11). He left in clouds and so shall He triumphantly return.

“They also which pierced him” can refer to those who actually took part in the crucifixion as well as those who voiced their consent to it. In a larger sense it refers to the Jews as a whole who rejected Him and sought His death. Ultimately, it can also refer to those who have rejected His witness. Those who have, in effect, chosen to make His crucifixion worthless because they have failed to make use of the benefits it brought to mankind. The Hebrew writer said of Christians, *“it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame”* (Hebrews 6:4-6). They crucify Christ again by mocking and publicly shaming Him. In a similar fashion, all those who reject Christ from the outset likewise shame Him publicly.

“And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.” There are presently, as there always have been, many procrastinators, doubters, atheists, fools, and others who will suddenly come face to face with the reality that they are doomed. These people will wail when they realize that they have failed to listen to Christ and have forfeited their chance for salvation. *“When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”* (II Thessalonians 1:7-9).

There will likely be many atheists and fools who cry out in stubborn opposition at what they still refuse to believe. There will also be many who proclaimed to be Christians but did not live up to their claim. They were too weak, or too lazy, or too unconcerned, or too ignorant of His will to do as the Lord commanded. They will have to stand and hear a pronouncement of doom from Christ. *“Not every one that saith unto me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity’”* (Matthew 7:21-23).

This verse tells us that *“ALL kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him.”* This does not mean that literally every person will view the coming of Christ with dread. In general this is true, since the majority of men will be lost (Matthew 7:13). To someone idly observing the whole scene of Christ’s return, it would appear as if the whole world was mourning. Only a few scattered individuals will actually find joy at the return of their Lord. The Apostle Paul spoke fondly of the coming of Christ, from the perspective of a Christian. *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that LOVE his appearing”* (II Timothy 4:8).

1:8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

Alpha (Α, α) and Omega (Ω, ω) are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. They are synonymous with our A and Z in English. It simply means that there is nothing before or after. Christ is the beginning and the end. He, like God the Father, is eternal. He always has been, He is, and He always will be. He was even present in the creation of the world. *“All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made”* (John 1:3).

It is very interesting to note here that Christ also calls Himself *“the Almighty.”* This is a term that we normally think of as applying solely to God the Father. This demonstrates the shared power between the Father and the Son. In chapter three, Christ tells us that He and the Father both occupy the same throne. *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Revelation 3:21). This again indicates a sharing of power between the two.

1:9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.

John now puts himself in perspective. Although he spent a good deal of time with Christ and became one of His apostles, he is nothing more than a man. He is not “special” in any way, and he is not to be revered or worshipped. He was just the fortunate one who was allowed to see this vision. He states that he is the companion in tribulation to all Christians. In his many years as an apostle of the Lord, he certainly suffered many things and this is quite often the case with Christians. As the Apostle Paul pointed out, *“and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (II Timothy 3:12).

John also states that he is the companion of Christians in the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. This verse, along with numerous others, refutes the idea that the Kingdom of God is yet future. The Kingdom is the Church, and it was established on the day of Pentecost in A.D. 30. That the kingdom has already been established can be quite easily seen in the following passages. *“Verily I say unto you, ‘There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom’”* (Matthew 16:28). Do you know of any two-thousand year old men who are still alive and waiting for the Kingdom to come? *“Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son”* (Colossians 1:13). *“Hath translated us into”* is past tense. Someone could not have been translated into something that was still many centuries in the future.

John tells us where he was when he was allowed to witness this magnificent vision. He was on an island in the Mediterranean Sea called Patmos (see Map 1). *“It is a small, rocky island, one of the Sporades, in the Grecian Archipelago, and is now called Patino. It lies off the southwestern coast of Asia Minor about thirty miles south of Samos; and is about fifteen miles in circumference, and generally barren.”*¹⁰ Smith’s Bible Dictionary adds that Patmos *“was the scene of the banishment of St. John in the reign of Domitian, A.D. 95.”*¹¹ The reason John gives for being on the island is *“for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* Because of John’s stand for Jesus, he was forced from the mainland and caused to dwell on this island where he would be less of a disturbance to those who were seeking to quell the spread of Christianity. In its early stages, Christianity was fought against fiercely by many groups, but especially by the Jews who saw it as a blasphemous threat to their religion. Early Christians suffered many things at the hands of their enemies. Many were beaten or even killed. Some, like John were exiled. Many other cruelties were also employed in an effort to stamp out Christianity. All of this persecution, however, only strengthened the resolve of the early Christians.

¹⁰ John D. Davis, *Davis Dictionary of the Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1983), s.v. “Patmos.”

¹¹ William Smith, *Smith’s Bible Dictionary*, (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986), s.v. “Patmos.”



Figure 2
Map of the Seven Churches

1:10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,

It is here that John begins to relate the visions that he saw. He gives us the setting when he first noticed something unusual. He says he *"was in the spirit on the Lord's day."* This leaves us with two questions. First, what does it mean to be *"in the spirit,"* and, secondly, what is the *"Lord's day?"*

I think it will be easier to answer the former by first understanding the latter. We do not observe any day as holy or sacred in the New Testament era as did the Jews the Sabbath under the Old Law. However, one day does "stand out" from the rest; this day is Sunday. Sunday is the day Christ arose (Mark 16:9). It is the day the Church was established, the day of Pentecost being fifty days after the first Sabbath after the Passover (Leviticus 23, Acts 2). It was the day the early disciples met to commemorate the Lord's death.

Sunday is a special day to Christians, but it is not a holy day. We are forbidden to make laws about observing certain days (Galatians 4:9-11). Those who would tell us that it is wrong to work or do any other type of activity on Sunday are making a law where there is none. The term *"Lord's day"* simply refers to Sunday as the day when the Lord's disciples gathered together to worship.

Knowing what the Lord's day is now makes it much easier for us to understand what John meant by saying he was in the spirit. John himself had recorded the words of the Lord spoken over sixty years before when He said, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit implies that the mental attitude is what is important and not something physical.

From the earliest times and continuing to this day, men have often sought to impress the god(s) they were

worshipping by using expensive and beautiful things. This ranges from the practice of building large and elaborate temples, churches, cathedrals, etc., to wearing very expensive clothing or ornate jewelry. Frankly, God is not impressed with such things. He made the entire universe and all of the beautiful things in it. Should we expect Him to be impressed by the work of men's hands? God is only impressed by the humble, submissive, obedient heart of a man, not what he can build with his hands.

It can now be concluded that when John said he was in the spirit he simply meant that he was worshipping God. His mind was concentrating on spiritual matters. It did not matter that he had been exiled to a desolate island, he was not going to allow the persecution of men to interfere with his worship of God.

As John worshipped on that particular Sunday his worship was interrupted by the sound of a great voice that he described as being like a trumpet. To John a trumpet was not the shiny brass instrument we use today, but rather "a loud-sounding instrument, made of the horn of a ram or of a chamois (sometimes of an ox), and used by the ancient Hebrews for signals."¹² The voice that John heard was not actually a trumpet nor did it even really sound like one. What this means is that the voice was strong, powerful, and distinct, just like a sounding trumpet. We will find in the next verse that the voice was that of Christ. We cannot actually hear the voice of Jesus, but you can certainly imagine how His voice must have sounded to John; a voice of power and majesty ringing out like a trumpet loud and clear.

I will mention here that some have a very different interpretation of the phrase "*Lord's day*." Their contention is that John was referring to the entire Christian era as the Lord's day. It is quite true that in the Revelation John did see the entire Christian era unfold before him. Furthermore, it is also accurate to refer to the Christian era as Christ's day or the Lord's day. We do often use this type of phrase when talking about the period of someone's influence. For example, someone could say, "the Jews suffered great persecution during Hitler's day." This refers not to one literal 24 hour period, but to the entire time of Hitler's power and influence in Europe.

While the Christian epoch is the Lord's day, this is not what John was referring to. While that interpretation is technically true, it simply is not logical. John is giving us the setting for the beginning of the Revelation. He was worshipping, most likely praying, when suddenly he heard this powerful voice. This voice was the first indication he had that anything extraordinary was afoot. Several times God has appeared to men while they were praying. God gave Peter a vision concerning the Gentiles while he prayed (Acts 10:9-16), He spoke to Cornelius while he prayed (Acts 10:30), He released Paul and Silas from prison with a great earthquake as they sang and prayed (Acts 16:25-26), He appeared to Paul while he prayed to give him instructions (Acts 22:17), and the angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel as he prayed (Daniel 9:20).

There is an even more compelling argument for the Lord's day being Sunday. The Greek word that is translated "Lord's" here is "kuriakos." This word is used only one other time in the Bible. "*When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper*" (I Corinthians 11:20). Strong's defines this word as "belonging to the Lord (Jehovah or Jesus): - Lord's."¹³ The word lord(s) appears over 700 times in the New Testament. Except for the two verses just noted, it always comes from the Greek word "kurios," which Strong's defines as "*(supremacy); supreme in authority, that is, (as noun) controller; by implication Mr. (as a respectful title): - God, Lord, master, Sir.*"¹⁴ This word is almost always translated as lord but a few times as master. John himself used this Greek word 78 times: 53 times in John, once in II John, and 24 times here in Revelation. Obviously, John knew this word and knew it well. Why did he choose to use a different and apparently special word in the present verse? Why did Paul do the same thing in I Corinthians 11:20? The answer is obvious; both of these were defining moments. We use the phrase "Lord's Supper" all the time. Do you realize that it occurs for the first time in I Corinthians 11:20? Do you further realize that it occurs for the ONLY time in I Corinthians 11:20? In what is the only true discussion of and instruction concerning the Lord's Supper, Paul established this beautiful term. To the Greek reader, his intent would have been obvious due to the use of the special word. Unfortunately, for the King James reader, it is less obvious.

¹²Ibid., s.v. "cornet."

¹³ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #2960."

¹⁴ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #2962."

Here in Revelation, John uses kuriakos for exactly the same reason; he is defining a new and important phrase. The term “Lord’s Day” also occurs one and only one time in the scriptures. John is showing us the beauty and importance of this day. It is still not a Sabbath, but if it is the day we are supposed to worship the Lord, then it is special nonetheless.

The objection many people have to accepting that John referred to Sunday as the Lord’s day is rooted in their disdain for the way so many people have misused the phrase. Many have attempted to turn Sunday into what could best be described as the Christian Sabbath. In fact, you can often hear people, in their ignorance, refer to Sunday as the Sabbath, which is of course, the seventh day, or Saturday. I have met many people in my life that vehemently proclaim that it is a sin to work on Sunday. No scripture can support such a claim. Only if someone allows their work to cause them to forsake assembling with the Church upon the first day of the week (Hebrews 10:25) have they violated God’s commandments. There are still many laws on the books that reflect the era when it seems most people treated Sunday like a Sabbath day. The laws are referred to as “blue laws.” Blue laws are “laws designed to enforce the observance of the Sabbath or to regulate the details of personal conduct. Most of the states of the United States, however, still have laws regulating and restricting business, public amusements, and work on Sunday.”¹⁵ Many of these laws have been removed from the books and others simply are not enforced any longer, but some still persist. If someone chooses not to perform certain activities on Sunday, that is their prerogative. However, Paul clearly instructs that us to “*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come*” (Colossians 2:16-17a). The observance of special days was a part of the Old Law but not the New.

I will now stray a little further from the topic to explain a little more about the Sabbath and Christianity. Most people misunderstand the whole purpose of the Sabbath. Its purpose was not to make people rest. The people had six days to do as they wished (within God’s commandments), but the seventh day belonged to God. The purpose of the Sabbath is explained most clearly in the book of Isaiah. “*If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words*” (Isaiah 58:13). The point should be very clear. God was forcing the people to pause from their busy lives and remember Him; remember what he had done and continued to do for them.

We have a similar thing in Christianity today to help remind us of God’s part in our lives, but it is not Sunday; it is the Lord’s Supper. “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come*” (I Corinthians 11:23-26).

The death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is the focal point of all Christian worship. Without this, our hope would be vain. Therefore, God has established the only real ritual in the Church. It is a ritual intended to remind us weekly of God’s love and why it is so important that we serve Him. This points out a serious error on the part of the denominations that choose to partake of the Lord’s Supper sporadically (monthly, or just once or twice a year), instead of weekly according to the pattern established by the apostles in the early Church (Acts 20:7).

I have strayed purposely to show that there is no Sabbath or any thing resembling it in the Christian era. Therefore, we have nothing to fear from the phrase “Lord’s day.” In reacting to the abuses of the term mentioned above, many people overreacted and tried to explain it away completely but in doing so we lose a beautiful scene. Just imagine John, the last remaining apostle, probably about 90 years of age, persecuted in various ways for over 60 years, now exiled to a small island because of his beliefs. Still undaunted, however, by age or trials, he is praying earnestly to God one Sunday when all of a sudden the voice of his Lord, and one-time earthly companion, sounds powerfully but warmly in his ears. This is the final earthly reward for a tired and weary soldier.

¹⁵ *Funk & Wagnall’s New Encyclopedia*, (New York, NY: Funk & Wagnall’s Inc., 1973), s.v. “blue laws.”

1:11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, what thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

Alpha and Omega were first mentioned in verse eight and were explained to be the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. This just refers to the eternal nature of Christ. Nothing was before Him or shall be after Him.

John was instructed to write the vision he is about to see in a book. This book was then to be sent to seven churches that he names. These seven churches were all on the western end of an area then known as Asia Minor (see Map 1). Asia Minor is basically the area that is today called Turkey. However, these seven were not the only churches in that area. I do not believe for a moment that God meant for this book to be read only by those seven churches and no one else. Most things contained in the book could not be understood until after they had happened. Even those seven churches would not have been able to understand the majority of the book since the events depicted in it had not occurred. This leads to the conclusion that God intended for Christians of all times to have and study this book.

Also, what about the seven letters found in chapters two and three? Why would Jesus send letters to only seven of the churches in the area when more were present? When we study these letters we will see that they are much more than what they may appear to be at first glance. While those letters certainly reflected the conditions at those particular churches at that time, they also had a deeper meaning. The conditions of those churches paralleled the conditions of the Lord's Church as it progressed through history. In other words, the conditions at Ephesus depicted the Lord's Church in the early years, and the conditions at Laodicea are synonymous with the conditions of the Church near the time of the end of the world. The other five churches fill the intermediate period following one another in the order in which the letters were written. The specifics of each letter and the time periods they cover will be discussed individually at the appropriate places in the next two chapters. It should again be remembered that the number seven signifies completeness. When Jesus sent these letters to the Seven Churches, He was actually writing to all Churches of all time.

1:12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks;

When John heard the majestic voice of Jesus speaking to him, he naturally turned toward the source of the sound. When he did, he saw seven golden candlesticks. These candlesticks are reminiscent of the ones in the Temple. God commanded Moses to *"make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knops, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side"* (Exodus 25:31-2). Obviously, these are not seven separate candlesticks but are all made into one piece (see Figure 2). These candlesticks, as we will see in verse twenty, represent the Seven Churches that were just discussed in the previous verse.

The candle of the first century was nothing like our wax candles of today. They were, in fact, lamps burning pure olive oil. Moses was given very specific instructions for making the golden candlestick that was placed in the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:31-35). It was located outside the veil just across from the table of shewbread (Exodus 26:35). When Solomon built the Temple, he made ten golden candlesticks and placed five on each side of the temple (II Chronicles 4:7). The priests were commanded to *"cause the lamp to burn always"* (Exodus 27:20), which signified God's continual presence among His people.

Jesus used candles to illustrate the intended effect of righteous men on the world, during His Sermon on the Mount. *"Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16). A candle's purpose for being made and used is to produce light. Likewise, God intends His people to shed spiritual light on the world. That is, to be an example of God's love, mercy, and grace to the sinful masses. Through their manner of life, the positive influence of Christians on the world should be just as consistent and steady as the burning of a lamp.

1:13 And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

As John beheld the candlesticks, he saw something even more impressive in the middle of them. It was the person who had been speaking to him. It was a person whom John said looked like the Son of Man. It in fact was the Son of Man. John had spent a little over three years with Christ while He was upon the earth. Although that time was now almost sixty years past, John would still remember what He looked like. Here Jesus is not in the form of an ordinary man. Nevertheless, John sees a great resemblance between this figure before him and Jesus whom he had known as a man upon the earth. The fact that Jesus was in the middle of the candlesticks, that represent the Seven Churches, and by extension all churches of all time, shows His continued presence among His people.

“*Clothed with a garment down to the foot.*” The clothing Christ was wearing was probably some type of flowing robe that reached down to His feet. This type of attire was common in the Middle East at that time, and indeed still is today. “*And girt about the paps with a golden girdle.*” The paps is the region of the breast or chest. The girdle was “an essential article of dress in the East, and worn by both men and women. The common girdle was made of leather, like that worn by the Bedouins of the present day. A finer girdle was made of linen, embroidered with silk, and sometimes with gold and silver thread, and frequently studded with gold and precious stones or pearls. Girdles were used as pockets, as they still are among the Arabs, and as purses, one end of the girdle being folded back for that purpose.”¹⁶

1:14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire;

With this description, we can see why John apparently was not sure that it was actually the Son of Man he was seeing. The face may have been the same but several features were markedly different than the man John knew as Jesus.

The white color of His hair does not denote the aging of the body, but rather it represents some of the characteristics often associated with those of many years: wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and patience. It also represents such things as purity and innocence. All of these are attributes of Christ.

Fire is often used to test the worth and purity of certain materials, especially precious metals such as gold and silver. The fire will burn away all impurities and leave only that which is of true importance. Native gold always contains silver, which is of course a less valuable metal. If someone gave you a piece of gold claiming it was pure, and therefore quite valuable, fire would easily determine the true worth of the metal without damaging it. When subjected to very high temperatures, silver will melt at 960°F¹⁷ whereas gold will not melt until 1045°F.¹⁸ This means the sample of supposedly pure gold can be heated to see if it contains silver, which would melt out first. If this indeed was the case then the fraud would be revealed without damaging the gold.



Figure 3
Candlestick with Seven Lamps

The depiction of Christ’s eyes being like a flame of fire shows His ability to see through anything. There is nothing that is not open to His sight. “*Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and*

¹⁶ Ibid., s.v. “girdle.”

¹⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, (New York, NY: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1929), s.v. “silver.”

¹⁸ Ibid., s.v. “gold.”

hid, that shall not be known” (Matthew 10:26). “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Hebrews 4:13).

Christ can burn away all barriers and even see into the hearts of men. He can determine the true worth of a person, without the prejudices that influence man’s judgments. This is what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he said, *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is” (1 Corinthians 3:13).* This also illustrates the fact that there is no where to hide from the Lord where He cannot see your every move and hear your every thought.

1:15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

Feet of brass shows the foundation upon which Christ stands is pure, solid, and strong. As the Apostle Paul told all Christians, they should likewise have a firm footing in truth. *“And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace” (Ephesians 6:15).* The fact that His feet were burned in a furnace shows that they had been tried of fire to again show the strength and soundness of the foundation upon which He stands. There were no impurities present in His foundation that might serve to weaken it. It was completely pure and as strong as possible.

His voice was like the sound of *“many waters.”* This has the same implications as the trumpet in verse ten; namely that His voice is strong and powerful. This same symbolism was used in the Old Testament to describe the voice of God. *“And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory” (Ezekiel 43:2).* All one needs to do is spend a few moments near the sea shore on a day when the waves are high or near a large water fall to understand this verse. The sound of large quantities of water crashing about is extremely powerful and deafening. It is a roar that is hard to describe. This is how powerful the voice of Jesus sounded to John.

1:16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength.

The seven stars will be found in verse twenty to represent seven angels. The angels correspond to the Seven Churches first mentioned in verse eleven. The fact that they were in His hand shows that He had power and authority over them. The significance of their being in His right hand is that it is considered the side of honor. This lets us see that these angels occupied a position of honor and respect with Christ even though they were under His authority.

The sword that came from Christ’s mouth was His words. Christ is the Word of God made flesh. *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1,14).* The Word of God is also a spiritual sword. *“The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6:17).* *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword” (Hebrews 4:12).* The words of Christ, which also are the words of God, are a spiritual sword that Christ and all of His followers use to fight against Satan.

This sword is no ordinary sword but is a *“two-edged sword.”* This means that regardless of which way the sword moves it has the ability to cut. It takes less effort to inflict harm with a two-edged sword than one that is only sharpened on one side. With such a fine weapon the one who wields it need not be extremely proficient in its use; the sword will do most of the work. This is indeed true of God’s Word. It is much more powerful than any person who proclaims it to others. There is one draw back to a two-edged sword, however. It also provides twice as many opportunities for the inexperienced or unqualified user to inflict unintended harm to himself or innocent bystanders. Likewise, the Bible, if handled improperly, can be used for great evil and multitudes can be harmed. This fact will be made exceedingly clear in the course of this book. Even today, the two-edged sword is synonymous with anything that is potentially beneficial and harmful at the same time.

Countenance means the appearance; especially the face. Jesus’ countenance was as bright as the sun. There is

nothing in the natural world that any man has ever beheld with his eyes that is brighter than the sun. In fact, staring at the sun for only a few moments can lead to permanent eye damage and even blindness. But Jesus, in His power and glory, easily out shines the sun and all other celestial bodies.

1:17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

John was so overwhelmed at the man who was standing before him that he immediately fell down before him frozen in fear. Then Jesus gently touched him and assured him that there was no reason to be alarmed. Once again a point is made to mention that the right hand is used denoting Jesus' respect for John. Jesus followed the reassuring touch by telling John His identity. First and last is the same as Alpha and Omega which points to His eternal nature. No one else could truthfully make this statement so John knew who the speaker was. This leaves no doubt as to the identity of the person standing before John. Later on, on two separate occasions (Revelation 19:10, 22:8-9), we will see John fall down before an angel and be severely rebuked for it. Both angels tell John that only God is to be worshipped. Therefore, this cannot be an angel here but must be Christ Himself.

1:18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.

Jesus then proceeds to give further indication of who He is. He is the only one who has ever been resurrected from the dead that has not had to die again. *"Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him"* (Romans 6:9). *But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death* (I Corinthians 15:23-26). Christ will continue to reign in His Kingdom until death is finally conquered, which will be when he resurrects all who have ever died.

All others who have ever been resurrected in the past have later died again. But having conquered death, Jesus now has the keys of Hell (Hades) and death. When He raises the dead in the last day, no one will ever die again. Hades is where the souls of men go to await their sentencing at the end of time. In other words, since He now enjoys dominion over death, having overcome it Himself, He has the power to raise people from the dead such that they will never die again.

1:19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Jesus now instructs John to record what he has already seen, the things that he is currently seeing, and the things he will soon see. In short, He is telling him not to leave anything out. Jesus had already told John, *"What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia"* (Revelation 1:11). Possibly John was so awestruck with his surroundings that he was forgetting to take notes and Jesus just gave him a friendly reminder. We do know that John did do some writing while receiving this vision because it is mentioned in chapter ten.

1:20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

Now having John in a slightly more receptive state, Christ begins to explain some of the things John has seen earlier. The seven stars that John told us about in verse sixteen represent the seven angels of the Seven Churches of Asia to which the seven letters in the following two chapters are addressed. In Revelation, and indeed throughout the entire Bible, heavenly bodies are used as symbols of powers, governments, authorities, and such like. It could easily be said that God is the sun, Christ the moon, and the angels are the stars.

The seven golden candlesticks of verse twelve are said here to be the Seven Churches. Just as the purpose of candles is to shed light upon their surroundings, so too the Church is intended to shed spiritual light upon its surroundings. The symbolism of the stars and candlesticks serves to prepare us for what lies ahead. Christ has used these symbols and then told us what they mean. Throughout the rest of the book, He will use symbols but will not tell us what they mean. In this chapter, He was just giving us a little warm-up exercise on interpreting symbols.

SECTION II

The History of the Lord's Church Throughout the Entire Christian Era (The letters to the Seven Churches)

Chapter Two

Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, & Thyatira

As we begin this section, we need to recall some of the comments made in the previous chapter. These seven letters are more than merely letters to these seven churches. While they certainly reflect the conditions present at those particular churches at that time, they also have another meaning. They represent the conditions experienced by the Lord's Church, from its inception in A.D. 30, to the end of time. The conditions of those churches paralleled the conditions of the Lord's Church as it progressed through history. Taken in the order in which they were written, the seven letters successively describe the progression of the Church through history. This idea will be discussed more in the future, but for now it will suffice to allow us to begin our study of these letters.

However, there is one final note that needs to be made about this before we do begin. Due to the possible difficulty in simultaneously explaining both meanings of the letters they have been given separately. The literal interpretation, which refers to the actual churches, appears first. The figurative interpretation, concerning the Lord's Church down through the ages, has been deferred to its own section following chapter three. This will allow for a more clear and concise explanation in both cases.

2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

Ephesus was "A city of Lydia on the western coast of Asia Minor, at the mouth of the River Cayster, nearly midway between Miletus on the south and Smyrna on the north. Situated at the junction of natural trade routes, and near a far-famed shrine of an Asiatic nature goddess, whom the Greeks identified with Artemis, its growth was assured. In the eleventh century B. C. the town was seized by the Ionians, a section of the Greek race. Ephesus became one of the twelve cities belonging to their confederation, and itself the capital of Ionia. About 555 B. C. the city submitted to Cræsus, king of Lydia, whose capital was at Sardis, but it soon fell under the Persian domination. When the victories of Alexander the Great overthrew the Persian Empire, Ephesus came under Macedonian Greek rule. Hitherto it had been confined to a low alluvial plain liable to be flooded. About 286 B. C., however, Lysimachus extended it to an adjacent eminence which the water could not reach. By this change of location the temple of Artemis was left outside the city walls. In 190 B. C. the Romans, after defeating Antiochus the Great at Magnesia, took Ephesus from him and gave it to Eumenes II., king of Pergamos. On the death of Attalus III of Pergamos in 133 B. C. it reverted to them, and eventually became the capital of the Roman province of Asia. In A.D. 29 the city was much damaged by an earthquake, but was rebuilt by the emperor Tiberius. Many Jews with Roman citizenship resided at Ephesus and maintained a synagogue; and Paul, on his way to Jerusalem, toward the end of his second missionary journey, paid a short visit to the place, preached in the synagogue and left Aquila and Priscilla there, who continued the work. On his third journey he labored there at least two years and three months, leaving the city after

the riot which was stirred up by Demetrius, a maker of small silver models of the temple, who found his craft endangered by the preaching of the apostle.”¹⁹

Once again, Christ is given as the author of the letters and is depicted as holding seven stars. The stars, which first appeared in chapter one, verse sixteen, are the seven angels of the Seven Churches to whom Christ is writing. The fact that Christ holds them in His hand demonstrates His authority over them. The seven golden candlesticks, which first appeared in verse twelve of chapter one, represent the Seven Churches. Christ is shown in the midst of them demonstrating His continued presence among His people.

2:2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:

In this verse, Jesus hands out nothing but praise to the Church. He commends them in five areas; their works, labor, and patience must have been exemplary. Although He does not actually say they had done well in these areas, it is implied by the context. The term “*I know*” does not necessarily mean anything good or bad, but merely conveys knowledge of their activities. It means that He was aware of what they had been doing. Since He did not follow this up with any negative comments, we can assume they had done well in these areas.

Everything in verses two and three is complimentary; it is not until we get to verse four that he addresses their problems. He purposefully deals with their good points first and then turns to their faults. Usually, you will have a better effect on someone when you do things this way. If He were to have jumped immediately into their problems, He could have caused them to be offended, and this certainly was not His intent. He wanted them to repent so He tried to be as tactful and diplomatic as possible. He first praised them for what they were doing correctly and then reprimanded them for their mistakes. We will see Him follow this course of action in almost all of the letters.

We can see that the Church at Ephesus had good works, abundant labor, and great patience. He then commends them for their stand against error. It is not enough to take a stand **FOR** truth, one must also take a stand **AGAINST** evil. Then He mentions their treatment of those who had claimed to be apostles of the Lord but were really frauds. This Church tried these men, which means they put them to the test. In other words, they demanded that these men back up their claims with some sort of proof. All of the apostles had the capacity to perform miracles in order to demonstrate their authenticity (Hebrews 2:4). In addition, they gave spiritual gifts to others who they felt were worthy to have them and would use them wisely (Acts 8:18). Since these men were fakes, they would have lacked this ability and could have been found out very easily.

This all sounds simple, but it begins with people being concerned enough to check the credentials of someone who sets himself up to be one who speaks for God. It is far too common today for people to take the word of so called “men of God” at face value and never question their teachings. Although men today are not capable of miracles to show that God is with them, there is the Bible which can and should be used to confirm or refute the claims of men.

2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.

Jesus continues to shower the Ephesian Church with compliments; once again commending their patience and their ability to bear the persecutions they were facing. Not only had they managed to hold out in the face of opposition, but they were still laboring abundantly. “*Hast not fainted*” means they had not fainted in their heart. In other words, they had not become overwhelmed by the tribulations that were coming their way that they would give up and forsake the Lord.

“*For my name's sake*” shows that they had the proper motivation for the things they were doing. As the Apostle Paul instructed, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord*” (Colossians 3:17). They were not doing things for the sake of popularity or praise of men. They genuinely sought to please the Lord.

¹⁹ Davis, 1983, s.v. “Ephesus.”

2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

After all of the commendations, Jesus finally brings up something that they were doing wrong. “*Left thy first love*” means they had ceased to do many things from a standpoint of pure love. They were doing these things because they were commanded to, not because they wanted to. In I Thessalonians 1:3, the Apostle Paul speaks of a “*labor of love.*” This is how a Christian should feel about everything he does. He should not mind doing anything for the Lord, simply because he loves Him.

A good illustration of this might be a married couple who have drifted apart over the years. Perhaps both are heavily involved in their careers and, after spending time with the children, they just seem to have very little time left for each other. Now the problems that once seemed insignificant give rise to big arguments. In becoming so wrapped up in themselves and their careers, they have forgotten how to love each other.

This analogy can perhaps help us see what had happened to the early Christians. The excitement of those first disciples in the months and years immediately following Christ’s death and resurrection must have been overwhelming. Just imagine having seen the Lord die on the cross and then a few days later to see Him walking around! Then a few weeks later, the Church was established in an inspiring show of power by the Holy Ghost. Within days, thousands had been added to the number of disciples. Indeed, what an exciting time to have been a Christian. However, just as we know that in a marriage the honeymoon must end, both literally and figuratively, so too the wave of great excitement begin to fade after a while.

Disciples were no longer made by the thousands or even hundreds. Persecution was ever present at the hands of the Jews and Romans. The day of the great apostles of Christ was coming to a close. The number of those alive who had actually known Jesus and had been witness to the awesome events of A.D. 30 was growing smaller and smaller. Only the elderly would have been from the first generation of Christians. Those younger than about seventy-five would have no personal knowledge of Jesus and may well have been raised as Christians by their parents. As is often sadly the case, many children do not share their parent’s zeal about religion. This generation of Christians might have learned what to do, but have failed to learn to truly love the Lord.

Christ desires for those who serve Him to be zealous and hardworking. This the apostle Paul pointed out in his letter to Titus. “*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:14). This zeal was missing from the hearts and lives of those in Ephesus. They were doing only what was commanded of them and only because it was a commandment.

They had become very much like the unprofitable servant Christ spoke of. “*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are COMMANDED you, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do’*” (Luke 17:10). Someone who only does what he has to do can never please the Lord; this was the condition of the Ephesian Church. This whole situation just goes to prove that good deeds do not justify a person, if their heart is not in what they do. It is as the Apostle Paul said, “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing*” (I Corinthians 13:1-3). Without charity, or love, a person’s profession of Christianity is worthless.

2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Now that He has told them where their error is, Jesus instructs the Ephesian Church to repent. He tells them to remember how it used to be and try to return to that state. They need to rekindle their love. Continuing our example from the previous verse, perhaps the husband could bring his wife flowers like he did when they were dating. In addition, a lot of the other little things that had made their relationship special in the beginning could be renewed.

Love is not something that merely happens; it is something that can be cultivated and grown just like a flower. If, however, they fail to heed the instructions He gives them, He will remove their candlestick. Since the candlesticks represent the congregations, removing their candlestick would symbolize their removal as a congregation of His Church. He would not literally remove them from the face of the earth, but he would no longer consider them as His. This is a lesson good for all time. Just because a group sets themselves up to be a congregation of the Lord's Church, this does not mean that is what they really are. If they are not following the commandments of God, He may well have already removed their candlestick. Luke told us that *"the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved"* (Acts 2:47). If the Lord adds to the Church, then He can certainly remove people or entire congregations from it as well.

2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

After a stern rebuke, Jesus here commends them once again. This time it was for taking a stand against the Nicolaitanes, which He says He hates. Nicolaitanes is from the Greek 'Nikolaites' which Strong's defines as, "a Nicolaite, i.e. adherent of Nicolau's:-Nicolaitane."²⁰ This word comes from the Greek 'Nikolaos' which Strong's defines as, "victorious over the people; Nicolau's, a heretic:-Nicolaus."²¹ This word, in turn, comes from two Greek root words 'nikos' and 'Laodikeus.' Which Strong's defines respectively as, "a conquest (concretely), i.e. (by implication) triumph:-victory,"²² and "a Laodicean, i.e. inhabitant of Laodicia:-Laodicean."²³ The idea is that men were seeking to abandon the scriptural leadership of elders and supplant it with an ill conceived hierarchy. Scriptural elders have very little authority and are expected to lead more by example, whereas these usurpers wanted absolute power over the believers.

God's intent for the government of His people has remained essentially the same for the last four-thousand years, but, unfortunately, so has man's rejection of God's plan. Under the Law of Moses, God was to be the King of the nation of Israel. Because of the imperfection of the Old Law, God continually sent prophets to teach and guide the people and to be the mediator between Himself and the people. Each city was overseen by the respected elders of the city. *"And when he that doth flee unto one of those cities shall stand at the entering of the gate of the city, and shall declare his cause in the ears of the elders of that city, they shall take him into the city unto them, and give him a place, that he may dwell among them"* (Joshua 20:4). In times of crisis, the elders of all Israel would assemble. *"So all the elders of Israel came to the king to Hebron; and king David made a league with them in Hebron before the Lord: and they anointed David king over Israel"* (II Samuel 5:3). God realized the importance of utilizing those with experience and wisdom to help Him rule the people.

The people, however, decided that a man could rule them more effectively than God. *"But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Harken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them"* (1 Samuel 8:6-9).

These men eschewed the blessings and leadership of God for the domination of men with evil ambitions who were often inept, oppressive, and very wicked. God warned them what they were getting themselves into. *"And Samuel told all the words of the Lord unto the people that asked of him a king. And he said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his*

²⁰ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #3531."

²¹ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #3532."

²² Ibid., s.v. "Greek #3534."

²³ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #2994."

horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day” (1 Samuel 8:10-18).

Despite the warnings, the people would not be deterred from their intent of rejecting their Creator in favor of imperfect men. *“Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay; but we will have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and he rehearsed them in the ears of the Lord. And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken unto their voice, and make them a king” (1 Samuel 8:19-22).*

God’s intent for the government of the Church is very similar to that of Israel; the role of elders is clearly seen. *“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). “And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church” (Acts 20:17). “For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5).* It is very important to note that, just as was the case with Israel, every church was to have a plurality of elders. When power and authority are vested in one man, those subject to his authority are at the mercy of his ambitions and faults. When that same power is divided among two or more men, it is much less likely that they will agree together to work corruption. God wisely recognizes that no one man should ever be entrusted with authority in a church. The elders then answer to the Head of the Church. *“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Ephesians 5:23). “And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).*

God’s intent was that Christ is to be the Head of the Church and He is to have absolute power over it. There is no need for a continuous string of prophets as was the case with the Old Law, because the Church is under *“the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25).* It is unfortunate, although not unexpected, that men have chosen to reject Christ as the Head of the Church, just as Israel rejected God from being their King. Most denominations are today ruled by “ministers” (a gross misuse of the scriptural term) at the congregational level, and by councils, conventions, synods, etc. at the regional or national level. The height of apostasy is the hierarchy established by the Roman Catholic Church. Modeled after the civil administrative network of the old Roman Empire, they have a succession of leaders at various levels, culminating in one infallible, essentially divine man, the pope. This centralization of authority has made it possible to completely overthrow the principles of New Testament Christianity in favor of the doctrines of men. They are as Paul spoke of the Jews of his day. *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:2-3).* In many ways, the false prophets of Rome will be the focus of a large part of the remainder of the book of Revelation.

Returning to the verse at hand, we also notice that after Christ had rebuked the Ephesian Church for their error, He hands out a little more praise. This serves to ‘smooth their ruffled feathers.’ He is showing Himself to be a master of diplomacy here by the way He is handling the situation. I have often heard others say that the way to effectively deliver some bit of necessary criticism to someone is to first ‘butter them up’ with a compliment, then give them the bitter medicine, and then give them some more praise for what they have been doing right. Perhaps a bitter pill is more easily swallowed if it is in the middle of a sweet sandwich.

2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

“*He that hath an ear, let him hear*” is to me an indication that we should look very closely at what has just been said. Hear not only means to listen to the words but to understand and digest them as well. Hear is from the Greek

word “akouo,” which Strong’s defines as “a primary verb; to hear (in various senses):-give (in the) audience (of), come (to the ears), ([shall]) hear (-er, -ken), be noised, be reported, understand.”²⁴ It is understanding that the Lord desires people to gain, not merely listening to the words.

The way he uses the word here in this particular phrase has a very special meaning. It is a clue that some great truth has been indirectly spoken. It is like saying “he that has the ability to understand, let him understand.” In the gospels we find Christ using this phrase several times, and each of those times He seems to be telling His listeners to think closely about what He has said.

In Matthew chapter eleven, Christ speaks of John the Baptist and in doing so says more than His words might indicate. “*For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that 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 suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force. For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear*” (Matthew 11:10-15). That last phrase is what tips us off to the fact that He has said something more than it appears; and that He wants us to figure it out. What did Jesus say here that is hidden in His words? While discussing John he said that he was actually Elijah who was prophesied to return. This prophecy is found in Isaiah 40:3. “*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*” What is the significance of this prophecy? Prepare ye the way of the Lord means to prepare the way for the Messiah. If John is Elijah, then the one he has been preparing the way for must be the Christ. That, of course, is Jesus Himself. Jesus claims to be the long-awaited Messiah without ever directly saying it. He hints at it and then uses the phrase, “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” For those who were interested enough to ponder the situation it would become obvious that Jesus was claiming to be the Lord’s Christ.

Many times after teaching a parable, Jesus used the statement “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” He was exhorting them to give thought to His parables in order that they might understand the deeper truths which characterized His teachings. In our situation here in Revelation, Jesus again wants us to see something that will not be apparent on the surface. These letters, for the most part, are fairly simple and do not appear to be harboring any secrets. However, as has been mentioned previously, these letters represent not only the named congregations, but also all congregations of the Church at different periods of time throughout the entire Christian age. Ephesus, which we have just looked at, being the first, represents the Church from its foundation in A.D. 30 until around A.D. 180. At the end of chapter three a synopsis of Church history, as revealed through these letters, will be given and should make all of this much clearer.

The Spirit which is saying these things to the churches, is the Spirit of God, which He often employs in such activities. “*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*” “*Him that overcometh*” is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. This would include temptation as well as persecution. Any person who is able, through submitting himself to the power of God, to overcome Satan will earn the right to partake of the tree of life, which gives eternal life. Man lost his access to the tree of life after the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. “*And the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:’ so he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life*” (Genesis 3:22, 24). But now, through the death of Christ, man has been reconciled to God (Romans 5:10), and through obedience to God can someday regain access to the tree of life that is in Heaven (Revelation 22:14).

2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

Smyrna was “a city of Asia Minor, situated on the Aegean Sea, 40 miles north of Ephesus.”²⁵ It was “a city of great

²⁴ James Strong, *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, (Hendrickson Publishers, 1982), s.v. “Greek #191”.

antiquity on the western coast of Asia Minor. It was possessed by the Æolian Greeks, and finally the Ionian Greeks admitted it to their confederacy. The Lydian king, Alyattes, destroyed it, and it lay waste for some 200 years, till the plan of rebuilding it was formed by Alexander the Great, and executed by his immediate successors, on a new site nearby. It then became a large and flourishing commercial center, retaining its importance under the Romans. It became a part of the province of Asia, organized after 133 B. C. Its bishop Polycarp suffered martyrdom by fire, near the stadion, probably in A. D. 169. In A. D. 178 Smyrna was destroyed by an earthquake, but was speedily rebuilt. Lying as it does at the extremity of a fine bay, in the track of trade, it is admirably adapted for commerce, and even under Turkish rule remains a highly flourishing city, the largest and most important in Asia Minor.”²⁶

Smyrna was one of the two churches which had nothing spoken against it by Christ; Philadelphia was the other. Jesus again refers to Himself as the first and last. This coincides with the phrase “Alpha and Omega,” which He often uses to show His eternal nature; that nothing was before Him and nothing shall come after Him. He also points out that He “*was dead, and is alive.*” No one else can make such a claim. Christ is the only one to ever conquer death, by being resurrected to die no more.

2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

The Church at Smyrna was commended for the work they were doing, the tribulation they were enduring, and the poverty they were suffering. It does not really sound like an appealing life, but they apparently were doing all as a labor of love, in contrast to Ephesus who had lost their first love. Although Christ refers to their poverty, He still says they are rich. One reason they probably were so poor was the persecutions they were suffering. One of the first things an oppressor often goes after is someone’s possessions. They were no doubt lacking in a material way, but because of their dedicated service to God, they had laid up for themselves unsearchable riches in Heaven (Matthew 6:20). Therefore, where it really counted, they were rich. Their situation is exactly the opposite of what we will find in the seventh church, Laodicea. Christ described Laodicea this way, “*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Revelation 3:17). Laodicea had material wealth but spiritual poverty. It is often the case with men that a scarcity of material goods will cause people to seek after God, and correspondingly, an abundance of material goods will cause people to turn from God. This point is well borne out in these two churches.

“*Them which say they are Jews*” refers to people who were actually of the Jewish race but did not adhere to the laws they professed to follow. This type of person, who is insincere from the start, is a prime candidate to join in the persecution of other groups. These who professed to be followers of God, were actually blaspheming Him by persecuting those who were His true followers, and denouncing their practices. They had crucified God’s Son and were now trying desperately to stamp out His followers. If they had been sincere and knowledgeable from the start, they would have accepted Christ when He came. Since they were working against God, it can then be said they were working for Satan. “*He that is not with me is against me*” (Matthew 12:30). This is the reason for saying they are “*the synagogue of Satan.*” They serve Satan, and the term synagogue is added, because this is where they claim to worship God. They hypocritically tried to worship God from a synagogue, but because of their blind ignorance were actually serving Satan’s purposes.

2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

This verse elaborates on the persecution that the Church at Smyrna was suffering. Despite the persecutions, Christ exhorts them not to fear those things that they might be put through. “*And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*” (Matthew 10:28).

²⁵ Smith, 1986, s.v. “Smyrna.”

²⁶ Davis, 1983, s.v. “Smyrna.”

He tells them that if they are faithful UNTO death then they will receive, as a reward, a crown of life. This crown of life signifies victory over Satan and everything evil. It also means that its owner is entitled to eternal life in Heaven.

Being faithful 'unto' death, which He commands here, is not the same as be faithful 'until' death; although it does include that. Being faithful until death means to remain faithful to God as long as you live. However, being faithful unto death, means standing firm even if you are put to death for your beliefs. It is one thing to profess Christianity when you are not opposed for doing so, but it is quite another to profess it when Christians are being killed and tortured all around you. This is exactly what Christ asks of His followers. After all, He did this for them, why should He not ask for the same in return?

He also reveals to us the identity of the one who is behind all of this evil which is befalling these saints. It is no surprise to find that it is Satan who is masterminding it all. The ten days of tribulation does not appear to have any direct application to the Church at Smyrna, but it has a very obvious meaning for the Church as a whole during the period of time represented by the Church at Smyrna, which was A.D. 180 to A.D. 313. This point will be elaborated on in the summary that follows chapter three.

2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

Once again we see the phrase "*He that hath an ear, let him hear.*" Indeed we will see it after each of these seven letters. This again alerts us to look for a subtle meaning in this letter. This is of course its application to the history of the entire Church.

"*He that overcometh*" is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. This would include temptation as well as persecution. Any person who is able, through submitting himself to the power of God, to overcome Satan will not be hurt of "*the second death.*" The second death is spiritual death. Death is not a cessation of life but rather a separation. Physical death is the result of the separation of the body and spirit of man. "*For as the body without the spirit is dead*" (James 2:26). This is the first death. The second death is spiritual, and results when a soul is separated from God. This occurs when a person is cast into eternal Hell. In other words, a person who does not yield to God will be cast into Hell. All of this will be discussed in greater detail in chapter twenty.

It is very appropriate that Christ described the heavenly reward as He did to the Ephesian Church. With all of the persecution they were suffering, Christians must have been dying quite often. He points out to them that for their efforts, they will be spared the second death. Compared to the first death, the second is a much more serious matter, and will, unfortunately, overtake most men.

2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

Pergamos, also known as Pergamum, was a city located about forty miles north of Smyrna. It was situated on the Caicus River about twenty miles from the sea. It was a great center of idolatrous worship, containing temples of Zeus, Athena, Apollo, and Aesculapius.²⁷ "It had a vast library of 200,000 volumes, which was moved by Antony to Egypt and presented to Cleopatra. In this town was first discovered the art of making parchment, which was called pergamena. The city was greatly addicted to idolatry, and its grove, which was one of the wonders of the place, was filled with statues and altars. The wealth of the Attalic princes had raised Pergamum to the rank of the first city in Asia as regards splendor. It was a sort of union of a pagan cathedral city, a university town, and a royal residence, embellished during a succession of years by kings who all had a passion for expenditure and ample means of gratifying it."²⁸

²⁷ W. Smith, 1986, s.v. "Pergamos."

²⁸ Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, (Chicago, IL, Moody Press, 1988), s.v. "Pergamum."

Here Jesus describes Himself as one possessing a sharp sword. He also used this description of Himself in the previous chapter. It refers to His being the Word of God made flesh (John 1:1, 14). The Word of God is also said to be as the sword described here (Hebrews 4:12).

2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

As with the first two churches, Christ begins His remarks by stating that He knows their works. This is a statement of overall approval of what they had been doing. It does not mean they were doing nothing wrong, because in the next verse we find that they were. Here, as with Ephesus, He begins with praise for their good works and then reproves them for their faults. He then mentions the area where they live as being Satan's seat. In the description of this city, it was noted that Pergamos was a great center of Idolatry. There were many temples there dedicated to pagan Roman gods. This certainly does not seem to be a very conducive environment for the spread of Christianity, but nevertheless a congregation had been established there. Even in the face of this stiff opposition from the idolatrous people of the city, they held fast the name of Christ. They, like Smyrna, did not faint due to the tribulations they were facing.

The persecutions at Pergamos were even to the point where disciples were being slain because of their faith, Antipas is even given as an example of that here. Considering the circumstances it seems quite remarkable that this Church was able to hold out. They were in the midst of a center of idolatry, they were being persecuted by the idolaters, with some of them were even being killed because of their faith. However, we will see in the next verse that the Church did not come out of all this totally unscathed. They did have their problems, but we can at least partially attribute this to their surroundings.

Antipas is given as an example in this verse of a man who was a martyr of Christ. We know the man was killed, not because he was a martyr, but because it states that he was slain. Unlike its usage today, in the past, the word martyr has not always meant dying for a cause. Thayer gives the following definition, "a witness (one who avers, or can aver, what he himself has seen or heard or knows by any other means)."²⁹ Certainly, if a person dies in the defense of a cause, he becomes the ultimate witness for that cause. Someone does not have to die to be a martyr, but dying for a cause is the greatest form of martyrdom.

2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

After a rousing commendation in verse thirteen, Christ begins this verse by telling them that all is not well. They have problems and He is about to address those problems. Within the fellowship of the Church at Pergamos, were certain ones who advocated the doctrine of Balaam. Balaam was a prophet spoken of in the Old Testament. He was called by the Moabite king Balak to curse Israel. Four times Balaam, speaking as God had instructed him, blessed Israel instead of cursing them as Balak had requested. Finally, Balak sent Balaam away in disgust; but this was not the end of the matter.

Apparently, before leaving, he gave advice to Balak as to how he might be able to weaken Israel. This was by enticing them into idolatry and fornication. "And Israel abode in Shittim, and the people began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. And they called the people unto the sacrifices of their gods: and the people did eat, and bowed down to their gods. And Israel joined himself unto Baal-peor: and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" (Numbers 25:1-3). Moses is the one who revealed the fact that Balaam was the person who was behind this evil. "Behold, these caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the

²⁹ Thayer, 1989, s.v. "μάρτυς."

Lord in the matter of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the Lord” (Numbers 31:16). Thus we have Christ’s statement “Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.” Balaam was eventually slain in a battle between Israel and the Midianites (Numbers 31:8). The problem that the Church at Pergamos had was very similar. There were those among them who were advocating the same ideas that Balaam conveyed to Balak. That is to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication.

As concerning the eating of things offered to idols, I feel we need to pause momentarily and discuss this matter further. As the following reference points out, a decree had been issued from the meeting in Jerusalem which stated *“That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well” (Acts 15:29). However, the apostle Paul seemingly contradicted this statement when he said, speaking of meat offered to idols, “But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse” (I Corinthians 8:8).*

The question now arises, is it lawful to eat meat offered to idols or not? The answer is quite simply, yes and no. The situation determines the legality of eating meat offered to idols. Let us look at Paul’s comments from I Corinthians just a little closer. *“As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) but to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled. But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; and through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ” (I Corinthians 8:4-12).*

A couple of chapters later, Paul touched on the subject again and helped to clarify the situation immensely. *“If any of them that believe not bid you to a feast, and ye be disposed to go; whatsoever is set before you, eat, asking no question for conscience sake. But if any man say unto you, This is offered in sacrifice unto idols, eat not for his sake that shewed it, and for conscience sake: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof: conscience, I say, not thine own, but of the other: for why is my liberty judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God” (I Corinthians 10:27-32).*

Is it wrong to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Technically, no. As Paul points out, meat is meat. However, because some people would be offended by seeing another eat meat that had been sacrificed to an idol that meat should not be eaten if it is known that it was sacrificed to an idol. Paul says not to ask if meat has been sacrificed to an idol because, if you do not know, then no harm is done. However, if you do have knowledge of it, then you should refrain from eating it. For one thing, you show the person serving the meat that you do not believe in their idolatrous practices and will not have anything to do with it. Therefore, if the Nicolaitanes were advocating the eating of things sacrificed to idols they were also probably teaching that it was alright to take part in other idolatrous activities.

2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

Another charge against the Church at Pergamos was similar to the first. It again involved having people within their fellowship who were practicing and advocating unscriptural ideas. The Nicolaitanes were first mentioned in connection with Ephesus, however, that church did not condone or fellowship these people, and for this they were commended by the Lord. The sin of these people was that they were attempting to wrest control on the congregations from the scripturally appointed elders and create a man-made government within the church. They were rejecting Christ as the Head of the Church and seeking to place a man in His stead. Christ hated this doctrine as indeed all righteous people would. Unfortunately, however, Pergamos had allowed itself to become corrupted with

this spiritual plague. They were allowing men to create positions of power and authority not found in the Bible or the original Church.

2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

After stating the error of the Church, Christ tells them that they must repent of their evil or else face the consequences. The consequences would be, as He put it, *“I...will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”* This sword is His Word, which has been explained on a couple of prior occasions. He could have fought against them with His Word by having someone like the Apostle Paul come in among them and “clean house.” Doing so would certainly cause much controversy and could easily be labeled a fight. They would certainly be much better off removing the error themselves than having someone else come in and stir up the proverbial hornet’s nest.

We should note here who Christ tells to repent. Christ tells the ENTIRE congregation to repent or else He will be forced to come there and fight against those who hold this false doctrine. Certainly, those who advocated this doctrine needed to repent, but these are not the ones Christ was addressing. He told the entire congregation to repent of their sin for allowing those people to be among their fellowship. They should have separated themselves from these corrupt individuals in the past but had not done so. This teaches that an individual is accountable for the beliefs and practices of his congregation. Christians should not be in fellowship with unrepentant sinners.

2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

Again we notice the phrase *“He that hath an ear, let him hear”*. This again alerts us to look for a hidden meaning. *“Him that overcometh”* is anyone who overcomes all of Satan’s attempts to weaken and destroy his faith. Any person who is able, through submitting himself to the power of God, to overcome Satan will be given to eat of the hidden manna. The hidden manna is a reference to the unsearchable riches of Christ (Ephesians 3:8). Just as the manna from God miraculously sustained the Children of Israel as they wandered in the wilderness for forty years, so too this manna will sustain the redeemed in Heaven for all eternity. *“This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever”* (John 6:58). A person who is faithful to God will receive blessings which he never thought of even in his wildest imaginings. These things are hidden from the view of carnal men, but their worth is recognized by those who are spiritual. These things will be abundantly enjoyed by the spiritual man in eternity.

Another blessing that Christ will bestow upon the Christian is a white stone with a *“new name written”* on it. Stones were often used in those days for writing, so this should not seem strange to us. What is this new name? This new name is that of a redeemed person. As Paul said *“if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (II Corinthians 5:17). If we are a new creature, shouldn’t we have a new name?

It was customary for God to give new names to people during Old Testament times, when He enlisted them into His service. Abram’s name was changed to Abraham (Genesis 17:5) and his wife’s from Sarai to Sara (Genesis 17:15). Jacob, the father of the twelve patriarchs, had his name changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28). God has also named some children before they were born. He named both sons of Abraham, instructing Hagar to call her son Ishmael (Genesis 16:11) and telling Abraham to call his son by Sara, Isaac (Genesis 17:19). He also named his own Son Jesus (Matthew 1:21) as well as John the Baptizer (Luke 1:13). Christians will not actually take new names, a practice common today among converts to Islam, but will have the same type of relationship with God as those who had their names changed. It is a father’s prerogative to name his children whatever he wishes, so when someone becomes a child of God He renames them. Even when the father adopts a child, he can rename the child after himself. The Bible shows clearly that Christians are the adopted sons and daughters of God. *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ”* (Galatians 4:4-7).

“No man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.” Those who are lost will not be able to receive this name, since they have not been adopted by the Father. This stone is to be given to those who overcome. One has not truly overcome until he has died faithfully in the Lord. Therefore, Christians will not receive the stone in this life. The lost will have missed out on all of this and thus will not receive a new name.

The Church at Pergamos is synonymous with the third period of the Church as described by these letters. This period was from A.D. 313 to A.D. 533. The summary at the end of chapter three will provide further details.

2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; ‘These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

Thyatira was a city located between Pergamos and Sardis. It was east of the road connecting these two cities along the Lycus River, some 27 miles from Sardis.³⁰ “It was situated on the confines of Mysia and Ionia, a little south of the river Hillus, and at the northern extremity of the valley between Mount Tmolus and the southern ridge of Temnus. It was one of the many Macedonian colonies established in Asia Minor, in the sequel of the destruction of the Persian Empire by Alexander. The waters of Thyatira are said to be so well adapted for dying that in no place can the scarlet cloth, out of which fezes are made, be so brilliantly or so permanently dyed as here. So in Acts (16:14) Lydia, the first convert of Paul at Philippi, is mentioned as a seller of purple from Thyatira.”³¹

Thyatira lay along an important trade route and was primarily a manufacturing center, specializing in all manner of textiles. It was an important center for the production of goods made from wool, linen, and leather, as well as other materials. Most every aspect of commerce in a manufacturing center of the time would be controlled by the trade guilds. Similar to the labor unions of today, the guilds monopolized particular crafts for their constituents. Each specific trade, such as leather workers, dyers, etc. would have their own guild. In order to work in a particular craft, a person would have to belong to the appropriate guild. Any attempt to circumvent the guild would be met, at the very least, with a legal challenge, but more probably with outright violence.

“Who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass.” The eyes of fire show Christ’s ability to penetrate and see through anything. This is how He is capable of knowing the thoughts and intents of a man’s heart. The feet of brass refer to His firm foundation of truth and righteousness.

2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

Again Christ begins His address with the phrase “I know thy works.” This phrase is used in the sense of approval. He really starts off by saying that He knows all of the good things they have done, but..., and the ‘but’ comes in the next verse. He mentions their charity which refers to their love for others. Their service means the things they did for Him and for others, which certainly was motivated because of their charity. Their faith was their conviction and dedication to God. The last portion of the verse, while not necessarily mistranslated, has at the very least been mispunctuated, by the King James translators. That a problem exists should be readily apparent since their works seems to be mentioned twice. In its intended form, the latter part of the verse should read “*thy patience; thy last works are more than the first.*” The idea is that, in contrast to Ephesus, Thyatira’s works were actually increasing.

Thyatira was a wealthy city due to their reputation as the foremost dyers of scarlet and purple in the Empire. From Christ’s statement above, it appears certain that the Church of Thyatira gave generously to those in need. Their generosity is certainly commendable, but this alone does not justify them in God’s sight. The Lord Himself gave a very stern warning in His Sermon on the Mount. “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day,*

³⁰ W. Smith, 1986, s.v. “Thyatira.”

³¹ Unger, 1957, s.v. “Thyatira.”

Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23). We will find, in the next verse, that the Thyatiran Church was definitely coming up short in some areas.

2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

“*Notwithstanding,*” or despite their good characteristics, Christ holds something against the Church at Thyatira. It just goes to prove that regardless of how good something may be, if there is a little bad mingled in with it, God will not be pleased with it. The evil in this case was a woman named Jezebel. It was not, however, the extent of her evil that Christ was really so upset about. His accusation was not against her but against the Church for their tolerance of her. “*Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel,*” means they allowed her to practice and teach her false doctrine without opposition. This Jezebel had set herself up to be a prophetess of God when she was not. The Church at Ephesus had been commended for their stand against those who claimed to be apostles but were not. Thyatira, apparently did not have as much backbone when it came to questioning the correctness of doctrines taught by others. This is what Christ was so displeased with. They were allowing her to teach the Christians in Thyatira that it was alright to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. This is the same doctrine that was referred to as the doctrine of Balaam in the letter to Pergamos. The eating of things sacrificed to idols, and the commission of fornication, are both things that were often included in pagan religious rites.

Jezebel is not the real name of the woman involved here, but is a reference to a truly abominable woman from the Old Testament; the wife of king Ahab. Jezebel was not even a Jewess, but was a Zidonian (I Kings 16:31). She had all of the prophets of God killed that she could find (I Kings 18:4). She had a man murdered so that Ahab could take possession of his vineyard (I Kings 21:7-4). Ahab was the most evil king Israel ever had and Jezebel was no small reason why. “*But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up*” (I Kings 21:25). It is no wonder that she has become the namesake for all women who would seek to influence others to do great evil against God.

Since little else went on in Thyatira except manufacturing, it would have been hard to survive there with being associated with at least one trade guild. On the surface this may seem innocent enough. For the Christian, however, the guilds often had a darker side. It is not uncommon today for various types of meetings to be opened with a prayer, although the rise of secularism has curtailed this significantly in many arenas. Since the religion of Thyatira was paganism, the guild meetings were opened, not with a prayer, but with a libation to the gods of the day. This was usually followed by a meal of things sacrificed to idols. It was not at all uncommon for things to deteriorate from there into a full blown sex orgy.

What was Jezebel’s role in all of this? We will certainly never know exactly who or what she was, but her role in all of this is nevertheless quite certain. She was a woman of some notoriety who was, for whatever purpose, espousing the idea that it was acceptable for the Christian to take part in these pagan activities. Her argument may have been similar to that of many today whose motto is “business is business.” The notion is that there are two parts to our lives: business and private. In our private lives we are certainly expected to be in subjection to Christian principles. However, in our business lives, we can do whatever we have to do in order to be successful, and God will certainly understand.

There are indeed two important parts to our lives, but not in the way so many may view it. These two parts I will call public and private. Our public lives involve the Church and us functioning as part of that Church. Our private lives are what we do apart from the Church. Notice that this is very different from the typical usage of the word private. In this usage, private would include what we do at home, work, the mall, or even on a busy highway. In each of these instances, we are practicing our own individual Christian lives. The Bible does make a distinction and provide different rules and guidelines for these two areas. For example, women are forbidden to teach publicly (in the Church assembly). “*Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence*” (I Timothy 2:11-12). “*Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith*

the law” (I Corinthians 14:34). However, they are allowed to teach privately. *“And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla (Aquila’s wife) had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly”* (Acts 18:26). *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 2:3-5).

Another example is eating. Eating of meals is a private matter and cannot be scripturally done when the Church is assembled to worship. *“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come”* (I Corinthians 11:20-22, 34). This does not mean that some or all of the members of a congregation may not eat a meal together. The problem Paul was addressing was an abuse of the Lord’s Supper that took place during the public assembly. Once the assembly is dismissed, they enter the private realm and may eat where and with whom they choose.

Most people, however, do not make the distinction correctly. Rather, they follow the example of Jezebel. Their type of reasoning is necessary to legitimize so much of what occurs in the world today. The soldier who kills an enemy combatant on the field of battle is simply doing his job as a good citizen and soldier, therefore Christ’s prohibition against killing does not apply to him. *“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Matthew 5:43-45).

The Christian cannot intentionally kill another person for any reason and be sanctioned by God for doing so. God has placed men in positions of authority to rule as He sees fit. If that ruler sees fit to fight a war, then we pray for the ruler, the troops, all others in harm’s way and for a swift resolution to the conflict. As Christians, however, we cannot be personally involved in the fighting. *“I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty”* (I Timothy 2:1-2). Likewise, we obey the laws, but we do not enforce them in a capacity that could lead to our being in a position to take another’s life; this is the realm of the police. *“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well”* (I Peter 2:13-14).

Jezebel was obviously claiming that it was quite acceptable for Christians to be part of the trade guilds and to participate fully in all of their activities as long as they kept their business and private lives separate. This, however, is not just wrong, it is also quite impossible. Christ said *“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon”* (Matthew 6:24). No man can serve God on a part-time basis. Being a Christian is a full-time job, and no amount of compromise with the world is acceptable to God. Jezebel’s speech was full of lies and deceit, yet she obviously and unfortunately had a tremendous impact on the Thyatiran Church.

2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

The Lord has never been one to be lacking in mercy. Here He gives this wicked woman ample time and opportunity to repent of her evil deeds before beginning judgment upon her. Despite the Lord’s goodness, however, she refused to turn from the error of her ways. This whole story can be a good lesson for all men. Far too often men pass judgment and ostracize one another without giving ample warning and space to repent. This is not the example the Lord sets here.

2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

Now Christ promises judgment and punishment upon Jezebel and those who heed her doctrine unless they cease their abominable practices. “*Cast her into a bed*” is symbolic and is used because one of the sins which she is guilty of is fornication. He is saying that since they enjoy her bed of fornication so much, He will cast them together into a bed of great tribulation. This tribulation is nothing more than the turmoil, destruction, and chaos which would characterize their punishment. Even throughout these warnings, we see His mercy expressed. It is still His desire that she repent. He would much rather see this happen than to be forced to take action against her.

2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

Her children are those who are her followers and who practice her evil deeds. They were following in her footsteps just as a child often does its mother or father. A parent usually has great influence over the child and the child believes whatever the parent says. This may well have been the case between Jezebel and her followers. They had been seduced by the allure of her evil ways. Again Christ promises judgment upon these people; this time the punishment is named as death. “*Kill her children with death*” is redundant and is used for the sake of emphasis.

“*All the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts.*” Christ’s punishment of these people will be in such a way that everyone will know what has happened and who was responsible for it. They will be made a public example so that others will know better than to try anything so foolish. Everyone will see that the Lord demands adherence to His commandments and will not tolerate those who pervert those commandments to their own advantage.

“*Searcheth the reins and hearts*” shows that He is able to know the intents and motives of a person’s heart. This would cause others to think twice before participating in evil and make them reevaluate their entire position. After stating that He knows every person’s thoughts and motives, He says that he will give everyone what they deserve based on their own actions. Everyone will stand alone before God, naked and exposed before His penetrating eyes.

2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Now the Lord addresses Himself to those who have managed to keep themselves pure from the corrupt practices of Jezebel; those who have not known the depths, or deep things, of Satan. “*As they speak*” means as the doctrine is taught by Jezebel and her followers. He says He will ask nothing special of them, only that they will remain faithful to Him. That they would continue to stand firm in the truth and not allow themselves to be corrupted by the present evil.

It appears to me that the righteous were outnumbered in Thyatira and were unlikely to be able to throw out Jezebel. As a result, the Lord tells them to just hold on to what they had. This is in contrast to the situation in Pergamos, where they had among them those who held the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes. They were unequivocally instructed to rid themselves of this evil influence, which indicates that the righteous retained sufficient power to accomplish this if they wished to do so. Here at Thyatira, however, the righteous are spoken to apart from the congregation as a whole. I believe the Lord realized they were outnumbered and would not be able to throw Jezebel out no matter how bad they might want to do so. They are only instructed to “*hold fast till I come.*” Eventually, Christ’s patience would run out and He would bring judgment against those in Thyatira who opposed Him. The faithful are told to hold out for that day.

2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

“He that overcometh” is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. Any person who keeps the commandments of God unto the end will be abundantly rewarded. The end would either be the end of a person’s life, or the end of the world, whichever came first. The reward spoken of here is *“power over the nations.”* This is meant in the same sense that Christians are part of a kingdom that will outlast all manmade kingdoms. Christ currently reigns in His kingdom, the Church, and all Christians are part of that kingdom. As the prophet Daniel said, *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Daniel 2:44). Christ’s kingdom has conquered and subdued all other kingdoms of the world. As its king, Christ enjoys power over the nations. Those who are part of his kingdom, Christians, also enjoy power over the nations. Our kingdom will last forever; long after the dust has settled on the greatest powers of man. This will take on an added meaning when applied to the entire Church.

2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

“Even as I received of my Father.” All that Christ has He received of His Father. *“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end”* (Luke 1:32-33).

David prophesied that Christ would rule with a rod of iron. *“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, ‘Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’”* (Psalm 2:7,9). This does not mean that Christ will literally occupy a throne on the earth from which He will rule the earth. As He pointed out, *“My kingdom is not of this world”* (John 18:36). Christ’s kingdom is spiritual and not carnal.

2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

Another reward to the faithful is the morning star. The so-called morning ‘star’ is not really a star at all. It is what is referred to as a “wandering star” in Jude 1:13. The ancients recognized that certain “stars” did not remain fixed in relation to the other stars, but seemed to slowly traverse the heavens like the moon. These stars are known to us today as planets. Other than the sun and moon, four of the planets are the brightest objects to be routinely observed in the heavens. Although their magnitudes vary depending on their distance from the earth, at their brightest Venus, Jupiter, Mars, and Mercury respectively all outshine the brightest real star, Sirius.

Depending on their positions relative to the Sun and Earth, the planets will be the brightest objects to be seen in the evening or morning skies. As a consequence, they have come to be known as evening and morning stars. In chapter twenty-two, verse sixteen, Jesus refers to Himself as the bright and morning star. This is symbolic of His spiritual brightness and strength. His glory outshines that of all other inhabitants in heaven, except the Father Himself. Here Jesus is promising Himself as a reward to the faithful. They will be allowed to enjoy His company for all eternity.

2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Again we notice the phrase *“He that hath an ear, let him hear.”* The Church at Pergamos represents the Lord’s Church during the period from A.D. 533 to A.D. 1400. The summary at the end of chapter three provides further details.

Chapter Three

Sardis, Philadelphia, & Laodicea

3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

Sardis was a city located about 50 miles east of Smyrna. It was about two miles south of the River Hermus, just below mount Tmolus.³² “It was a wealthy trading center on the routes between the Aegean Sea and the interior. Its strong citadel was destroyed by the Cimmerians in the 7th century B.C., but the town recovered and flourished, becoming the luxurious capital of the proverbially rich Croesus. In 546 it was captured by Cyrus, the Persian king, who incorporated Lydia into his realm. The acropolis was burned in 510 B.C. by the Greeks, and it was in Sardis that Xerxes prepared his invasion of Greece (480). The city was taken by Antiochus III after a siege (215-213 B.C.). Under the Romans, Sardis prospered in spite of great destruction by earthquake in 17 A.D., but after the establishment of Constantinople (330 A.D.), the trade routes gradually moved away from it.”³³

The seven Spirits of God are simply a representation of God’s Spirit; the number seven denotes the completeness of the Spirit. Jesus said “*I and my Father are one*” (John 10:30). Therefore, it is a necessary conclusion that Christ also has God’s Spirit. As a result, we understand the statement “*he that hath the seven Spirits of God.*”

Jesus has previously explained the seven stars to be the Seven Churches in Asia to whom these letters are addressed. As with the first four churches, He begins His comments with the general term “*I know thy works.*” This time, however, the context will show this to be a term of disapproval. With the previous letters He has always begun by praising the churches for their good works. The reason He does not do so here is that they did not have any good works!

“*Thou hast a name that thou livest.*” They professed themselves to be Christians and wore the name, but he told them they were dead. They might have called themselves Christians, but in reality they were no better than the Jews Christ so often criticized for their hypocrisy during His earthly ministry. “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness*” (Matthew 23:27). God does not judge men based on their outward appearance of sincerity, but rather the intent of their heart. “*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24).

³² W. Smith, s.v. “Sardis.”

³³ *Encyclopedia Americana*, (New York, NY: Americana Corporation, 1954), s.v. “Sardis.”

The church at Sardis was like so many today who call themselves Christians without really considering what the name means. Christian literally means “Christ like.” To deserve the name of Christian, someone must try to have the same attitudes and behaviors as Christ. Unfortunately, men have established so many denominations that have left behind the true teachings and principles espoused by the Savior. They are just as Paul described the Jews. *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God”* (Romans 10:2-3). All of the good intentions and hard work is useless unless it is done in accordance with God’s wishes.

3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

The Church at Sardis was in bad shape, but there were still a few good things about them. Even the most wayward denomination, if just by accident, will be doing some things the way God wants. These few things will not make these people acceptable to God, but if they decide to repent, these things will not have to be changed. Christ told them to be watchful and pay attention to those good things because they were ready to die also. *“I have not found thy works perfect before God”* is just a blanket statement showing widespread error in the Church. As a whole, the Church was very corrupt and unrighteous.

3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Christ now exhorts the Church at Sardis to remember the gospel that they had received and return to it. It seems they were like those at Galatia whom Paul rebuked sharply. *“I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Galatians 1:6-8, 12). Despite Paul’s warning, some still choose to deviate from God’s word and chart their own path.

Christ admonishes the Church at Sardis to remember the original gospel they had *“received and heard,”* and to hold it fast and repent. Like Jezebel at Thyatira, Christ is giving this Church space to repent. However, if they are not careful and do not watch, Christ will come upon them and execute judgment before they have a chance to repent, and they of course will be lost eternally. Christ speaks of coming upon them *“as a thief.”* This refers to His stealth and unseen approach, not to His character. The thief comes when he is least expected and catches a person unprepared. Thus the person suffers great loss. The same warning is given to Sardis. If they do not rectify their spiritual situation they are in danger of losing their souls.

3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

Although the condition of the Church in Sardis was very desperate, there were still some there who had not *“defiled their garments”* with the sin that was so rampant there. The defiled garments represent the fact that they had gotten themselves ‘dirty’ by participating in sinful practices. Those who had refrained from the wrong doing remained spotless, washed by the blood of the lamb (Revelation 1:5). Christians were commanded to do this by the Apostle Peter. *“Wherefore, beloved, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless”* (II Peter 3:14). Those who do this, Christ says, are worthy. Worthy of Heaven is what He is speaking of here. Again, white represents purity and innocence that will be characteristic of Christ and those who are faithful to him. They will be granted the privilege of walking with Him eternally in Heaven.

3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

“*He that overcometh*” is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. Any person who is able, through submitting himself to the power of God, to overcome Satan will have his name written in the book of life. If someone does not have their name written in the book of life, then they will be cast into eternal Hell. “*And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:15). The implication of Christ’s statement here is that if a person does not ‘overcome’ Satan then they will be lost. Those who do overcome, and are faithful to Jesus, He will confess before His Father. Confess is used in the sense of claiming them as His friends and disciples worthy of Heaven. As Christ says, “*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*” (Matthew 10:32-33). If a man acknowledges Christ in his speech and his way of life, then Christ will acknowledge that man as His disciple before the Father.

The book of life is simply a book that contains the names of those who are God’s people; those who have been redeemed from among men for their faithful service to God. The book of life is not a new concept, but can be found even in the Old Testament. “*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name*” (Malachi 3:16). Christ also spoke of this idea during His earthly ministry. “*Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*” (Luke 10:20). It is likewise mentioned in the Hebrew epistle. “*To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*” (Hebrews 12:23). Much more will be said about this book in chapter twenty.

3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As with all of the other letters, the phrase “*He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear,*” is used to close this one. The Church at Sardis was representative of the Lord’s Church during the period from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1793. The summary at the end of this chapter provides further details.

3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

Philadelphia was “a town on the confines of Lydia and Phrygia Catacecaumene, 25 miles southeast of Sardis, and built by Attalus II., king of Pergamos, who died B.C. 138. It was situated on the lower slopes of Tmolus, and is still represented by a town called Allah-shehr (city of God). Its elevation is 952 feet above the sea. The original population of Philadelphia seems to have been Macedonian; but there was, as appears from Rev 3:9 a synagogue of Hellenizing Jews there, as well as a Christian church. (It was the seat of one of “the seven churches of Asia.”) The locality was subject to constant earthquakes, which in the time of Strabo rendered even the town walls of Philadelphia unsafe. The expense of reparation was constant, and hence perhaps the poverty of the members of the church.”³⁴

Philadelphia is the second of two churches that received no criticisms from Christ in His letter to them; the other was Smyrna. As with the other letters, Christ states that He is the author of the letter and then refers to Himself in descriptive terms. Holy and true are certainly valid terms to describe Him, for there has never been a holier or truer than He.

The key of David is used as a reference to a prophesy of David concerning the Messiah who was to come. “*I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, ‘Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’*” (Psalm 2:7, 9). This shows the power that the Messiah would have. A key also denotes power. For whoever has the key to a locked door, has control over

³⁴ Smith, 1986, s.v. “Philadelphia.”

whatever is behind that door. He has the ultimate power over what the door conceals, which in this case is salvation, and ultimately Heaven. *“And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open”* (Isaiah 22:22). This means that the power and authority of the house of David was to be given to Christ. From the house of David came all but the first of the legitimate rulers of God’s people. The culmination of all this was when Christ, the son of David, became *“The blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords”* (I Timothy 6:15). He was, and still is, the ultimate King of God’s people.

Christ used the power given unto Him to open the door of salvation to all mankind. Even the Gentiles, who had previously been regarded as heathens, were welcomed into the fold. Not only was Christ given the power to open and close doors, He said that He Himself was the door of salvation. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, ‘He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.’ Then said Jesus unto them again, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:1-2, 7-9). It is through Christ that salvation can be found; any other way is a dead end.

“He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” When Christ opens or closes a door no man is able to resist. Christ also opens doors of opportunity for others to use. The Apostle Paul commented several times on doors that the Lord had opened for Him. *“For a great door and effectual is opened unto me”* (I Corinthians 16:9). *“Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord”* (II Corinthians 2:12). *“Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ”* (Colossians 4:3). An open door symbolizes an opportunity to accomplish something that was previously unavailable.

3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

As with the first five letters, He uses the statement *“I know thy works.”* The context here shows it to be a general statement of approval for their works. The door He had opened before them was a door of opportunity; opportunity to spread the gospel message to others. As He had pointed out in the previous verse, He has the power to open doors and then no man will be able to close them. Here He has opened this door of opportunity and He says it will remain open for them, regardless of man’s attempts to close it. Certainly, many were trying to close the door on Christianity during the first three centuries of the Church.

“Hast a little strength” means that, although they weren’t necessarily “strong,” they were still able to stand against the opposition arrayed against them. In contrast, however, to other churches, most notably Thyatira and Sardis, they kept the word of God. Even though they were not as strong as they could have been, that was a minor matter, because they were true to the Bible. *“Hast not denied my name”* is just another way of saying they kept His commandments. For to disobey His words, was to deny Him. *“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Colossians 3:17). In order for something to be done in His name, it must be according to His will. This implies keeping his commandments in the Bible, for they are the only way we have to know His will. The Church at Philadelphia was adhering to the gospel as it had been delivered to them. They had not sold out to the corruption around them as had some of their close neighbors.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

“The synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews” was also mentioned in connection with the Church at Smyrna. Coincidentally, this was also the only other “good” Church. It refers to people who were actually of the Jewish race, but who did not adhere to the laws they professed to follow. In other words, they are hypocrites. They *“say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie.”* They lied when they called themselves Jews because they did not live as the Jews were supposed to according to the Law of Moses.

They were the synagogue of Satan because they were actually serving his purposes. If you are not serving God, then you are serving Satan; there is no middle ground. *“He that is not with me is against me”* (Matthew 12:30). The word for worship means to crouch to or prostrate oneself in homage according to Strong’s.³⁵ The idea here is that the hypocritical Jews will be humbled and forced to bow down before the Christians. He will let the Jews know that he loves the Christians by blessing them and favoring them over the Jews.

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Because the Church at Philadelphia patiently endured the trials and tribulations that came upon them, Christ promises to spare them from the period of time when He would bring great stress and troubles upon the entire world. The purpose of this upheaval was to test man. *“Hour of temptation,”* simply means an indefinite period of time when the Lord will cause difficulties for the entire world.

3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

Christ tells them that He will soon return, so it was necessary for them to remain in the state they were in and not succumb to their evil surroundings. They were doing things correctly and all they had to do was continue; there was no need for change. They were told to hold fast so that they would not lose their crown. The crown represents one who has gained power and authority; one who has been victorious. *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”* (James 1:12). The crown of life is the symbol of one who has been victorious over Satan, and has earned eternal life. Thus a crown of life equates to eternal life. They were told that at the present time they had crowns awaiting them if they are able to continue on their present course.

“That no man take thy crown.” In reality, no one could take the crown of life from someone unless they allowed it to be taken. All man can do is bring harm to the mind and body of another. He cannot damage the spirit, which is in God’s keeping. Ultimately, a person cannot lose his crown, unless he voluntarily submits to sin.

3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

“Him that overcometh” is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. Any person who is able, through submitting himself to the power of God, to overcome Satan will be made a pillar in the temple of God. A pillar is something that is established and will not be removed; it is a vital part of the structure. This signifies that faithful Christians will become permanent residents of Heaven, never to be shaken from their home of glory. *“He shall go no more out”* reemphasizes the idea that Christians will be in Heaven for eternity; they will never have to leave. A question often posed is, “can a man who has been saved and is in Heaven, sin and be cast out just as the angels were?” I do not believe this will happen. The angels were created in Heaven and had to “prove” themselves there. Some were found to be unworthy and were cast out. Man, on the other hand, was placed on another proving ground; the earth. If a man proves himself worthy here, then I think it is safe to assume that he “has what it takes” to remain in Heaven.

“I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God,...and I will write upon him my new name.” All this means is that Christians will be marked as God’s. He will put His stamp of ownership upon them. It’s just like a person putting an identification tag on their luggage when they travel. They want it to be recognized

³⁵ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #4352.”

as their possession, regardless of who sees it or where it happens to be. Likewise, God will put His name tag upon Christians to demonstrate His ownership of them.

“*New Jerusalem which cometh down out of heaven from my God,*” is a term which refers to Heaven. It is said to come down out of Heaven in the sense that it will come to the earth to pick up its new inhabitants. All of this will be discussed in much more detail in chapter twenty-one.

3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

As with the first five letters, this phrase is used to close this letter also. Philadelphia represents the Lord’s Church during the period from 1793 to 1948. This will be elaborated on in the summary following this chapter.

3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

Laodicea was “a city called originally Diospolis, city of Zeus, which was enlarged and improved by Antiochus II., and named by him Laodicea, after his wife Laodice. It was the chief city of Phrygia Pacatiana, in Asia Minor, and was situated a little south of Colossæ and Hierapolis, on the river Lycos, a tributary of the Meander. It manufactured cloth and garments from the black wool produced by a breed of sheep in its vicinity; and it was the seat of a medical school, whose physicians prepared the Phrygian powder for the cure of ophthalmia. It numbered many Jews among its inhabitants. About the year 65 of the Christian era, Laodicea, Colossæ, and Hierapolis were destroyed by an earthquake. The citizens rebuilt Laodicea out of their own resources, without the customary aid from Rome. Its ruins still exist at a place called Eski Hissar, near Denizlu, about 56 miles east-southeast of Smyrna.”³⁶

One of the meanings of the word amen is “trustworthy.” This certainly fits with the two adjectives which follow it: “*faithful and true.*” No one has ever been more true and faithful to God than His own Son. He was even willing to suffer and die for man at His Father’s bidding. “*And he said, ‘Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt’*” (Mark 14:36).

“*The beginning of the creation of God*” has the same meaning as “*The firstborn of every creature*” (Colossians 1:15). In other words, Christ existed before anything else that God created. We know that He was present at the creation. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*” (John 1:1-3).

3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

As with the other six churches, Christ begins His remarks with the statement “*I know thy works.*” This signifies his knowledge of all of their activities, both good and bad. This time they were mostly bad. The Lord is going to use the illustration of food to relate the condition of the Church at Laodicea. Most food is meant to be eaten either hot or cold; some can even be eaten either way. Many things, which are otherwise very appetizing, become almost repulsive when they are allowed to become lukewarm; lukewarm meaning barely warm or tepid. If the Church were hot, it would be zealous, and dedicated, and hardworking. If it were cold, it would be listless and lifeless, and for the most part, indifferent. Laodicea was somewhere in between. They weren’t really very active but neither were they dead. They, like lukewarm food, were repulsive to God. If a person put food into his mouth and found it to be sickening, the natural course of action would be to spit it out. This is what the Lord said He would do with Laodicea.

The intent of saying, “*I would thou wert cold or hot,*” is not to express approval for both cold and hot churches. The

³⁶ Davis, 1983, s.v. “Laodicea.”

Lord only approves of those who are ‘hot,’ anything less will not be accepted. The reason He would rather have someone cold than lukewarm, is that a cold person is quite easily seen for what he is; a hypocrite. It would be unlikely for others to follow the example of a ‘cold’ person. On the other hand, a lukewarm person might be just good enough to cause others to look up to him, and follow his example. This type of influence can be very dangerous, for it will hinder those seeking the truth. Therefore, God would rather see people cold, and fairly harmless, than lukewarm, and potentially a very dangerous influence.

3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

In the preceding verse, Jesus spoke of the overall condition of the Laodicean Church, now He gets down to the root of the problem. As mentioned in the description of the city in verse fourteen, and again below, Laodicea was a very wealthy place.

“The great trade route from the Euphrates and the interior passed to it through Apamea. Placed in this situation, in the centre of a very fertile district, Laodicea became a rich city. It was famous for its money transactions, and for the beautiful soft wool grown by the sheep of the country.”³⁷

As a center of banking located on a major trade route, the amount of money flowing through Laodicea was no doubt quite substantial. It is no secret that material wealth has a tendency to weaken peoples resolve in spiritual matters. This explains why they had become somewhat lackadaisical. They were allowing their material possessions to cause them to feel secure and trust in themselves, instead of God.

This has always been a problem with mankind. Jesus told the rich young ruler to sell all of his worldly possessions and give the proceeds to the poor, but this was apparently too much to ask, for he went away sorrowful. (Luke 18:22-23). In his parable of the sower, Christ spoke of people who would allow material possessions to overwhelm them. “*He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*” (Matthew 13:22). The Apostle Paul pointed out that “*They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows*” (I Timothy 6:9-10).

The Laodicean Church felt that they had everything they needed and, materially speaking, they were correct. However, they were not “*Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.*” (II Peter 3:12). If they were, then they would have been more concerned about their spiritual condition, and this is where they were found so lacking. When Christ says they were poor, He means they were poor spiritually. They had laid up treasure on earth, rather than in Heaven, contrary to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 6:19-20. “*Wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” are all just terms denoting their desperate spiritual condition.

Laodicea was just the opposite of Smyrna. Christ said of them, “*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan*” (Revelation 2:9). They had been deprived of their material possessions because of the severe persecutions brought against them. This caused these people to be strong and resolute in their defense of the faith. In contrast, Laodicea represents a condition of ease and plenty. It caused these people to be weak and lazy in their defense of the faith.

3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

³⁷ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Laodicea.”

Having told the Laodicean Church what their problem is, in the previous verse, Jesus turns His attention to telling them what they need to do to correct the problem. The entire solution boils down to a single statement made by the Apostle Paul. *“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Colossians 3:2).

Gold tried with fire signifies that it has been tested to remove all impurities; only then its true value is known. The gold they had would not stand the fires of the judgment, therefore they needed to seek after ‘spiritual’ gold. *“White raiment”* signifies one who is pure, and holy, and righteous. The clothing they presently had was stained with the sins of the world, and was therefore unacceptable. They needed clothing washed white in the blood of the Lamb. The eyesalve would correct their spiritual blindness. *“The deceitfulness of riches,...entering in, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful”* (Mark 4:19). They had been deceived by their wealth and were blind to their true poverty. They had been blinded by the *“god of this world”* (II Corinthians 4:4).

All three of these items also have a direct relationship to the prosperity of the city. The three main businesses in Laodicea were banking, wool, and medicine. Money in those days consisted of coins, the most valuable of which were made of gold. As a center of banking there is no doubt that a large amount of gold flowed through the city. Christ warns them, however, that thrusting in this gold is foolish and will lead to their eventual ruin. The city was also famous for its black wool, but again Jesus warns them not to trust in this enterprise because this clothing will not protect them in the final day. The third major business was the manufacture of an ointment that the initial description of the city said was for “ophthalmia.” This “is a name for severe diseases affecting the eye membranes. These diseases may be caused by infections, poisons, or injuries. Sympathetic ophthalmia spreads to both eyes after an injury to one eye and often leads to blindness.”³⁸ The Laodiceans were renowned for their ability to help save other’s sight, yet Jesus warns them that they cannot themselves see straight. This is very similar to the warning Christ gave in His Sermon on the Mount. *“And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye”* (Matthew 7:3-5).

3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

Although the Laodicean Church was seriously lacking, Jesus had not abandoned them. He expressed His love for them and His continued willingness to try to help them resolve their problems. He exhorts them to become zealous, or heat up from their present lukewarm condition, and repent of their past mistakes. As long as the Lord has hope for someone He will continue attempting to correct them. *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:6-8).

3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

After telling of His willingness to accept the errant Laodicean Church back into the fold, if they will repent, Jesus broadens His invitation to include all men. The Apostle Peter told us that *“The Lord is not...willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9). Here He pictures Himself as continually knocking on a door. If anyone ever wants another chance, He’s there waiting and willing to reconcile. The entire decision rests with each individual person, for the door He is knocking on is the heart of men. Jesus made His decision when He died on the cross, now all that is left is for men to decide whether to accept or refuse His offer of salvation. If someone will open the door of his heart to Christ, He will come in and show him what he must do. He will sup with him, which means He will have fellowship and communion with him.

³⁸ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “ophthalmia.”

In this verse we see a message of hope for the procrastinator and the backslider; Christ is always ready to accept the repentant at heart. However, this verse also has a less optimistic message, shedding more light on the dismal condition of the Laodicean church. In Chapter one Christ is seen standing among the seven golden candlesticks, which represent the seven churches (verse 13). Here He is no longer seen on the inside, but has been shut out and is knocking hoping to regain admittance to the hearts and minds of these lukewarm people. They have become so worldly-minded that they have forgotten about the Savior who died for them. In reaping the temporal blessings God had given to them, they neglected to heed His advice. *“Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that”* (James 4:13-15).

3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

“*Him that overcometh*” is anyone who triumphs over Satan and all of his efforts to defeat him. Any person who is able, through submitting themselves to the power of God, to overcome Satan will earn the right to sit with Christ in His throne. Sitting in Christ’s throne will show triumph over Satan, and will show the person to be reigning with Christ in His kingdom. Jesus will reward His disciples with things beyond anything the Laodiceans could have ever imagined, let alone possessed.

Christians should not look to possess such wealth or authority here on the earth; the reward of Christians is in Heaven. This reward will come as a result of their “overcoming,” just as Christ also overcame. Jesus likens successful Christians to Himself in this manner. *“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection”* (Romans 6:5). As Christ was glorified and exalted upon His resurrection from the dead, so also will Christians receive like treatment at their resurrection. They will be treated like kings. Christ was able to defeat Satan’s best attempts to bring Him down, and He now sits victorious on the right hand of God. *“Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him”* (I Peter 3:22).

3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

At the close of this, the last of the seven letters, we see the pattern still holds. The phrase “*He that hath an ear, let him hear,*” concludes this letter, as it does all the rest. The Church at Laodicea is synonymous with the Lord’s Church during the period from A.D. 1948 until the end of the world. The summary immediately following will provide further details.

Application of the Letters to the Seven Churches

Chapters Two and Three

In verse eleven of chapter one, Christ told John to write down those things which he would see in a book and then send this book to the Seven Churches named in the verse. All seven of these churches are in an area then known as Asia Minor, off the coast of which John was exiled on the island of Patmos. These were not, however, the only churches in that area. Colossae, to whom the Apostle Paul wrote the book of Colossians, was only about 10 miles from Laodicea. Troas was about 60 miles northwest from Smyrna. Antioch was about 140 miles to the east of Philadelphia, with Iconium being even a little further east.³⁹ Across the Aegean Sea from where John was located, you also had the churches of Corinth, Berea, Philippi, and Thessalonica (see Map 2). That is fifteen churches in the 'general' area and there were no doubt more that we do not know about.

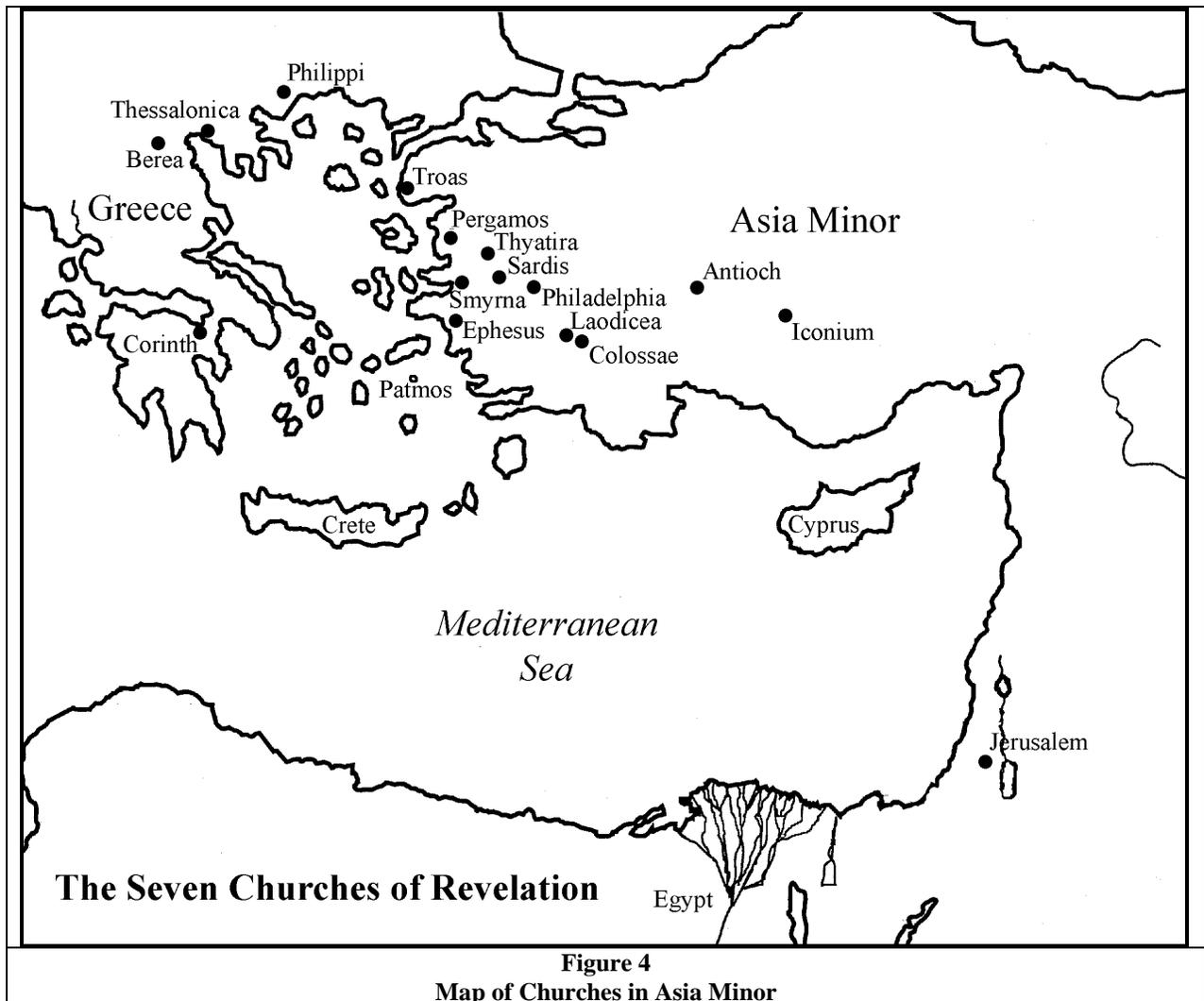
The intent could not have been to write to all the churches of that area, and John certainly did not write to the seven that were closest to him. Neither could his purpose have been to write to all of the churches with problems that needed to be addressed. Certainly others had problems, and besides, two of the seven who were written to were not even criticized. Then what was the intent? Certainly these congregations were real, and had real problems, but that just turned out to be a convenient tool for Christ to use to give us a grand view of the Church from beginning to end.

It would make no sense to say that the Lord only intended the book of Revelation to go to those seven churches and no one else. Most of the things contained in the book can only be understood in the light of world history. It could not be understood until after those things predicted had occurred. Even those seven churches would not have been able to understand the majority of the book, since the events depicted in it were, for the most part, yet future. Even if they did understand it all, most of it would have done them little good since it depicted things well beyond their lifetimes. This leads to the conclusion that God intended for Christians of all times to have and study this book. It was meant to be a source of assurance to man that God was still in control, as he saw God's prophecies unfold before him. Once again we note that the number seven represents completeness. This gives us a hint that the Lord had more in mind when He wrote to these seven churches; He was actually writing to all churches of all time.

There is also another item to look at. Why would the Lord include these seven letters in such a grand book of prophesy if all they were meant to be were simple letters. Certainly He could have given them to John separately, or even had someone else write the letters. The very fact that they appear in this book suggests that there is something very special about them.

³⁹ C. F. Pfeiffer, *Baker's Bible Atlas*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1979), pp. 118-9.

There is a phrase that occurs at the end of each letter which also gives us an indication that the Lord had more in mind than just writing ordinary letters to a few churches. The phrase “*He that hath an ear, let him hear*” is an indication that we should look very closely at what has just been said. It is a clue that some great truth has been indirectly taught. It is like saying “he that has the ability to understand, let him understand.” It’s like when a person says something with the intent of conveying another message, and then winks at someone as if to say “did you get what I REALLY meant?” In the gospels we find Christ using this phrase several times, and each of those times He seems to be telling His listeners to think very closely about what He has just said in order to grasp the intended meaning. For instance, in Matthew chapter eleven, He speaks of John the Baptist. He cites Malachi’s prediction of the return of Elijah who would prepare the way for the Messiah. He then tells them that John was Elijah for whom they had been watching. After all of this He said in verse fifteen “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” What did He want them to hear? Well if Elijah was to precede the Messiah, and John was Elijah, then Jesus must be the Messiah. He did not directly claim to be the Messiah, but there is no mistaking the fact that He did indirectly claim the title for himself. For those who were really paying attention, and were interested enough to think the situation over, it would become obvious that Jesus was claiming to be the Lord’s Christ.



Many times after teaching a parable, Jesus made the statement “*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*” There were great lessons to be learned from the parables but they were not usually apparent at first glance. He was exhorting the people to consider them in order that they might discover those lessons. A few examples of this are Matthew 13:9,

13:43; and Mark 7:16. There are also several other examples. In our situation here in Revelation, Jesus again wants us to see something that might not be apparent at first. He wants us to look deeper for a hidden meaning.

The seven letters for the most part are fairly simple and do not appear to be harboring any secrets, but let us incline our ears and see just what the Lord was trying to tell us. Let us look at the way in which the conditions at those seven churches paralleled the conditions of the Lord's Church as it progressed through history.

First let me state that the time periods which follow are only approximate. There are no biblical guidelines for fixing exact dates here. These dates reflect the general conditions and direction of the Church during history as it compares with the descriptions in the letters of Revelation. Certainly, these changes within the Church did not occur overnight, but were, in most cases, fairly gradual. In reality, the break from the Church as described by one letter versus another, would not be sharp, but would be an extended period of time. This implies that the periods described by these letters overlapped to some extent. It should be stated again that the dates given below are nothing more than "ballpark figures" in many cases. In the places where there were historic events which allow us to be more specific, the appropriate explanations will be given.

Time Periods of the Seven Churches	
Ephesus	30-180
Smyrna	180-313
Pergamos	313-533
Thyatira	533-1400
Sardis	1400-1793
Philadelphia	1793-1948
Laodicea	1948-?

Table II

Letter #1 Ephesus -- A.D. 30-180

*2:1 Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;
2:2 I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars:
2:3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast labored, and hast not fainted.*

The Ephesian church is commended by Christ for its abundant labor and stand against false teachers, especially their stand against the Nicolaitanes. "I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars" (Revelation 2:2). This was certainly true of the Church during the first century. The Apostle Paul spoke of some being false apostles. "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ" (II Corinthians 11:13).

During this period of time, the Bible had not yet been put together. The only way anyone could know without a doubt what was right or wrong was to consult an apostle or other inspired teacher. This often made it easy for false teachers to deceive others unless they were very wary. An inspired teacher should also have some type of miraculous power to prove his authenticity. The early church was well aware of this and put people to the test by asking them to perform some miracle to prove they were an authorized representative of God.

The early church was also marked by sporadic persecution, mainly instigated by the Jews. Despite this opposition, the early Church grew and spread very rapidly. The Christians during this period of time were very active in spreading the gospel and other labors; for this they are commended.

2:4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.

Although the Ephesian Church was very active and doing many good works, they did have one major flaw; they were greatly lacking in the area of love. Indeed we can see this trend in the early Church, even in the days of Paul. *“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: the one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: but the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel”* (Philippians 1:15-17). Many simply were not sincere in what they did. I believe this was a spill-over from the Jews who were notorious for their insincerity in religion. Christ often rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for their poor attitudes and their hypocrisy. This had rubbed off on the ordinary Jews and had become a way of life. When many became Christians, they soon relapsed into their former habits.

In I Corinthians chapter thirteen, Paul talks extensively about charity, which is love. That entire book was aimed mainly at correcting problems that existed in Corinth; one of those problems was a lack of love. There, and in many other places, most of the right things were being done, but not always for the right reasons. Love should be the motive for all that a Christian does, but, unfortunately, this is not always the case. This was especially true of the Church during the first 150 years. Under the supervision of the apostles and other great men, the Church did not have a severe problem with the practice of false doctrines. The problem was in getting the people to learn to love one another and the Lord as they should.

2:5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

Christ now commands the early church to ‘clean up its act,’ by doing *“the first works.”* These are the little things which can often be overlooked. Things which love will prompt a person to do, but other motives will not. Even though they were doing many things well, they were still commanded to repent, which shows that the Lord does not accept partial obedience, but is only pleased with complete dedication.

2:6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

2:7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

The Nicolaitanes take on a very important meaning here. As stated earlier, when we were looking at this verse, Nicolaitanes means “victory over the people” or “victory over Laodicea.” This gives up a picture of the Nicolaitanes as a group who’s goal was to gain a ‘victory’ over God’s people. Since Laodicea represents the church in the end times, it seems that the goal was to completely overcome God’s people before time ended. Would we expect anything different from Satan? After their victory, the conquerors would then rule God’s people and direct the course of the Church. The basic idea of this is some sort of ‘clergy’ who will rule and guide God’s people. No such idea can be found anywhere in the New Testament, yet there have always been those who advocated it. This is exactly what did occur with the rise of the papacy in the sixth century. We can see that even in the earliest days of the Church there were those who sought preeminence and authority over others. *“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church”* (III John 1:9-10). Paul warned the elders of the Church at Ephesus that there would be those from among their own number who would seek to deceive the faithful and pervert the truth. *“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:28-30).

To sum all of this up, Christ is telling us that there will be those during the first 150 years of the Church who will seek power and authority for themselves over God’s people, but during this period of time the Church will reject their efforts. We will see later, however, that the Church does eventually give in to this unscriptural practice and centralization of authority begins, which leads ultimately to the papacy.

I should now offer some rationale for the dates given as the beginning and ending points for Ephesus, namely A.D. 30-180. The beginning is quite obvious, since it was in this year that the Church began. Many people erroneously believe that the Church began in A.D. 33, but this is not the case at all.

“Jesus was at the outset (of His ministry) about thirty years of age. His birth took place in the reign of Herod (d. 4 B.C.), and His crucifixion probably in A.D. 29 or 30.”⁴⁰

The reason that Christ was born in 4 B.C. and not in 1 B.C. or A.D. 1 is because of a four year error which occurred when the calendar was revised for the purpose of beginning with Christ’s birth.

The end of this period is not ‘set in concrete’ as no great event occurred to mark its conclusion. However, there are a couple of very compelling reasons which favor the choice of this date. First of all, in chapter six we will find that the first of the seven seals corresponds to a period ending in A.D. 180 with the ascension of Commodus to the imperial throne. This marks a change in the Roman Empire and also a shift in the character of the Church due to their relations with the Empire. After this point, persecution against the Church began to increase, which is a very prominent characteristic of Smyrna, the second Church.

The next item to consider is even more important. The greatest change the Church has experienced since its inception at Pentecost is the end of the age of inspiration. We know that John lived nearly to the end of the first century, and perhaps he did live to even see the dawn of the second. Regardless, it is safe to say that the last apostle died around the end of the first century. Since only an apostle could pass on spiritual gifts, the last person able to perform miracles would have died around A.D. 180, if he received those gifts as a young man and lived to be as old as John.

We can establish that only the apostles could pass on the power to perform miracles by looking at Acts chapter eight. *“Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, ‘Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost’”* (Acts 8:14-19).

Notice that the disciples in Samaria did not receive the gifts of the Holy Ghost until an apostle went there to personally lay hands on them. Whoever converted these people may have had miraculous powers, but not being an apostle, they could not impart these gifts to others. Every time we see miraculous gifts given to others it was at the hands of apostles; never do we find anyone else with the ability to do this. The example of Simon gives us the reason why God kept tight reins on this important power. The apostles could be trusted with it, but others might be tempted to abuse it if they received it.

As the age of inspiration ended, and with it the ability to prove your authenticity, something else came on the scene to replace it.

“By the middle of the second century the two chief component parts of the New Testament had taken shape, and the practice of reading apostolic writings in public worship together with selections from the Old Testament Scriptures was preparing the way for the conception of a Canon of Scriptures of the New Testament.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Jesus Christ.”

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Bible.”

The New Testament replaced inspired men as the authority in all spiritual matters. This marked a turning point in the history of the Church, and seems to me to be a good point to close the period of Ephesus and open the period of Smyrna.

It is important to note here that even the names of the Seven Churches have significance. The name Ephesus means “desirable.”⁴² It is certainly easy to see how this term fit the early church. Even though the Church was not without its problems, and they suffered sporadic persecution, it was certainly a wonderful time to be a Christian. Just imagine having been one of those early Christians who had personally known Jesus, who had heard Him teach, or had been witness to the crucifixion.

It would also have been wonderful to have known other great men of the first century. Can you imagine sitting down and having a long conversation with Paul, Peter, or John himself? Or imagine having been there on the day of Pentecost and having witnessed the many miracles that were performed. Imagine the excitement which must have existed among the earliest brethren? It is easy to see why this period of the Church’s history is called *desirable*.

The reward which God promises to those who are faithful to him through this period of time is that they will be able to “*eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*” In the beginning, man had access to the tree but lost it when Adam and Eve sinned. Ever since that time man has been mortal and it has been the destiny of all who live to eventually die. Death held dominion over mankind until Christ conquered it and provided man with a way to overcome it. It is in this period of time, which witnessed the birth of the Church, that man regained access to the tree of life. Even though Christians of all ages will have access to the tree in heaven, it is still very fitting that God mentions the tree as the reward for the faithful during this first period of the Church. This forms a pattern that we will see for the remaining six letters; the rewards always match the situations the Churches faced.

Letter #2 Smyrna -- A.D. 180-313

2:8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

2:9 I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

2:10 Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The great distinction of this period was the extreme amount of persecution the Church was subjected to. There had certainly been a good deal of persecution before this time, and there would be much more after it, but overall the Church suffered more during this period than at any other time in history. At first Christianity was more or less tolerated by the Roman government, it was primarily the Jews who were behind the persecution in the first century. As Christianity began to spread, and its influence grew, Rome began to take notice of it. Rome was fearful of being taken over by the spread of this religion and sought to suppress it. A downturn in the overall health of the Empire also led many people to look for someone to blame for their troubles. It was the Christians who were increasingly the object of the emperor’s wrath.

“Toward the many religious sects of the Empire, the Roman government adopted, on the whole, a policy of toleration. It asked only that veneration be shown on official occasions...to the traditional gods, and to the persons of deceased and deified emperors. This civic religion asked for little more than a public declaration of loyalty and patriotism, but the Christians, as the Jews before them, refused to make even this small compromise with polytheism.

Sporadic persecutions, the severity of which is hard to judge, and long periods of peace marked the history

⁴² U. Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation: The Response of History to the Voice of Prophecy*, (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1897), p. 375.

of the Church into the third century. Then only amid general social crisis, did some emperors attempt a systematic suppression of the Christians. Decius in 250-251, Valerian in 257-260, and above all Diocletian in 303-313, sought to extirpate the Christian name; their concern with this menace to the state was a tribute to its now established strength.”⁴³

The greatest period of persecution the Church has ever seen was during the ten year period from 303 to 313, under the rule of Diocletian. This ten year period of extreme persecution was predicted in the letter to Smyrna as the following: “*Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days.*” In prophesy a day is equal to a year of actual time. In 313 the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration (a.k.a. The Edict of Milan),⁴⁴ which put an end to the official Roman persecution of the Church. This ended the ten year period of persecution which was, by far, the worst the Church has ever seen.

This proclamation announced that Christianity would be recognized and tolerated. Christians were given back property that had been taken away during the time of persecutions and acquired all the rights of normal citizens. Christ described well what life was like for Christians during this period. “*I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich)*” (Revelation 2:9). Their oppressors took away many of their worldly possessions, but no one could deprive those Christians of the treasures they had laid up in Heaven (Matthew 6:20). This is why He said they were rich even though they lived in poverty.

“The conversion of Constantine to Christianity in 312 marked a revolution in the Church and in its relations with the Roman Empire. The circumstances attending this dramatic event are obscure. In the traditional pious story, first appearing in 318-320, Constantine had a dream on the evening before he was to fight a rival emperor for supremacy over Italy, at the Milvian Bridge near Rome. He was instructed in the dream to decorate the shields of his soldiers with the monogram of Christ: ‘In this sign you shall conquer.’ Constantine won the battle and recognized the divine power in the name of Christ.”⁴⁵

Thus ended one of the saddest chapters in the history of the Church. Contrary to common expectations, however, the Church actually flourished amid the suffering and persecution. Not a single thing was said against the Smyrnan Church by Christ. Persecution weeds out the weak and leaves only the strong. The strong are forced to take a firmer stand and become even more resolute in their determination to serve the Lord. They are brought closer together with all Christians and become more of a family. Times of trial benefit the Church, whereas times of ease actually bring about complacency and digression. It is also interesting to note that there was no mention of the Nicolaitanes during this time. Those who were seeking personal gain were not willing to brave the persecution in their attempt to grab power.

“In an age of persecutions, the Church could not tolerate such intellectual luxuries as variations from the accepted faith.”⁴⁶

2:11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

It is very appropriate that Christ mentions here, as the reward for those who are faithful during this period of great persecution, deliverance from the second death. Although many Christians will face untimely physical deaths (the first death), they have no need to fear the second death (eternal hell). It is as Christ said, “*fear not them which kill*

⁴³ M. Chambers, R. Grew, D. Herlihy, T. K. Rabb, & I. Woloch, *The Western experience to 1715, 3rd ed.*, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1983), p. 153.

⁴⁴ Britannica, 1929, s.v. “Constantine.”

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 154.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 155.

the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matthew 10:28). As long as these Christians remained faithful to God, they had nothing to fear from man, even if their lives were taken from them.

The name Smyrna means "myrrh."⁴⁷ Myrrh was often used in perfumes and as an antiseptic. Like a perfume, the dedication and sacrifice of the Smyrnan Church was a sweet smelling savor to God. An antiseptic, although it might cause pain when applied, cleanses and makes pure by destroying or removing all that would corrupt. Similarly, the persecutions that the Church endured during this period may have been painful, but they purified the Church by driving away all that were insincere and would have otherwise served to weaken the Church.

The end of this period is fairly simple to determine from what we have already seen. This period was marked by great persecution that plagued the Church until the Edict of Milan in A.D. 313. This change in the attitude of the Empire toward the Church makes a fitting end for the period of Smyrna and the beginning of the period of Pergamos.

Letter #3 Pergamos -- A.D. 313-533

2:12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

2:13 I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.

During this period of time, the persecutions of the second and early third centuries ceased and Christianity became the official religion of Rome. This brought peace to the Church, but not an end to its problems.

"Christianity did not become the established or official religion of the Empire until Theodosius the Great outlawed heresy (381) and closed the pagan temples (391). But the Church had already acquired a privileged juridical status that it would retain, in many Western lands, until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries."⁴⁸

During this time period, the papacy arose, having her official beginning in A.D. 533. This will be discussed in great detail in chapter thirteen. Where "*Satan dwelleth*" is undoubtedly Rome, since it is the seat of the papacy, the greatest satanic power the world has ever seen. It was here that Antipas was slain. The name Antipas is very interesting and warrants very close scrutiny. According to Strong's it is from two Greek root words 'anti' and 'pater.'⁴⁹ Strong's defines these words respectively as "a primary particle; opposite, i.e. instead or because of (rarely in addition to):- for, in the room of. Often used in composition to denote contrast, requital, substitution, correspondence, etc.,"⁵⁰ and "apparently a primary word; a 'father' (literally or figuratively, near or more remote):- father, parent."⁵¹ We can see from this that Antipas means one who is 'anti-father.' The father spoken of here is the pope; the word pope meaning papa or father. It was during this period of time that the hierarchy which was to become the papacy began to take shape. Those who fought against this unscriptural innovation were defeated, that is, Antipas (anti-father) was slain.

⁴⁷ W. Smith, 1986, s.v. "Smyrna."

⁴⁸ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 154.

⁴⁹ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #493."

⁵⁰ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #473."

⁵¹ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #3962."

With the external enemies defeated, the Church turned upon itself, and men began to vie for power. Already men had exalted themselves to positions as 'bishops' of cities and regions. The simple Bible pattern of elders governing each autonomous congregation (Acts 11:30, 14:23, 20:17, 21:18, Philippians 1:1, I Timothy 4:14, 5:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, I Peter 5:1) had been forsaken by many. The Church began to drift and digress from the truth. The problem with the Church at Pergamos was not widespread immorality or anything of that nature. Rather, it was the toleration of those who held and taught false doctrines. This is what the Lord's Church did after 313. They tolerated those men who were beginning to set up a hierarchy which was foreign to the principles of the Bible. This hierarchy was centered at Rome, which is what Christ was alluding to when He said, "*I know...where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is*" (Revelation 2:13). As will become apparent later in Revelation, Rome was the center of Satan's evil ambitions for over two-thousand years.

"Before the end of the second century, each city in which there was a Christian congregation had a chief priest who was recognized as its overseer, or bishop. He was selected by the priests of his community, aided by the laity, and he held his position for life. Responsibility and authority in local affairs went increasingly to the bishop. He was ordained to the office by other bishops, and the theory gradually developed that the bishops together constituted the successors of the original apostles.

His area of jurisdiction, known as a diocese, normally included the city in which his Church was located and the surrounding district. The diocese was divided into parishes, each with its local congregation and priest (pastor). Because both clergy and laity were required to obey the bishop, he held full control over the Christian community.

In coordinating their religious activities, the bishops turned to the model of Roman imperial administration. As Diocletian grouped several provinces into a civil diocese, the bishops (reversing the terms) grouped several dioceses into a province. Over this larger jurisdiction reigned the bishop of the chief city in the province. Since a great city was known as a 'metropolis,' this bishop took on the higher title of 'metropolitan' (later, archbishop).

By the time of Constantine there were five leading metropolitans: the bishops of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, and Rome. Their importance led to their being designated as 'patriarchs,' a title and rank above that of other metropolitans.

...many Church leaders felt that the only way to solve the countless other issues, of a more serious nature, that divided the Church was to recognize a final authority at the top of the hierarchy. Each of the five patriarchs believed that the top position rightly belonged to him. Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople offered impressive arguments, but Rome seemed to have the strongest claim. The Roman bishop had several decisive advantages: the Eternal City still enjoyed great prestige among the communities of the Empire.

Roman bishops made the most of the Petrine tradition. They interpreted a passage in the Gospel of Matthew (16:18-19) to mean that Christ had founded his Church upon Peter and had entrusted to him alone the 'keys of the kingdom of heaven.' This, they insisted, made Peter supreme among the apostles. Since each bishop of Rome was the direct successor to Peter, the bishop of Rome was clearly supreme among the bishops of the world.

The rival patriarchs rejected Rome's assertion of supremacy, pointing out that such a sweeping claim could hardly be justified by a brief passage appearing in only one of the gospels. They argued, further, that during the early days of the Church all important decisions were made by a council in Jerusalem, a council in which Peter had participated, but had not ruled. Paul had made no references to Peter as the supreme head, and Peter had made no such claim for himself.

Nevertheless, the position and dignity of Rome and its association with both Peter and Paul won for it a place of primacy in the Christian world. The patriarchs of the East conceded that the successors to Peter had a right to sit at the 'head of the table' so to speak, as first among equals. The Roman bishop, however, was not satisfied with this concession; he continued to insist on his supremacy, on being recognized as absolute monarch, the 'Vicar (Deputy) of Christ' on earth.

In the West, where there was no rival, Rome achieved that supremacy. By the fifth century the Roman bishop had begun to reserve to himself the title of papa (pope). This word, meaning 'father,' had formerly been used to refer to any bishop or priest, but henceforth it was to be used only for the bishop of Rome, in the broader sense of 'Father of the Church.' From this usage arose the term 'papacy' to refer to the office of the pope."⁵²

The nature of men who would so pollute the simple pattern of authority established by Christ can easily be seen in the following. It should come as no surprise that they are much more interested in serving self than God.

"The story of Paul of Samosata, who filled the metropolitan see of Antioch while the East was in the hands of Odenathus and Zenobia, may serve to illustrate the condition and character of the times. The wealth of that prelate was a sufficient evidence of his guilt, since it was neither derived from the inheritance of his fathers, nor acquired by the arts of honest industry. But Paul considered the service of the church as a very lucrative profession. His ecclesiastical jurisdiction was venal and rapacious; he extorted frequent contributions from the most opulent of the faithful, and converted to his own use a considerable part of the public revenue. By his pride and luxury the Christian religion was rendered odious in the eyes of the Gentiles."⁵³

There can be little doubt that many during this time still advocated a strict adherence to the Scriptures. They would have demanded the removal of all those in positions of authority not authorized by God and the installation of qualified elders. Just as has taken place in more recent centuries within the Lord's Church, as well as many denominations, liberal trends take root, gain popularity, and soon become irrevocably entrenched. Eventually those who contend for the truth are left with only two alternatives. They can either abandon their conservative and correct stand for the truth, or they can abandon the congregation and form their own. According to the Apostle Paul, however, they really have only one choice in such a circumstance. "*Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself*" (I Timothy 6:5).

It was probably during the fourth century that the first, but certainly not the last, mass exodus from the mainstream Church began. As the Church became increasingly liberal and accepted more and more unscriptural teachings and practices, many withdrew themselves and started Churches based on the first century pattern. This occurrence is not to be found in the secular history of that period. History is concerned primarily with the influence of the mainstream Church on the Roman Empire and after its fall the subsequent powers in Europe and Western Asia. Little note would have been taken of those viewed as schismatics, heretics, or fringe cults.

Furthermore, anything written favorably about those who dared to defy the popular trends and defend the truth, would hardly have escaped the editorial review of Catholic monks of later centuries. During the Dark Ages, literacy was almost completely the sole possession of the Catholic clergy. As they consolidated their power and tried to strengthen their claim of authority, anything that cast doubt on their origins would have certainly disappeared if it found its way into their hands. It took five centuries, and finally an emperor's edict, to enthrone the papacy into a position they now claim was theirs from the beginning. There is an old saying that "history is written by the victors." This is certainly very true. The victorious will certainly make themselves seem better and their enemy worse than was actually the case. Even when people are trying to be objective, and this is rarely the case, human nature will cause anyone to see mainly good about their side and lots of evil in their adversaries. Even well intentioned monks would have most certainly tossed into the trash anything that spoke well of those early enemies of Rome.

Thus Antipas died. Those who opposed the evolving form of church government, different variations of which now rule most denominations, were outnumbered and were forced to retreat into the shadows of history. There they would remain for well over a thousand years. During this time history was written, again primarily by the Catholics,

⁵² T. H. Greer, *A Brief History of the Western World, 5th ed.*, (New York, NY: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1987), pp. 137-9.

⁵³ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire: vol. I*, (New York, NY: Random House Inc., 1963), p. 483.

and the existence of the Lord's Church based on the pattern of the century went unnoticed. Because of persecution they were forced to hide, but anyone would have to be very naïve indeed to believe that everyone throughout the centuries was a devoted practicing Catholic. Many doubted, and a few even had the nerve to practice their own beliefs handed down through the centuries.

2:14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.

2:15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate.

The doctrine of the Nicolaitanes was present in the time of Ephesus but they were strong enough to reject it. It is the doctrine that a 'clergy' should lead and dominate the Church; an idea completely foreign to the Bible. This time we find the Church has accepted this idea and is practicing it. This confirms what history has already shown us.

The doctrine of Balaam deals with idolatry. In the case of Balaam, actual fornication was involved, but here we are dealing with spiritual fornication. Spiritual fornication is often referred to as idolatry in the Bible. God accused Israel of committing adultery against Him by committing idolatry *"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also"* (Jeremiah 3:8). Now the Lord's Church had followed suit and committed spiritual adultery by allowing the papacy to arise.

The religion of the pope can be considered idolatrous in a couple of ways. First of all, the pope sets himself up to be in the place of God here on earth. He is, in effect, placing himself on a par with God. The pope, being in the place of Peter, is subject to be worshipped, just as are the apostles, Mary the mother of Jesus, and many other 'saints.' Twice in Revelation John fell down before an angel to worship him and was severely rebuked. *"And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, 'See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God'"* (Revelation 19:10). Man cannot be worshipped under any circumstances, nor can angels; only God can be worshipped.

Secondly, the pope's religion involves numerous idols and images. One only needs to walk into any Catholic church or many Catholic homes to prove this. Statues and images of various persons will be found everywhere. These images are worshipped contrary to the commandments of God. Very early in His relations with man, God let it be known how He feels about idols. *"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth"* (Exodus 20:4). This idea was confirmed to us by John himself, *"Little children, keep yourselves from idols"* (I John 5:21).

2:16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

2:17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

The sword which Christ speaks of is the Word of God. It is the Word that the Church has now forsaken by allowing this unscriptural hierarchy to arise. Christ warns that He will come and fight against this error with His Word unless they repent. We will see this actually happen later in our study. The end of this period, A.D. 533, is given because it is the 'official' beginning of the papacy. Pergamos is the time when it arose to prominence, and Thyatira will be the time of its supremacy over Christendom.

The name Pergamos means "citadel,"⁵⁴ "height, or elevation."⁵⁵ Even though the Church had its problems during this period, and a great digression from truth really began to take shape, this period is still the greatest height that the

⁵⁴ Davis, 1983, s.v. "Pergamos."

⁵⁵ W. Smith, 1986, s.v. "Pergamos."

Church has ever reached. In terms of membership and influence, the Lord's Church reached its zenith during this period.

The reward that God promises to those who are faithful during this period is twofold. First, God will give them *"to eat of the hidden manna."* One of the accusations which God makes against this Church is that they *"eat things sacrificed unto idols."* For those who abstain from this evil, God is promising a much better food source.

This is similar to the situation of the Children of Israel wandering in the wilderness. They saw no apparent source of food which could possibly sustain such a large group of people. Many doubted God and longed to return to bondage in Egypt where they at least had food to eat. However, the faithful trusted God and had no desire to turn back but were willing to follow God anywhere. In the case of the Church in Pergamos, many abandoned God's way for man's. They returned to the bondage of sin, while the faithful continued to follow God's plan.

The second reward that is promised is *"a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."* The Greeks commonly gave white stones to the victors in their athletic contests.⁵⁶ Similarly the white stones God gives the faithful represent victory, but a different kind of victory. Christians are victorious over Satan and all of his evil devices. More importantly, however, the children of God are victorious over death. This is an appropriate reward for God to mention since the faithful of this time period, represented by Antipas, have been defeated by those who sought to change God's Word to suit their own ideas and eventually created the papacy.

Church about to go into hiding. Cannot use old name!

Letter #4 Thyatira -- A.D. 533-1400

2:18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

2:19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first.

2:20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.

No one can fault the Catholics for their charity. Even today, they are widely known for all of the ways in which they help the poor and needy. This was also a characteristic of the Church during the time of Thyatira and is pointed out in verse nineteen. However, no amount of good works can justify error. As Samuel pointed out to Saul, king of Israel, *"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams"* (I Samuel 15:22). Good intentions are not what pleases God; obedience does.

The problem with the Church during this period is that they were allowing a prophetess named Jezebel to teach some false doctrine. Jezebel is an allusion to the wife of Ahab an ancient king of Israel. She was very notorious for her evil ways. She was a bad influence on her husband and caused him to be much worse than he would have been otherwise (I Kings 21:25). She was an avid supporter of idolatry and *"slew the prophets of the Lord"* (I Kings 18:13).

Jezebel is used here to represent the papacy, which came into being at the beginning of this period and for centuries was the dominant power in Europe. She is also synonymous with the great whore of Revelation chapter seventeen. History shows that Pope John II finally received the recognition that the bishops of Rome had claimed and desired for many decades. Emperor Justinian I officially recognized him as "Lord of the Church" in A.D. 533.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Davis, 1983, s.v. "stone."

⁵⁷ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1967), "John I, Pope."

The similarities between the two are unmistakable. Just as Jezebel was very evil and fought against God, so did the papacy. Both supported idolatry and sought to extirpate the true supporters of God. The papacy embodies all of the foul and evil characteristics of Jezebel, being willing to stoop to any depths to satisfy her own desires. Both were harlots selling themselves without shame in order to further their own agendas.

The papacy can definitely be spoken of as a 'prophetess,' since the pope claims to speak for God here on the earth. His words are supposed to carry as much weight as the Holy Scriptures themselves. In reality, he is actually claiming to be a prophet of God, although nothing could be further from the truth. The pope is, in reality, a prophet of Satan.

Again we find mentioned here the commission of fornication and the eating of things sacrificed to idols. This is the same thing which was termed the doctrine of Balaam in the time of Pergamos. It refers to the idolatrous and adulterous relationship of the Church with the papacy.

2:21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not.

2:22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds.

2:23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

The Lord has warned the purveyors of this unscriptural hierarchy in the past to repent of their evil ways or face His judgment, but His words have fallen on deaf ears. He has given them ample time to realize their error and amend their ways, but to no avail. They have went right on building their spiritual empire with no one's authority but their own. The Lord now becomes more graphic in His warnings to these charlatans. He promises to cast this whore, together with all who partake of her evil, into a bed. This will not be a bed of pleasure, but a bed of "*great tribulation*." The longsuffering Lord still gives them an out if they will only repent and renounce their evil ways. He also promises to kill "*her children*." The children of the papacy are all those who teach or follow the evil doctrine put forth by this great harlot. Not only will the Lord bring down the organization, but He will also bring down those who support it.

Not only do the above verses have the spiritual application mentioned above, but they also point to another very dramatic occurrence. As will be discussed in detail in chapter ten, the way for the Reformation was paved by something that devastated Europe in the 50 years preceding it. During this time almost one quarter of the population died. Above in verse twenty-two Christ says He will "*cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her*." This literally occurred during the last half of the fourteenth century when an estimated twenty-five million people became bed ridden and died from the Black Plague. Christ literally did "*kill her children with death*." Much more will be said about the effects of this event on Europe in chapter ten.

2:24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden.

2:25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

Despite the seemingly universal acceptance of the Roman system, there were still some left who were faithful to the Lord. Those who "*have not known the depths of Satan*," as He called the doctrine of the Roman Church. He exhorts those faithful ones to remain as they are until He comes. They still had the truth, but were up against very severe odds. They had no hope of overthrowing the papacy, so they were simply told to hold on to what they had. It is here that the Lord first speaks separately to the faithful; He also does this in the next letter to Sardis. This signifies to me a change in His attitude toward those in error. He no longer groups them with the faithful, but gives them their own separate 'repent or else' warning.

2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations:

2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father.

The great problem of the Christians during this period of time is that the nations have power over them. The papacy controls the nations and directs them to crush any group that would teach any form of doctrine in opposition to that emanating from Rome. The Lord now promises to turn the tables on the papacy by allowing Christians to have “*power over the nations,*” thus freeing them from the tyranny imposed upon them by the papacy, and, as we shall soon see, inflicting great strife on the papacy. Christians are also to rule the nations “*with a rod of iron.*” This rule is not to be literal, but symbolic. It will be discussed extensively in chapter twenty.

2:28 And I will give him the morning star.

2:29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Another blessing Christians of this period are to enjoy is the gift of the ‘morning star.’ Earlier we said that this literally means being in the presence of Christ. That will be fine for an eternal reward, but it has a much more dramatic meaning here in the period of Thyatira. Christ has spoken often of the impending judgment upon Rome unless she repented of her evil ways. She has not repented and as the period of Thyatira closes we see the judgment beginning. It is important to note that Christ said “*he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give...*” In the literal sense, this implies an individual being faithful unto the end of his life. Here in the figurative sense, it means those who are present at the end of the period of Thyatira.

The word ‘give’ in verse twenty-eight is from the Greek “*didomi*” which Strong’s defines as, “a prolonged form of a primary verb (which is used as an alternate in most of the tenses); to give (used in a very wide application, properly or by implication, literally or figuratively; greatly modified by the connection):-adventure, bestow, bring forth, commit, deliver (up), give, grant, hinder, make, minister, number, offer, have power, put, receive, set, shew, smite (+ with the hand), strike (+ with the palm of the hand), suffer, take, utter, yield.”⁵⁸ As you can see, this word has a wide variety of meanings, the proper interpretation of which must be determined by the context.

The term ‘morning star’ is used by Christ to refer to Himself in Revelation (22:16), but He is not the only one to be described this way. “*How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!*” (Isaiah 14:12). Lucifer is, of course, Satan. The word Lucifer is from the Hebrew “*heylel*” which Strong’s defines as, “(in the sense of brightness); the morning-star:-lucifer.”⁵⁹ This should not surprise us because, prior to his fall, Lucifer enjoyed a highly exalted position in Heaven. In Ezekiel chapter twenty-eight, God speaks to the ‘king of Tyrus,’ who is actually Satan, and He refers to him as “*the anointed cherub that covereth*” (Ezekiel 28:14). He also says thou “*hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness*” (Ezekiel 28:17). He was as bright as the ‘morning star’ but lost all of his glory in one moment of foolish pride. When Christ described his fall He said, “*I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*” (Luke 10:18). Satan went from being as bright as the morning star to being a shooting star which is soon consumed by reason of its own brightness.

What could the Lord possibly mean by telling those of the period of Thyatira that He would ‘give’ them Satan? Give is not an improper translation but some of the other meanings given in Strong’s will perhaps provide us with a clearer picture of what the Lord means here. If we substitute deliver (up), hinder, have power (over), smite (+ with the hand), strike (+ with the palm of the hand), or take, it will aid our understanding. The idea is that Satan will be hindered or restricted in his ability to promote evil among mankind. The application of this will be somewhat unclear at this point in our study, but should become abundantly clear as we progress. For now let it suffice for us to say that Satan began to be hindered when the Reformation began. There is no hard and fast date for the beginning of the Reformation so we will choose A.D. 1400. This was around the time that men such as John Hus and John Wiclif began to make ripples which were to eventually bring Rome to her knees by the eighteenth century.

⁵⁸ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #1325.”

⁵⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Hebrew #1966.”

The name Thyatira means “sweet savor of labor.”⁶⁰ During the long period of time from the papacy’s beginning in A.D. 533 to the time it began to lose its grip on Europe in A.D. 1400, the Church was forced to go underground. As Rome’s power and influence over the nations increased, their ability to use secular governments to stamp out heresy also grew. Thus, anyone whose beliefs or practices differed from that which was approved by Rome, was subject to any sort of reprisal from the government.

Despite the very difficult circumstances under which the Church was forced to operate, which climaxed in the form of the Inquisition, the Church continued to be faithful to God. It was a labor performed in secret, but a labor deeply appreciated by God. We close the period of Thyatira in 1400, with the promise of deliverance for God’s oppressed saints just beginning to appear. Now we turn to Sardis.

Letter #5 Sardis -- A.D. 1400-1793

3:1 And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.

3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

3:3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

As we come to Sardis in 1400, we begin to see the rise of sectarianism. Many people were beginning to question the Catholic Church, and some were advocating radical change. Christ said to Sardis “*thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead.*” He was alluding to the fact that most who claimed to be Christians were not living as Christians at all. There was nothing about the Catholics which even remotely resembled New Testament Christianity by this time. They had almost completely forsaken the faith. This is why Christ admonishes them to “*Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.*”

Names of the Seven Churches and their meanings	
Ephesus	Desirable
Smyrna	Myrrh
Pergamos	Citadel, height, elevation
Thyatira	Sweet savor of labor
Sardis	That which remains
Philadelphia	Brotherly love
Laodicea	Judgment of the people

Table III

It is made abundantly clear in the New Testament that God intends for man to live by the doctrine delivered to the first century Christians and not by any other. “*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain*” (I Corinthians 15:1-2). “*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you*” (Philippians 4:9). “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ*” (Colossians 2:6-8). Notice how Paul emphasizes their obedience to the doctrine as it was delivered, leaving absolutely no room for their own interpretation or application of it.

“*Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die.*” is in reference to the few good characteristics they had left. No matter how bad a person or organization is, there will always be some aspect of good, even if it is very

⁶⁰ U. Smith, 1897, p. 387.

small, that will remain. They were advised to build on these things, instead of continuing to go further into their corruption. In Rome, the corruption began at the top.

“Worldliness and abuses had swept the Church once more, and the brave reform efforts of earlier centuries were forgotten. The monastic orders, traditionally the conscience of the clergy, fell into scandal, corrupted by comfortable living. Many of the seculars (priests and bishops) also slipped into self-indulgence, lust, and greed. While there doubtless remained thousands of honest, chaste, and pious clerics, the general situation was nevertheless distressing.

Vigorous reform of these abuses became urgent. But the popes of the fifteenth century, themselves deep in worldliness, were not interested in reform. The ‘princes’ of the Church were more interested in politics, wealth, and art than in spiritual affairs. The Medici pope Leo X is reported to have said, after his election in 1513, ‘As God has seen fit to give us the papacy, let us enjoy it!’”⁶¹

“The lackadaisical attitude of the Roman leadership allowed many who opposed them an opportunity to speak out. In previous centuries many who opposed Rome had been burned at the stake in the name of religious purity and unity. Some were still being killed, but the strength of the papacy was beginning to come unraveled. In 1305, under pressure from King Philip of France, a French cardinal was elected and crowned at Lyon, Pope Clement V. Clement moved the papal court from Rome to Avignon in 1309, and appointed only French cardinals. The papacy remained in France during the next seventy years. This has sometimes been referred to as the Babylonian captivity.

Finally, in 1377, Pope Gregory XI decided to return the papal court to Rome. Upon his death the Roman people pressured the cardinals into electing a Roman pope. But then the French cardinals fled the city, declared the election invalid, and chose another pope. This one, with his supporting cardinals, moved to Avignon, while the Italian pope, with his cardinals, remained in Rome. Each declared the other to be a false pope and excommunicated him and his followers. This situation, known as the Great Schism persisted for some 40 years, until finally there was once again a unified papacy. This was but one of several episodes of internal struggle witnessed in the Roman Church during this period.”⁶²

With things of this nature occurring, it was much harder for them to continue their widespread suppression of dissenters, which had been so successful in earlier centuries. They were bearing out the truth of Christ’s statement “*if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand*” (Mark 3:24-25). Late in the fourteenth century in England, interestingly enough while the Great Schism was occurring, John Wiclif began to challenge, not only the abuses that the Roman Church had become filled with, but the very foundation upon which it stood. He challenged the role and powers of the clergy, arguing that God and the Scriptures were the sole sources of spiritual authority. Early in the fifteenth century, John Hus of Bohemia, who was a Catholic priest, likewise began to publicly attack the foundation of power of the Roman Church. Both Wiclif and Hus were killed for their beliefs at the hands of the Roman Church; the fires of dissension and rebellion had been lit. The Reformation had begun and before it had run its course it would touch every nation and every person on the continent. For the next 400 years, religious and political strife would turn the European continent upside down, culminating in 1793 with the French Revolution.⁶³

“The American Revolution helped to spark the French Revolution of 1789, which proved to be the most violent and far-reaching of all the liberal upheavals. Not only did the French Revolution advance liberal ideals; it brought drastic changes in the legal, social, and economic order of France, the largest and most populous country in western Europe. The struggle was intensified by the passionate opposition of privileged groups at home and by the intervention of foreign powers. Even more than the English or American Revolutions, it was a watershed in the flow of Western history. As Tocqueville later wrote, ‘The

⁶¹ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 313.

⁶² Ibid., pp. 312-3.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 313-5.

French Revolution had no territory of its own; indeed, its effect was to efface, in a way, all older frontiers. It brought men together, divided them, in spite of law, traditions, character, and language-turning enemies sometimes into compatriots and kinsmen into strangers...’ Not until the Russian Revolution of 1917 was an uprising to have such an impact on the Western world.”⁶⁴

Europe, which had been dominated by the Roman Church for over a millennia, had been forever changed. Never again would the papacy enjoy the power and prestige she had held for so long. The French Revolution was one of the greatest turning points in the history of the Western World, and it was the single most important turning point for the Roman Church. Weakened by internal strife, and immorality, challenged philosophically by an increasing number of men, seeing many of its followers forsake it for the newly formed protestant denominations, Rome was no longer able to keep its Empire together. For well over two-thousand years, over one-third of man’s tenure upon the earth, Rome was the most powerful and influential city on the face of the earth. It had been in decline for about five centuries, but the French Revolution was the proverbial “straw that broke the camel’s back.”

Christ warns those of the period of Sardis to be prepared and watch for His coming lest He overtake them as a thief. Clearly, we are not at the end yet so He cannot be referring to His literal return at the end of time. Rather He is referring to His coming figuratively in judgment of Rome. If a person is unprepared for the coming of a thief, then they will suffer great loss at the hands of the thief. Similarly, if someone is unprepared to meet God when He goes to face Him, then he will likewise suffer great loss. Only in this case we are referring to the loss of one’s soul, not just a few household goods. During the period of Sardis, unrighteousness abounded and, as a result, most people were completely unprepared to face God when they died.

3:4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.

3:6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Instead of repenting as the Lord had told them to do on numerous occasions, the Roman Church not only continued in their sin, they also became greatly immoral. Even after all of this time, and with all of the wickedness around them, there were still a few who had remained faithful. These were the ones who had “*not defiled their garments*” by partaking in the evil deeds of the papacy. These few did not accept the authority of Rome and stood firm against her error. I cannot help but dwell on the fact that the Lord said there were only a **FEW** left. Without change, it appeared that it would only take a little while longer for those last few to disappear. Since around the year 300, the Church had been in steady decline, continually digressing farther and farther from the truth. The number who remained uncorrupted became less and less as the centuries passed. Now it appeared as if the end might be near.

The reward that God promises those of the period of Sardis is that “*the same shall be clothed in white raiment.*” The major accusation Christ spoke against most who called themselves “Christians” during this period was that they had defiled their garments. This is of course in reference to their allegiance to the papacy, an allegiance that puts them squarely in opposition to God. By siding with the papacy, any man becomes a partaker of all the evil that has been committed by the papacy and thereby defiles himself. Christ promises that those who kept themselves pure from the corruptions of the papacy would be clothed in white raiment. This is very fitting and serves to illustrate their purity and innocence in a time of great evil.

Another thing that God promises to the faithful of this period is that He “*will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.*” By this time God has given up on Rome and their time to repent has passed. He has already blotted their names out of the book of life. In contrast to those who have been so unfaithful, God promises not to blot out the names of those who have kept themselves pure.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 404.

The name Sardis means “that which remains.”⁶⁵ This term is very descriptive of the Lord’s Church during this time. Century after century of persecution at the hands of the Catholic church had taken its toll on the Lord’s Church. Only scattered remnants remained of the Church Jesus had founded over 1,700 years before. Satan appeared to be very near to accomplishing his goal of destroying God’s Church.

The period of Sardis takes us to the year 1793. This date is given because it was here, during the French Revolution, that the power of the papacy was forever shattered. A new and glorious age of the Church, that of Philadelphia, is now ushered in.

Letter #6 Philadelphia -- A.D. 1793-1948

3:7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth; 3:8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it: for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.

The letter to Philadelphia, which represents the Lord’s Church from 1793 to 1948, marks a great turning point in our story, and indeed for the Church. The Lord has now brought down the once great Roman whore. She has effectively been removed from the picture. Although the same system still exists, it has now lost its prominent position as a major force in the political affairs of the Western World. The idolatry, or spiritual adultery, that Christ condemned in His letters to Pergamos and Thyatira has been brought to a violent end. The unscriptural Roman system was against God’s plan and was contrary to His wishes. It had, in effect, become a form of idolatry. The cross was worshipped even statues and paintings of people were worshipped. Most Catholic Churches were filled with these idols. The pope had reached the point where he was almost deified. His word was even supreme over God’s word. He had the power to, and often did, change Church doctrine away from what the Bible taught. God had warned them that unless they repented He would bring judgment against them. He finally did this, with the fatal blow being the French Revolution. Up to this time, He had been longsuffering with Rome. He had warned them continually, but they had refused to repent. Finally, He had had enough.

The previous three letters, Pergamos, Thyatira and Sardis, all contain scathing rebukes and commands for repentance, but here in the letter to Philadelphia, we find nothing bad said about the Church whatsoever. Although Rome was toppled from her position of prominence, we know she did not repent, so what happened? Why did God stop demanding her repentance? I think God finally removed her candlestick (Revelation 2:5). Until this point, He had not totally given up on Rome because many people who were faithful to Him were still under her sway. However, now that He had freed them from her tyranny and given them free access to His word, something the common man had never enjoyed before this time, there was no more reason to be patient with Rome and hope for her repentance. I believe that the only reason that He waited as long as He did to bring Rome down was for the sake of His people who were caught up in the web of evil spun by the papacy. Throughout the Dark Ages, only the clergy had access to the Bible and the common people were kept in ignorance. Because their ignorance was forced upon them, God was merciful to them.

Christ also kept His promise to come and fight against Rome with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:16). This sword, of course, is the Word of God. He did fight against them with the Bible during the Reformation. The Bible began to be respected by many as the sole source of authority on all spiritual matters. This left no place for Rome in the picture. This is what caused the weakening of their grip on Europe and eventually brought about their downfall.

Now with that movement being effectively dealt with, He turns to those who are still faithful to Him. The fall of the Roman Church happened at the same time that the Lord’s Church began to experience a revival. This revival was known as the Restoration. It was so named because men sought to “restore” the Church of the Bible; to worship God the same way Christians did in the first century. During this time men began to seriously question all previously

⁶⁵ U. Smith, 1897, p. 392.

accepted religious doctrine. Many groups, totally oblivious of one another, began to turn to the Bible as their sole authority in all spiritual matters. The Lord's Church had finally been freed from the tyranny and persecution it had endured at the hands of Rome for over a thousand years. It is quite ironic that an American city also named Philadelphia, was heavily involved in one of the world's great struggles for freedom just as the Lord's Church was being freed from its oppressors. The letter to Philadelphia expresses this new found freedom of the Church. *"I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it."* In effect, Christ is saying that He freed the Church and no man could bind it again.

"Thou hast a little strength." This might seem, on the surface, to be a negative comment but really is not. The Church has just been freed from a 1,260 year period of great repression and persecution. During this time it was small, scattered, and had little influence. It will certainly take time to recover its strength. The fact that it had survived at all shows its courage and faith. It now needs time to grow and mature and will soon begin to flourish once again.

3:9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee.

Here Christ is referring to those who are by birth Jews, but their lives deny their heritage. They claim to be Jews, but fail to keep the Law of Moses. Except for a very small minority, the Jews have almost totally forsaken the Law of Moses. Christ tells the Church that He will cause these people to come and *"worship"* before their feet. The word worship comes from the Greek *"proskuneo,"* which Strong's defines as *"(to kiss, like a dog licking his master's hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore):- worship."*⁶⁶

After the destruction of Jerusalem, the Jews were scattered all over Eastern and Western Europe. The world in which they were living soon became a Christian world. All of the countries were ruled by those who professed to follow the Christian religion. For almost 1,900 years, the Jews were wanderers without a homeland. Finally, in 1948, Israel was given part of Palestine for a homeland. There is no doubt that they owe their entire existence to *"Christian"* powers such as the United States and Great Britain. America was the primary site of the restoration which began around 1800. From that point forward, God continually blessed this nation. This is how He let the Jews know that He loved Christians. He blessed the country which proudly waved the banner of Christ. The Jews had to depend on the heretical Christians for their very survival. They have, in effect, been made to worship, or bow down, before the feet of the Christian world, much to their displeasure. This theme will be greatly elaborated on in chapter twenty.

3:10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

Christ promises to spare those of the period of Philadelphia from some great *"hour of temptation."* The period of Philadelphia would end just before a great time of turmoil and chaos would come to test mankind. Because of their faithfulness, they would be spared this unpleasant experience. I believe this time is synonymous with the time mentioned in Revelation chapter twenty (verse 3) when Satan will be loosed a *"little season."*

God showed the Philadelphian Church the same measure of respect He often showed faithful Jewish kings. *"Wherefore the Lord said unto Solomon, 'Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen'"* (I Kings 11:11-13). Just as God here allowed David's son to pass before the

⁶⁶ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #4352."

punishment was begun, likewise, He allowed those of the period of Philadelphia to pass before the character of the world turned too evil and the trials began.

3:11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

3:12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.

3:13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

There is no way to know exactly how long the world will last after the close of the period of Philadelphia. Of the six periods already finished, the durations have ranged from 133 (Smyrna) to 867 (Thyatira) years. At present (2009) Laodicea is 61 years old. I feel there may be several years left, but exactly how many is hard to tell. There may well be several decades left. When all is said and done, I feel Laodicea will be one of, if not the shortest, of the periods. This is why the Lord said “*I come quickly*” at the end of the Philadelphian letter. His coming may be well within the lifetime of many who were alive at the close of the period of Philadelphia.

The crown He speaks of is certainly the “*crown of life*” spoken of by the apostle James (James 1:12). It symbolizes a Christian’s victory over death and over Satan. This crown cannot be stolen by anyone, but man must take care not to lose it by allowing himself to be corrupted by the evil enticements of Satan. This will certainly be a problem in the ensuing period of Laodicea, when Satan is loosed for a “*little season.*” Satan’s influence over man will increase and it will become extremely difficult, even for the faithful of God to resist his evil ways.

The loosing of Satan for a “*little season*” and the involvement of the Jews will be discussed at length in chapter twenty, but for now it will suffice for us to give the year 1948, the year when Israel became a sovereign nation for the first time in almost 1,900 years, as the end of the period of Philadelphia, and the beginning of the period of Laodicea.

The reward that God promises for the faithful in the period of Philadelphia is that “*I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out.*” A pillar is something that represents strength and stability, two things that were very much lacking at the beginning of the period of Philadelphia. After emerging from over a millennium of repression, the Church was in very poor shape. God opened the door of opportunity to the Church and it quickly grew in strength and number. The Lord is now promising the faithful of this period that they will never again have to worry, because in Heaven everything will be strong and stable.

Another thing that God promises the faithful of this period is “*I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God.*” After so many centuries of having to keep their true Christian identities secret, they will now have their names proclaimed all over Heaven for everyone to hear.

The name Philadelphia means “*brotherly love.*”⁶⁷ This period of time was indeed a remarkable time of brotherhood among all people. Most people were more “*neighborly*” than has been the case throughout most of human history. People cared about each other and would gladly lend a hand to a neighbor who was building a barn or undertaking any other such large project.

The influence of Christian values reached its zenith during this period of time. Things such as honesty, charity, hard work, neighborly kindness, the sanctity of marriage, respect for parents and others in authority, etc. were not only admired, but were expected by society.

All of these good values prevailed in society, but especially in the Church. Many people began to question established religious practices, both Catholic and Protestant, and a movement called the Restoration began. People sought not just a departure from Catholicism, which the Reformation had advocated, but to return to the Bible pattern established in the first century.

⁶⁷ Thayer, 1989, “φιλadelphία.”

This was truly a wonderful period of time for the Church as it was finally free from the yoke of tyranny imposed upon it by Rome for over a thousand years. The Church could finally breathe freely and optimism as well as love prevailed. Fervent and enthusiastic evangelism was also practiced for the first time in many centuries, carrying the repressed message of God's truth to a starving world. Not since the first century had the Church experienced such a period of rapid growth. Now for the final chapter: Laodicea.

Letter #7 Laodicea -- A.D. 1948-?

3:14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

3:15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot.

3:16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth.

3:17 Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

Finally, we come to the seventh Church, Laodicea. This Church covers the time period from 1948, until the end of the world. During this time period Satan is loosed a "little season," and we can see that the enthusiasm of the Restoration has worn off. The excitement that it had brought, the work and the labor of love, all of this is gone; the Church has become lukewarm. The city of Laodicea was a very wealthy one and resembles the world from the second half of the twentieth century forward. This affluence is the main enemy of the Church in the Laodicean period.

There was no indication of widespread immorality in the Church, or any other such thing; the big problem was simply indifference. The Western World has become very affluent, life is much easier, and people have begun to feel much more secure within themselves. The need for God in their lives has become less apparent. Man focuses on his material abundance and not on his spiritual needs. The things of this life have blinded man to what is truly important.

It is a very similar situation to the Children of Israel when they inherited the Promised Land. God warned them not to let their possessions become a hindrance to them, something to blind them to their need for God. "*Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage; and thou say in thine heart, 'My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.' But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day*" (Deuteronomy 8:11-14, 17-18). Of course Israel did not listen to God, and suffered mightily for it on numerous occasions.

In his day, the Apostle Paul warned the Church at Rome (coincidence?) that it was "*High time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed*" (Romans 13:11). This statement certainly could not be any truer, than for those living in the time of Laodicea, that is after 1948. The end can easily be around the next corner waiting for us all. Paul also said, "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*" (II Corinthians 4:3-4). Although men may heed the call of the Gospel, it quite often happens that the god of this world, Satan, manages to blind them once again. He is able to lull God's people to sleep; to make them lose interest in spiritual matters. This is exactly the picture to be seen in the world today. Man has become too filled with himself; he has little if any time left for God. Even those who do take the time to practice Christianity, often do it only halfheartedly.

Satan has been loosed indeed, and I must take my hat off to him. He is doing a marvelous job of luring people away from God. Even the Church is drifting away. One of the biggest problems of the Church today is its compromise of the truth. Most congregations have allowed modern innovations such as Sunday school, instrumental music, the

pastor system, centralized organizations, and other unscriptural practices to infiltrate the Church. This is testimony to their lukewarmness. They simply do not have the zeal to fight against these doctrines of men.

Of course problems of this nature have existed since the infancy of the Church, but it is much worse in the days of Laodicea. As Christ once said, *“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”* (Matthew 24:24). He leaves no doubt that Satan is after God’s people. Now, more than ever, it is vitally important for the Christian to heed the Advice of Paul, *“Wherefore he saith, ‘Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.’ See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:14).

3:18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

Christ exhorts man to forsake the temporary things of this world and embrace the eternal things of the spirit. *“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (II Corinthians 4:18). While man is so consumed with the amassing of material possessions, he neglects the only thing of true value which he possesses, his soul. Today most people, even the “poor” (except in some Third World countries) are rich relative to how the masses have lived throughout history. The abundance of “things” has caused most people to become blind to reality. They do not realize how tenuous life is and how perilous their situation actually is.

3:19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

3:20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

3:21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

3:22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

The ever patient and longsuffering Lord directs the erring to repent and serve Him with zeal. He pictures Himself as one standing at a door continually knocking and seeking entrance into the hearts of men. All that man must do is open his heart to Christ and allow Him to come in. Doing this will of course also entail obedience to His teachings. As Jesus said, *“If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him”* (John 14:23).

The reward that God promises to the faithful of this period is to sit with Him in His throne. He characterized the people of this period as being spiritually *“wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”* What better promise could there be for the destitute than to sit in a throne which surpasses all royalty the earth has ever seen? To also be a partaker of the wealth and power and majesty which are Jesus’?

The name Laodicea means “judgment of the people.”⁶⁸ This is the most obvious one to interpret. At the end of this period will be the judgment. All men who have ever lived will be resurrected to stand before God and answer for their deeds good and bad (John 5:29)

Fate of the cities

The eventual fate of the cities the seven Churches occupied also presents to us some very interesting points. The main problem Christ found with the Church at Ephesus was that they had left their first love. They had forgotten

⁶⁸ Strong, 1982, Greek #2993.

what was important and were simply 'going through the motions' in a very lackadaisical manner. This same attitude is perhaps what led to the eventual downfall of the city. The city was located at the second best natural port of the entire peninsula. This bay was what made their city a vital part of a trade route and as such was ultimately responsible for their success and prosperity. Their prosperity, however, may have been their eventual undoing. "The silting up of the harbor with mud brought down by the Cayster led to the decay of the city."⁶⁹ One constant in a successful and growing city is construction. There is always a need for more housing, markets, offices, etc. Construction involves digging, which means loose dirt that can and will be washed away by rainfall. They had a good, although somewhat shallow harbor. Apparently, no one realized that their own activities were slowly filling up the harbor and dooming their city. Or, perhaps they did realize what was happening, but no one cared enough to do anything about it. The same attitude exhibited by the Christians of the city. The bay eventually became a mosquito infested swamp. Malaria spread by the mosquitoes drove out the last inhabitants of the city. "By the tenth century the prosperous city of Roman times was completely deserted and invaded by marshes."⁷⁰

If one had to choose the noblest of the Seven Churches, the one that was most highly praised by the Lord, it would no doubt be Smyrna. Despite, and to some extent because of, the tremendous persecution they were undergoing this Church was very strong. It is therefore not surprising that, inhabited by men of such strength and conviction, Smyrna still exists today, despite a troubled past. It was "in ancient times one of the most important and now by far the greatest of the cities of Asia Minor, has preserved an unbroken continuity of record and identity of name for the dawn of history to the present time."⁷¹ It is also very interesting to note that "the city was several times ravaged by the Turks, and had become quite ruinous when the emperor John Ducas Vatatzes about 1222 rebuilt it."⁷² Thus the sufferings of the third and early fourth century Christians foretold the similar fate of the city.

The major flaw in the Church at Pergamos was the fact that they were willing to compromise the truth. They were allowing men to establish an unscriptural government against the will of God. The willingness to defer authority to others, rather than standing up and fighting, was a time honored tradition in Pergamos. "Other Greek kings in Asia Minor reduced Pergamian power to a very low ebb about 222 (B.C.). On the other hand, the influence of the Romans was beginning to make itself felt in the east. Attalus prudently connected himself with them and shared in their continuous success. Pergamum thus became the cultural and political capital of a considerable territory. The splendor of Pergamum was at its height under Eumenes II. (197-159). He continued true to the Romans during their wars with Antiochus and Perseus, and his kingdom spread over the greater part of Western Asia Minor."⁷³ The weakness of the kings of Pergamos caused their city to become one of the leading centers of idolatry in the Roman world. In addition to numerous temples dedicated to several of the Greek Gods, "under the Roman Empire Pergamum was one of the centers of worship of Asclepius "the Saviour." Pergamum was the chief centre of the imperial cult under the early empire."⁷⁴ The Church in this city later followed the same example and allowed unscrupulous men to usurp power reserved for the Head of the Church, Christ. The city that at its height under Roman rule, probably had in the neighborhood of 120,000 inhabitants, still exists "under the name of Bergama. It now forms a caza of the vilayet of Smyrna and numbers 20,000 inhabitants, of whom 10,000 are Turks, 700 Jews, and 9,300 Christians (300 Armenians and 9000 Greek schismatics)."⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Davis, 1983, s.v. "Ephesus."

⁷⁰ Unger, 1988, s.v. "Ephesus."

⁷¹ Britannica, 1929, s.v. "Smyrna."

⁷² Ibid., s.v. "Smyrna."

⁷³ Ibid., s.v. "Pergamum."

⁷⁴ Ibid., s.v. "Pergamum."

⁷⁵ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, s.v. "Pergamus."

As discussed in chapter two, verse nineteen, Thyatira was a very wealthy city, not on the same level with Laodicea, but rich nonetheless. It was their ability to dye scarlet and purple better than anyone else that brought them such wealth and renown. Both of these colors were quite significant during that time period. They will be discussed in more detail in chapter seventeen, verse four. There Jezebel is seen again, this time in much more detail. Purple dye was quite expensive, so purple material and garments were very expensive, and therefore were possessed exclusively by the wealthy and in particular royalty. Scarlet was not as expensive as purple but was nevertheless not as common among the general populace as some other colors. Scarlet was more often worn by priests or other religious ‘officials.’ The fact that Thyatira was known for the highest quality dying certainly also meant that they commanded top dollar for their merchandise. The fact that they were a supplier to priests and kings also probably elevated the city’s status within that part of the Empire. Therefore, the statement made about Jezebel later in Revelation seems quite apropos. “*How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow*” (Revelation 18:7).

“Thyatira is now represented by the modern town of Ak-Hissar on a branch line of the Manisa-Soma Railroad, and on the old Ro road 9 hours from Sardis. Ak-Hissar is Turkish for “white castle,” and near the modern town may be seen the ruins of the castle from which the name was derived. The village is of considerable size; most of the houses are of mud, but several of the buildings erected by Caracalla are still standing, yet none of them are perfect. In the higher part of the town are the ruins of one of the pagan temples, and in the walls of the houses are broken columns and sarcophagi and inscribed stones. The population of 20,000 is largely Greek and Armenian, yet a few Jews live among them. Before the town is a large marsh, fever-laden, and especially unhealthful in the summer time, formed by the Lycus. The chief modern industry is rug-making.”⁷⁶ Thyatira does not sound like a very inviting place to live today. It looks much like you would expect for a city that has suffered the wrath of the Almighty.

Sardis reflects the last days of the papacy as a world power. The city’s fate is a perfect fit to the fate of the great Roman whore. “Again in 295 AD, after the Roman province of Asia was broken up, Sardis became the capital of Lydia, and during the early Christian age it was the home of a bishop. The city continued to flourish until 1402, when it was so completely destroyed by Tamerlane that it was never rebuilt. Among the ruins there now stands a small village called Sert, a corruption of its ancient name. The ruins may be reached by rail from Smyrna, on the way to Philadelphia.”⁷⁷ The most powerful “empire” on the face of the earth for centuries, the papacy now rules the smallest sovereign nation on earth, Vatican City. Similarly, the once important city of Sardis was completely destroyed and now only a small village exists at the site.

Philadelphia was the second of the two churches for which Christ only had praise. Like all cities of Asia Minor, Philadelphia is now under Turkish dominion. “Its modern name, Ala-shehir, is considered by some to be a corruption of the Turkish words Allah-shehir, ‘the city of God.’ Ala-shehir is still a Christian town; one-fourth of its modern population is Greek, and a Greek bishop still makes his home there. One of the chief modern industries is a liquorice factory; in the fields about the city the natives dig for the roots. On the terrace upon which the ancient city stood, the ruins of the castle and the walls may still be seen, and among them is pointed out the foundation of the early church. The place may now best be reached by rail from Smyrna.”⁷⁸ It is quite exceptional that a town in that part of the world could still be Christian. Although these “Christians” are most certainly not worshipping God according to the Biblical pattern, it is none the less a great tribute to the strength of the people of Philadelphia that they have been able to maintain any type of Christian presence in the midst of a Muslim country.

Laodicea especially evoked God’s wrath because of their lukewarmness. God found this situation intolerable and the city’s fate fits accordingly. “The Mohammedan invaders destroyed it, and it is now a scene of utter desolation.”⁷⁹ “The ruins, now called Eski Hissar, or old castle, lie near the modern Gonjelli on the railroad, and they have long

⁷⁶ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001, s.v. “Thyatira.”

⁷⁷ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001, s.v. “Sardis.”

⁷⁸ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001, s.v. “Philadelphia.”

⁷⁹ Smith, 1986, s.v. “Laodicea.”

served as a quarry to the builders of the neighboring town of Denizli.”⁸⁰ Most ancient ruins are venerated because of their antiquity. Typically, the ruins are excavated and studied, many become great tourist attractions. Laodicea, however, suffers the indignity of serving as a quarry for a neighboring city. This is analogous to a person of wealth and power dying and not only failing to receive an elaborate burial suitable for a person of their station, but further suffering the indignity of being left for the carrion fowls and beasts to pick at their bones. Such can be the fate of those who defy God.

Satan’s Tactics

Satan is never lacking in the variety of ways in which he attempts to ensnare and defeat men who would serve God. He is also tireless in his work to spread evil. In addition to his attempts to ensnare individual men, he has also tried throughout history to destroy God’s people as a whole. In chapter 13, we will be introduced to a seven-headed beast that represent seven empires or kingdoms that Satan has used to rule over God’s people with the ultimate goal being their destruction. Since outright annihilation of so many people is not likely, it appears that Satan was more hoping to see God’s people assimilated into a larger and more dominant culture. If this happened, they could easily lose their own identity and culture as well as their religion. At the very least, their religion could become intermingled with the beliefs and practices of the people they lived among causing them to become unacceptable to God.

If we look back at the letters to the seven churches we just examined, we can also see how Satan’s tactics changed over time as the Christian era progressed. As the Church began, he attempted to lull people into the trap of ritualism; something that was so prominent among the Jews of Christ’s day. Christ told the Ephesian Church that “*I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love* (Revelation 2:4). They were doing most things correctly, but they were doing them more out of a sense of performing commanded rituals than they were because they loved their Lord. This was an easy sell for the Devil since so many of the early Christians were Jewish and he had already lulled most of the Jews into serving God in a ritualistic way.

The only real ritual the Church was given is the Lord’s Supper. However, Paul warned Christians about the serious nature of partaking of this ritual. “*Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*” (I Corinthians 11:27-30). The worthiness Paul speaks of is connected with the phrase “*discerning the Lord’s body.*” This is not simply a physical ritual where the partakers go through the motions and God is pleased. The word “discerning” is from the Greek *diakrinō*, for which Strong’s definition includes to separate thoroughly, discriminate, hesitate, make different, discern, judge, and be partial.⁸¹ The intent here is that Christians give conscious thought to what they are doing and appreciate the significance of this ritual. While there are physical aspects to it, the more important parts of this ritual are mental and spiritual. While here on Earth, Jesus stated how His followers were to worship Him. “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:23-24). This admonition was apparently not heeded by most in the first one-and-a-half centuries of the Church. The Devil knew their weakspot and wove his web of deceit.

During the period of Smyrna, the Church flourished. This was despite Satan’s attempts to destroy it through persecution. The worst period of persecution the Church ever suffered through was during this time. It culminated from 303 to 313 under the tyrannical reign of the aging and perhaps mentally unstable madman Diocletian. Perhaps Satan believed that he could kill some and scare away the remainder of God’s followers. History, however, has time and again shown that violent oppression is seldom an effective means of curtailing movements that have become established and have a significant following. The attention produced by persecution often draws more people to the movement that are killed by the persecutors. Of even greater importance, is the fact that persecution purifies a

⁸⁰ *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 2001, s.v. “Laodicea.”

⁸¹ Strong, 1982, Greek #1252.

movement by increasing the commitment of some and causing the less committed to dissociate themselves from it. The result is a group that is strongly convicted and focused with a oneness of purpose. Satan's attempts to persecute the Church only made it stronger and helped to prepare it for the tough times ahead.

Having failed in his first two attempts, Satan changed his strategy and tried to bring in false doctrines during the period of Pergamos. This was a twist on the old phrase "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em." Paul warned that Satan would send his people among the Church in an attempt to deceive them. *"And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works"* (II Corinthians 11:14-15). This kind of thing is more like what we think of where Satan is concerned; deceit through subtlety. He was attempting to draw the believers away from God by polluting and changing the doctrine of the Church. He was actually somewhat successful with this tactic. The Church did digress from the truth during this period. He could not, however, manage to get all of the believer to succumb to his efforts.

Following the introduction of false doctrines in the age of Pergamos, the Devil next tried to highjack the Lord's Church with a hostile takeover. He was able to centralize the authority of the Church in one man: the Pope of Rome. There were still those, however, who continued to resist the Devil and worshipped God according to the scriptural pattern. Even though these people were often persecuted by the Papacy, they continued to worship in secret and the Church did not die. Even when the Papacy became the strongest power in the Christian World and empires rose and fell at the pope's whim, the Church could not be defeated. The Devil apparently didn't believe the Prophet Daniel when he said, *"And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever"* (Daniel 2:44).

Realizing that the Papacy could not completely destroy the Lord's Church, the Devil next turned to flooding the world with denominationalism in the period of Sardis. Satan was actually left with no choice as God began to bring His great wrath to bear against the Papacy. Knowing that this tool of his was about to become less and less effective, he had to find another approach. It had become quite apparent that he could not unite all who called themselves Christians under the banner of his false prophet the Pope. He had pushed things too far and Catholic doctrine had become so far removed from the scriptures that many were beginning to question its validity. His next move made perfect sense. If he could not get everything to accept Catholicism and the authority of the Pope, then he would just create a wide variety of different doctrines to camouflage the truth and confuse the masses. Today the assertion that there is only one Church had led the Lord's Church to be labeled a cult by some so-called religious authorities. The Bible says "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:4-6). The world says, "Attend the church of your choice." Who should we believe? *"Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men"* (Acts 5:29).

Having failed to subdue the Lord's Church with the blight of denominationalism, Satan reached deep into his bag of tricks during the period of Philadelphia. A new concept began to sweep the Western World during this time: freedom. This was the most subtle of the Devils tricks and I must admit the hardest for me to figure out. How is freedom a device of Satan you ask? Without secular governments legislating morality people were much freer to act out their immoral desires. Before this time, governments usually were either controlled by the Papacy or, after the beginning of the Reformation, had some form of Protestant national religion. This intertwining of church and state meant that often church law was enforced by secular authorities. The separation of church and state, while a good idea on some levels, also opened the door for the rise immoral behavior.

The seventh and final period, Laodicea, marks Satan's last attempt to finish of God's people. He had been unable to do it through the various things he had tried in earlier times. During the first five periods, he had primarily focused on religion itself. He first tried to lull Christians into ritualism the, when this failed, he tried persecution. Thirdly he tried to corrupt the Church through the use of false doctrines. Next he took over the Church with the Papacy and its supposed authority to make and change Church law. When this failed, he turned to denominationalism; attempting to flood the world with so many false doctrines that the Lord's Church would be lost in the flood of different and conflicting beliefs and practices. This effort also failed to achieve his desired results.

Beginning with Philadelphia, the Devil completely changed his tactics. Instead of trying to corrupt or change the Church from the inside, he started working on the world in which the Church lived. With freedom comes responsibility and accountability. Far too often men of the past have shown themselves incapable of handling freedom. While Moses was on Mount Sinai receiving the Ten Commandments, Aaron made two calves of gold in an attempt to satisfy the people (Exodus 32:1-4). During the time of the judges, the people could not handle the freedom of not having a king and so demanded one of Samuel (I Samuel 8:19). The prodigal son turned to riotous living as soon as he was away from his father's house (Luke 15:13).

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Conclusion

Many details have been presented in this section which have been left unexplained at present. These details will become much clearer as we progress through the third section of Revelation. There we will be given a much more detailed look at the two-thousand years we just zoomed through. It might help to return to this section and read it again after completing the rest of Revelation so that these details will make more sense and can be fitted into their proper contexts more readily.

Church (Time Period)	Satan's Major Tactic
Ephesus (30-180)	Ritualism
Smyrna (180-313)	Persecution
Pergamos (313-533)	False doctrine
Thyatira (533-1400)	Centralized authority
Sardis (1400-1792)	Denominationalism
Philadelphia (1792-1948)	Freedom
Laodicea (1948-?)	Materialism

All that these two chapters have done is present the highlights of the Christian era from the perspective of the Church. Highlights can be helpful, but also misleading. Consider the following analogy. Someone sits down and sees the highlights of a football game. Probably all that they saw were the scoring plays. They will now know exactly why the final score was what it was. However, there is a lot that they will not know. By not seeing every play they will not understand how those scoring plays came about. They also will not know when and why the momentum of the game shifted. It is not uncommon for one team to dominate a game and yet lose because of two or three lapses that result in big plays for their opponent. This observer simply would not have the context for the plays shown in the highlights. We are in the same situation here in Revelation.

The attentive reader should have many questions right now. In several places you may have wondered why a certain thing occurred, or how I reached a particular conclusion. I will assure you that I did not write this section before having a firm understanding of the remainder of the book. In fact, as I have progressed in studying and writing about the remainder of the book I have found myself continually returning to chapters two and three to add and revise. Even though this is near the front of the book, it is the last part I finished.

SECTION III

The History of Christian Rome

Chapter Four

Before the Throne of God

4:1 After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter.

After receiving the letters to the Seven Churches, John looked about and saw a door open up in Heaven. The opening of the door in Heaven symbolizes the opening of Heaven to John so that he can see certain things that otherwise would remain hidden to man. It is the future that is to be revealed to John. Without intervention from above, man could never know anything two minutes before it happened, let alone two-thousand years ahead of time. This is, however, exactly what we are about to see. We will be shown the highlights of the entire Christian era many centuries before most of the events ever transpired.

After seeing this door open up before him, John heard a voice that sounded like a trumpet. We have previously seen John describe the voice of Christ to be like a trumpet and that is the case once again. Just as when a trumpet sounds, this voice was clear and distinctive. The voice, which was coming from inside the open door, invited John to move through the doorway. He was to come inside so he could see certain things that would occur in the future.

4:2 And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.

As soon as the Angel asked John to come through the doorway and join him, John found himself in spiritual form in Heaven. In other words, John's spirit had left His body down on the Island of Patmos. From John's perspective everything prior to this had just seemed like a distant vision; now he was suddenly part of it all. It's just like the difference between looking through the window of a house and then actually walking through the doorway into that house. John was now more than a distant observer of the goings on in heaven; he was now right there where things were happening so he would not miss even the tiniest detail.

What John saw in Heaven was a throne with someone sitting upon it. This person is not identified here, but we will soon find that it is none other than God Himself.

4:3 And he that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.

John now proceeds to give a description of the person he sees sitting on the throne before him. He first used two precious stones to describe the occupant of the throne. Some sources say that the stone spoken of as jasper, might

actually be diamond. It is no doubt appealing to say God would be represented by, what is to us today, a more precious stone such as a diamond. This idea, however, has a serious flaw. According to Funk and Wagnall's Encyclopedia "The first distinct and undoubted reference to diamonds occurs in Roman literature of the 1st century A.D."⁸² Even if John knew what a diamond was, and that is very doubtful, it would not have been very highly esteemed during that time. It appears we will have to be content with jasper as we know it, as the gem in this passage.

Jasper is "a variety of quartz, of a red, brown, yellow, green, or gray color, and opaque. Among the ancients the term was of broader meaning. It included, according to Pliny, a transparent or translucent green variety, and hence denoted a kind of chalcedony or agate."⁸³ Sardine (a.k.a. sardius) is "a variety of chalcedony, which the Greeks called sardios and sardion. Two sorts, distinguished by their color, were known by the name of sardius: the transparent red being our carnelian and the brownish red being the variety of carnelian to which we restrict the name sardius."⁸⁴

It is very interesting to note that these two stones were the first and last of the twelve used on the High Priest's breastplate (Exodus 28:17-20). Here, in reference to God, these stones represent the beauty and worth of the Almighty. The rainbow again illustrates the beauty and magnificence of God. A rainbow contains a continuous spectrum of all colors. What is better to represent beauty than this? The emerald, which we are very familiar with today, is just another depiction of God's beauty and importance.

The prophet Ezekiel gave a similar description of God. "*As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face, and I heard a voice of one that spake*" (Ezekiel 1:28).

The true glory of God cannot be fully related by a description using material things. In truth, the full glory of God cannot even be described with words. In these descriptions, John has done his best to show us that the beauty and glory of God far surpasses anything we could ever imagine here on the earth.

4:4 And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold.

Seated about the throne of God were twenty-four elders wearing crowns of Gold. The number which has the most significance in the Bible, next to seven, is twelve. There were twelve tribes of Israel, and twelve apostles of Christ. Each dispensation, Mosaic and Christian, can be represented by the number twelve. The twenty-four elders here represent both dispensations. They represent the saved Jews and Christians before God.

Christ speaking to His apostles said, "*Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Matthew 9:28). Here we see them along with the twelve patriarchs sitting before God. The twelve patriarchs represent the nation of Israel, and the twelve apostles represent spiritual Israel, the Church.

The twenty-four elders were clothed in white just as Christ had promised those who were saved would be. He made this promise to both the Church in Sardis and the Church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:4-5, 18). White denotes the purity and innocence of those who have been saved. They have been, of course, washed in the blood of the Lamb and cleansed of every spot and blemish.

The crowns of gold they were wearing shows that they were victorious and triumphant over sin and indeed over

⁸² Funk & Wagnall's New Encyclopedia, 1973, s.v. "diamond."

⁸³ Davis, 1983, s.v. "jasper."

⁸⁴ Ibid., s.v. "sardine."

Satan and all of his evil forces. These were not just some ordinary crowns but were crowns made of gold. This shows their value and the corresponding importance of the ones wearing them.

The crowns here can also be said to be synonymous with the “crown of righteousness” which the Apostle Paul spoke of: *“Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing”* (II Timothy 4:8). The “crown of life” which James spoke of: *“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him”* (James 1:12). The crown of glory the Apostle Peter spoke of: *“And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away”* (I Peter 5:4). Regardless of what name you give it, it symbolizes victory over sin and death. Its wearer will have a triumphant entry into Heaven; a hero’s welcome for a tired and battle weary soldier who has come home to glory.

4:5 And out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices: and there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God.

John now heard a voice from the throne on which God was sitting. It was a voice even more powerful and impressive than the voice of Jesus, which John likened to a trumpet (Revelation 1:10). This was the voice of the Almighty God of Heaven. His voice was so brilliant and powerful that it reminded John of lightning and booming thunder. God’s voice was so spectacular that no one could possibly ignore it. This is very reminiscent of the time God appeared to the Children of Israel at Mount Sinai. *“And it came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud; so that all the people that was in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice. And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they removed, and stood afar off. And they said unto Moses, ‘Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die’”* (Exodus 19:16-19; 20:18-19). What an impressive sight that must have been! The people were so overwhelmed that they told Moses to never let God speak to them directly again. They feared for their lives at the very sound of God’s voice. This shows how impressive it must have been. Certainly, John was witnessing something very similar and undoubtedly no less spectacular.

The seven lamps of fire, which are explained to be the seven Spirits of God, were first mentioned in chapter one. There they were explained to be just a representation of the Spirit of God. The number seven representing completeness, it simply shows the omnipresent nature of God’s Spirit.

The seven parts of God’s Spirit are depicted as lamps of fire. This is significant for a couple of reasons. The lamp has long been a symbol of wisdom, which would certainly fit the Spirit of God. Secondly, fire is the element which is able to try and test the worthiness of things. *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”* (I Corinthians 3:13). This shows the ability of God’s Spirit to determine the worthiness of a person. Like the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit is omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent.

This would be an appropriate time to pause and consider the identity and role of each member of the Trinity. Christianity claims to be a monotheistic religion, that is, it believes in only one God, but at the same time speaks of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. No one can logically dispute Jesus claiming to be God. *“And God said unto Moses, I am that I am: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you”* (Exodus 3:14). God tells Moses that His name is “I AM.” This refers to His eternal and self sufficient nature. Unlike mortal creatures that blink in and out of existence, God simply is. He always has been and He always will be. Man also requires God to exist. If God had not created the universe, the sun, the earth, and especially Adam and Eve, none of us would be here now. While we owe our existence to God, He does not in turn owe His existence to any other being or power. He truly is the “I AM.”

God the Father, however, is not the only "I AM." Notice what Jesus says in this passage and the reaction of His audience. "*Jesus answered, If I honour myself, my honour is nothing: it is my Father that honoureth me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: Yet ye have not known him; but I know him: and if I should say, I know him not, I shall be a liar like unto you: but I know him, and keep his saying. Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by*" (John 8:54-59). Those whom Jesus was disputing with thought He was uttering the ultimate blasphemy by claiming to be the "I AM," an undisputed reference to God. This claim was corroborated by the Apostle Paul. "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*" (Philippians 2:5-6). There are other ways, too numerous to mention, to show that Jesus is also God.

The Holy Spirit is also put on a par with the Father and Son. "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all*" (Ephesians 4:4-6). "*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*" (Matthew 28:19). "*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*" (1 John 5:7).

The question naturally arises, is there one God or three? Most ancient cultures had gods for just about everything. The Greeks and Romans had gods for war, fertility, the sea, wine, love, and just about anything else you can think of. Zeus was the father of the gods and Hera, his wife, was their mother. Zeus had many children, a few with Hera, and scores with other goddesses and mortal women. One major thing has always caused Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to stand apart from other religions is the belief in one supreme being, not a pantheon of gods. However, a cursory glance at the Bible shows that there is a Father and a Son who are both Gods. How can this logically be possible?

John answered this question for us when he said "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one*" (1 John 5:7b). The three "persons" of the Trinity are all just different manifestations of the same and only God. This is further evidenced by a conversation between Jesus and Phillip. "*Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*" (John 14:9-10). God the Father is in Heaven and has never appeared on earth. "*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*" (John 1:18). Jesus is simply the temporal manifestation of God. He is the God of time. While the Father reigns in eternity, outside of time, the Son rules the temporal world. Everywhere in the Old Testament where God was seen or heard it was God the Son, Jesus, who was there, not the Father as many assume. According to John it was Jesus who created everything in the beginning. "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made*" (John 1:1-3). Adam and Eve spoke with God (the Son) face to face in the Garden of Eden. "*And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden*" (Genesis 3:8). If they were not accustomed to God appearing to them in physical form, they would not have bothered to hide themselves. It was Jesus who walked through the fiery furnace with Daniel's companions. "*He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God*" (Daniel 3:25). The God who appeared to Moses referred to Himself as the I AM. "*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you*" (Exodus 3:14). This same name was claimed by Jesus. "*Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I AM*" (John 8:58). Jesus did not just begin to be concerned with man when He came as the son of Mary and Joseph. He has been very active on our behalf since the creation.

If God the Father rules in eternity and the Son is the Lord of Time, then who or what is the Holy Spirit and what is His purpose? Man is not a simple creature that lives and dies never to live or know anything again. Man has a soul that will live forever in either Heaven or Hell. In fact, Paul speaks of man having three parts. "*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The third part is the spirit or breath of life (Genesis 2:7).

This spirit even the simplest beast has. It is what separates an animal from a rock or any other nonliving object. This spirit goes back to God when we die (Ecclesiastes 12:7). When the spirit leaves the body, death takes place (James 2:26). Then the soul remains alive and aware, awaiting its fate.

While we live, the Holy Spirit is working with us and for us. His role is best summed up by Paul in the book of Romans. *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God”* (Romans 8:26-27). The Holy Spirit is always in communication with our spirit or soul. He is constantly encouraging, reassuring, and helping us from the inside out. The Holy Spirit is nothing more than a third manifestation of God, this one with the purpose of communicating with us on a level of which we are not consciously aware. The reason no one ever sees the Holy Spirit or hears His voice should now be quite clear. Just as Jesus said that His kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36), neither is God’s Spirit of this world. To summarize, the Father rules the heavenly realm and awaits us in eternity, the Son rules time and has labored since the creation here on the earth on our behalf, and the Spirit works nonstop in the hidden world of spirits.

4:6 And before the throne there was a sea of glass like unto crystal: and in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four beasts full of eyes before and behind.

In front of God’s throne was a “sea” of glass. The word sea here does not mean a large body of water such as the Mediterranean or Dead seas. It rather has reference to a large bowl like the one that Solomon had made for the Temple. *“And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about”* (I Kings 7:23). The purpose of this sea was for the priests to wash in before performing their service to God in the Temple. *“He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt offering they washed in them; but the sea was for the priests to wash in”* (II Chronicles 4:6). The sea that was in the presence of God was, of course, much superior to the one Solomon had made. This one was like glass; clear as crystal. It would be for anyone who was going to approach God to wash their hands in. Of course no unclean person would ever be allowed into Heaven in the first place. The sea symbolized the fact that only things which were pure and holy can come into God’s presence.

John now introduces us to four beasts which are surrounding the throne of God. The word beast here is an unfortunate translation. Not that the translation is incorrect, but it does have a tendency to give us the wrong impression about these creatures. When we hear the word beast we often associate it with some awful looking monster; some evil being whose only purpose is to kill and destroy, or some animal that is wild and untamed. This is not the case at all, with these creatures. Strong’s definition includes “a live thing, i.e. an animal.”⁸⁵ These creatures are not necessarily bad or evil just because they are referred to as beasts. From hence forth, I will usually refer to them as “creatures” to help give us a more accurate picture of what they really are. We will soon see (verses 8 & 9) that these beasts are good creatures, for they serve God. These four beasts had eyes in front and back, hence they could see in all directions, showing the power God had given unto them.

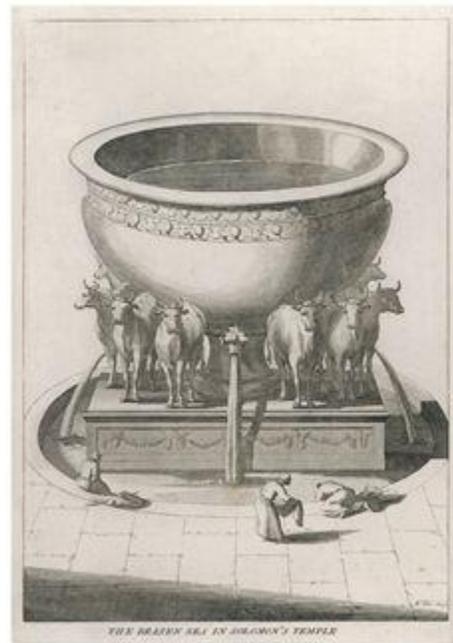


Figure 5
Solomon’s Brazen Sea

⁸⁵ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #2226.”

4:7 And the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle.

John now begins to give a description of the four creatures. The first is like a lion, which gives us a picture of power, strength, and ferocity. The second, like a calf, gives the image of gentleness and meekness. The third had the face of a man; showing intelligence and reason. The fourth resembled a flying eagle, which shows swiftness and grace. The characteristics of these four creatures, when combined, give a very accurate description of God Himself. We know that He is powerful and strong but at the same time gentle and meek. He is certainly intelligent, and His omnipresence is symbolized by the swift-flying and graceful eagle. These beings were not God, but were nonetheless very powerful and important. God created man in His image (Genesis 1:27), but we are very far from being anywhere close to the glory, intelligence, and wisdom of God. These creatures, however, appear to be much closer to God than man.

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4:8 And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within: and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.

The four creatures just described in the previous verse, are now said to each have six wings. This symbolizes the ability to fly very fast and gracefully, and to be able to fly in all directions at once going about doing the Lord's bidding. There are three dimensions or planes of motion. You could say they correspond to length, width, and height. These creatures have a pair of wings for each dimension, thus they are capable of flying in all directions at once.

The eyes of the creatures are mentioned again. In verse six they were said to be "*full of eyes before and behind.*" Again this represents their ability to see in all directions at once. I believe these creatures are meant to embody all the characteristics of God. The wings and eyes represent His omnipresence and omniscience respectively, He can be all places at one time, and can see all things at one time. The character of these creatures is now revealed to us. These creatures, being spirits, have no need of rest, so they can serve God continuously.

We are told quite a bit about these creatures, but are not really told what they are. To my knowledge there are only three types of intelligent creatures in all of creation. There is God, man, and the angels. Obviously these creatures are not God or man, so that leaves only angels. They do not, however, seem to really fit with how we normally imagine angels. I believe they are angels but very special angels. They are often referred to in the Old Testament as cherubim and seraphim. These beings are angels, but not ordinary angels.

The prophet Isaiah's description of seraphim certainly bears some striking similarities to the description we have seen here in Revelation. "*Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, 'Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory'*" (Isaiah 6:2-3). These seraphim had six wings just like our creatures. They also referred to God as, "*holy, holy, holy,*" as did our creatures. Three is another number, like seven and twelve, that was considered by the ancients to represent completeness. The fact that these creatures repeat the term holy three times shows that God is completely holy.

We have seen that the creatures in Revelation sit around the throne of God. Correspondingly you could say God sits among these creatures, and this is exactly what we see in the writings of Isaiah. "*O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, that dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth: thou hast made heaven and earth*" (Isaiah 37:16).

Possibly the most interesting comparison is found in the writings of the prophet Ezekiel. "*Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I was among the captives by the river of Chebar, that the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings. And their feet were straight feet; and the sole of their feet was like the sole of a calf's foot: and they sparkled like the color of burnished brass. And they had the hands of a man under their wings on their four*

sides; and they four had their faces and their wings. Their wings were joined one to another; they turned not when they went; they went every one straight forward. As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle. Thus were their faces: and their wings were stretched upward; two wings of every one were joined one to another, and two covered their bodies. And they went every one straight forward: whither the spirit was to go, they went; and they turned not when they went. As for the likeness of the living creatures, their appearance was like burning coals of fire, and like the appearance of lamps: it went up and down among the living creatures; and the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning. And the living creatures ran and returned as the appearance of a flash of lightning” (Ezekiel 1:1, 5-14).

The faces described here by Ezekiel are those of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle. Our creatures had the characteristics of a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle. In a later chapter Ezekiel describes the faces of the same creatures in a slightly different way. *“And every one had four faces: the first face was the face of a cherub, and the second face was the face of a man, and the third the face of a lion, and the fourth the face of an eagle”* (Ezekiel 10:14).

The description given by Ezekiel in chapter one exactly matches what we have in Revelation, and his description in chapter ten is only slightly different. In all three cases the faces of a lion, man, and eagle are mentioned. The only difference is that one had the face of a cherub in Ezekiel’s second description where elsewhere it had the appearance of a calf. In reality these are spiritual beings and do not naturally possess the appearance of any of these earthly creatures. They seem to be able to take any form at will. The difference here is that one of them was in his natural form when Ezekiel saw him the second time.

Taken all together I think this shows that our four creatures here in Revelation are cherubim or seraphim. They share too many similarities for there not to be a connection. Incidentally, there seems to be no difference in the usage of the terms cherubim and seraphim in the Bible and therefore refer to the same creatures.

Now that we have identified these creatures, let us move on to what they do. They testify to God’s holiness, and the fact that He is the Almighty. Then He is described as He *“which was, and is, and is to come.”* This relates His eternal nature. God has always existed, He was never created, nor was He born. He never came into existence in any manner, He simply always has been. This is a very deep concept, but when you consider the alternatives, it is no more difficult than any other. If God had come into existence at some point in the past, where did He come from? He certainly did not appear from nothing; someone or something must have created Him. Then where did that creator come from? You could keep going back to infinity with this idea. Either God always has been, or at least something from which God came always has been, or else He came from nothing. The idea that God always has been, although it is counterintuitive to man who lives in such a finite world, should not trouble us at all.

There are many things we are not really capable of comprehending at this point due to the limitations placed on us because of our humanity. One day when this mortal puts on immortality (I Corinthians 15:54), these things might become very simple concepts to us. For the present, however, we simply have to accept them without having a full understanding. God always has been, He is, and He always will be. In the world in which we live everything has a beginning and an end. It is hard for us to accept this idea of eternity, but God is eternal; He will continue to exist for ever. For those who are faithful to Him, they can join Him in Heaven for eternity.

4:9 And when those beasts give glory and honor and thanks to him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever,

4:10 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

4:11 Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Now we see the entire picture around the throne, the four creatures and the twenty-four elders praising and glorifying God. The four creatures are giving glory, honor, and thanks to God and once again testifying of His eternal nature, by saying He lives *“for ever and ever.”* Now we see the twenty-four elders joining in with the four

creatures in worshipping God, by falling down before him and casting their crowns before Him. These crowns were found, earlier in this chapter, to represent the victory of those who are saved over Satan, and over sin and death.

These twenty-four elders, representing those who lived under the Old and New Testaments, now take these crowns from their heads and toss them in front of God. This is not an act of ingratitude, or a refusal to wear the crowns, but rather an act of humility and subjection before God. The elders were humbly giving whatever glory, honor, and power they received with the crowns to God, who was certainly much more deserving of it than they. This idea is borne out in verse eleven where the elders say to God *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power.”* They are giving up all that they have received to God because He is indeed much more worthy than they are.

“For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.” God deserves reverence and respect from these twenty-four elders, despite their triumph and success, because He created them in the first place. They owe everything to Him, even their very existence. A very important principle is set forth here. The reason God created the universe was for His pleasure. I think that often times we hold a view of God that is somewhat cold and sterile. We do not tend to see God as one who can be happy and sad, but He can be. He has emotions just like you and I do. In addition, He derives pleasure from the things He has created. Here in the fourth chapter of Revelation, we find the answer to one of the most ancient questions of mankind, “why are we here.” We are here because it pleased God to create us. Why do most couples choose to have children? Ultimately, it’s for their pleasure. Certainly, children can bring their parents much heartache and grief just as we can do to God. However, just as children are expected to be in subjection to their parents, we are likewise expected to be in subjection to our Heavenly Father. Whether we like it or not, we were created for the purpose of pleasing God.

Chapter Five

Preparation for the Seven Seals

5:1 And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals.

We found in chapter four that God is the one sitting on the throne. Now John sees a book in the right hand of God as He sits upon the throne. The fact that God has the book in His hand shows that it is His book. In fact He wrote this book. It contains a revelation of the future that only God could know.

What we call a book today, with a cover and bound pages or leaves, was unknown at the time Revelation was written. The “book” referred to here was actually a roll of either animal skin or paper made from papyrus. “The skins when written upon were formed into rolls. They were rolled upon one or two sticks and fastened with a thread, the ends of which were sealed. The rolls were generally written on one side only, except in Ezekiel 2:9; Revelation 5:1. They were divided into columns (Authorized Version ‘leaves,’ Jeremiah 36:23); the upper margin was to be not less than three fingers broad, the lower not less than four; and a space of two fingers breadth was to be left between every two columns.”⁸⁶



Figure 6
Signet Ring

As mentioned in the above reference, these rolls usually contained writing only on one side, but this one had been “*written within and on the backside.*” This roll was sealed to prevent any unauthorized access to the material of the book. The seals spoken of here were not something which would physically prevent someone from accessing what was protected by the seal. All they would do is reveal if someone had gained unauthorized access to the book.

The seal was usually made of either clay or wax, and when the material was soft it was applied to whatever was to be sealed. Then the person who had authority over what was to be sealed would affix his “seal.” This simply meant that he would take his signet ring, or some other type of emblem designated for this purpose, and press it into the soft clay or wax. The imprint of the ring would then be left in the material as it hardened. Since the ring or emblem was supposed to be unique, no one would be able to duplicate the design left on the seal. As a result, if someone broke a seal, there was no way to re-affix it without the ring that had originally made it.

⁸⁶ W. Smith, 1986, s.v. “book.”

This book contained not just one but seven seals. These seals would not all have been on the outside, because there would have been no use for that. Rather the seals were distributed throughout the roll. You could unroll the book up to a certain point and then you would encounter another seal. You would have to then break that seal in order to proceed any further. Consequently, it was possible to tell how much of a roll had been read by unauthorized persons.

5:2 And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?

Now an angel of God speaks with a loud and powerful voice, and asks the question, “*Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof?*” It was not a matter of physical strength or intelligence that was needed to open the seals. A small child would possess the physical strength and dexterity to break the seals and expose the writings of the book. This was a question of authority, or as it is spoken of here, worthiness. The seals could only be broken by someone who had the right to open the book. The angel was asking who was qualified to open and read the book.

5:3 And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.

The question in verse two was put forth to find a person who had the authority to break the seals and open the book, so that the information contained in it could be obtained. Unfortunately, no one was found who possessed the authority to open the book. No one in Heaven or on the earth or under the earth was worthy to open it. Heaven is the domain of God and the angels, while the earth is the domain of man. Under the earth refers to Hades where the spirits of all departed men reside. No one in any of these three places was found to be worthy to open the seals and read the book.

5:4 And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

When John realized that no one was going to be able to open the book he was deeply saddened. In fact he was saddened to the point that he wept. The reason for John’s sadness is that he realized the importance of what the book contained, and if no one could open the book and read it, all of the knowledge and wisdom that it contained would be lost forever. A closed book does no one any good. This book must be an important one if it was in Heaven in God’s hand. Further testimony of its importance is the call that went out to all parts of creation seeking someone to open the book.

What is so important about this book? This book is really what we will see in the remainder of Revelation. As the seven seals of the book are loosed they will reveal the major highlights of history as they affected the Church. What God wants man to know about the entire Christian era is contained in this book. Certainly we can see why John was so distraught when no one was found to open the book and make known its secrets. It is very distressing to see how so many people today ignore the Book of Revelation when John actually cried when he thought its secrets would remain hidden forever. We need to give it as much respect as John did.

5:5 And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.

As John is despairing over the book, one of the twenty-four elders speaks to him and informs him that someone had been found who is worthy to open the book. Someone he described as the “*Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.*” This person would be able to open the book and reveal its secrets. The Lion of the tribe of Judah is a reference to a prophesy spoken by Jacob as he blessed his twelve sons. “*Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father’s children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion’s whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh*

come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:8-10). Shiloh, of course, is a reference to Christ.

The “*Root of David*” is a reference to Christ being a descendant of David. Both of His parents, Joseph and Mary, were direct descendants of David, Joseph through Solomon, and Mary through Nathan. He was praised as the Son of David by the multitudes as He rode triumphantly into Jerusalem to meet His fate. “*And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, ‘Hosanna to the Son of David: blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; hosanna in the highest’*” (Matthew 21:9). This is the one who was found to be worthy to open the seals of the book. He was pure and innocent and without sin (Hebrews 4:15), therefore He was indeed worthy.

“*Hath prevailed to open the book*” is a reference to Christ’s life. He “*was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). He prevailed, he was victorious in the game of life. He beat Satan at every turn. Despite Satan’s best efforts Jesus lived a perfect life, fulfilled His purpose, and then ascended back into Heaven to the right hand of the Father.

It should come as no surprise to us that it was up to Christ to deliver this very important message to man. The message originated with God, and Christ the mediator brought it down to man. “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*” (I Timothy 2:5). He again fulfilled His role as mediator here by opening the seals of this important book so that the message it contained could be given to man.

5:6 And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.

After one of the elders had informed John that there was indeed one found worthy to open the book, and he described Him without doubt as Christ, John looks and sees something new before the throne of God. Standing in the middle of the four creatures, and the twenty-four elders, was a Lamb that was apparently bloody and wounded in appearance, because he said It was “*as it had been slain.*” This is Christ depicted as a Lamb, as He is in many places in the Bible. “*He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth*” (Isaiah 53:7). “*The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’*” (John 1:29). Christ replaced the Passover lamb that had been offered annually for some 1,500 years. He was the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of mankind. “*For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*” (I Corinthians 5:7). The Lamb we see here appears to have been killed, and indeed Christ was slain for the sins of the world. Although this Lamb appears to have been slain, It is not dead, for It STOOD before the throne. The Lamb had been slain, but It had been resurrected by the power of God.

This Lamb, which is a depiction of Christ, had seven horns and seven eyes. In the Bible horns are often used to represent power and authority. “*And I said unto the angel that talked with me, ‘What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem’*” (Zechariah 1:19). Obviously the only thing which will scatter a city or nation is another, more powerful, nation. Horn is from the Hebrew word “qeren.” One definition which Strong’s gives for qeren is “power”⁸⁷ It is used this way dozens of times in the Old Testament.

The fact that the Lamb is pictured with seven horns shows that he has complete power. This agrees with the record of Matthew. “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth’*” (Matthew 28:18). The seven eyes of the Lamb shows Christ’s complete vision. He can see everywhere and everything at once. He shares this ability with the Father.

We are told that the seven horns and eyes represent the seven Spirits of God. The two characteristics represented by the horns and eyes certainly pertain to the Spirit of God. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are all omniscient,

⁸⁷ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Hebrew #7161.”

omnipresent, and omnipotent. “*Sent forth to all the earth*” is just further evidence of the existence of God’s Spirit “everywhere at once.”

In this verse Christ was pictured as a lamb, whereas the previous verse spoke of Him as a lion. These are two very diverse creatures but taken together serve well to illustrate the nature of Christ and God. Christ was very meek and humble like a lamb. However, when it comes time for the wrath of God to be loosed on sinners, He is stronger and deadlier than the most ferocious lion. He can be both gentle and harsh depending on the requirements of the situation.

5:7 And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne.

Now the Lamb, which is Christ, moves forward and takes the sealed book, that is in the hand of God, who was seated upon the throne. The passing of the book from God to Christ agrees with what we were told in chapter one. “*The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him*” (Revelation 1:1). God was the author of the book and gave it to Christ the mediator for delivery to man.

5:8 And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.

After Jesus took the book from God, the four creatures and twenty-four elders, who had previously been worshipping God, began to worship Christ. This is what is meant by “*Fell down before the Lamb.*” Each one of the twenty-eight beings possessed harps with which to worship Christ. They also had “*Golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints.*” God does not at all feel bothered by man when he prays to Him. Far from it, God enjoys receiving the prayers of righteous men. “*The prayer of the upright is his delight*” (Proverbs 15:8). “*Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*” (Psalm 141:2). To God, the prayers of saints, or Christians, is just like a very sweet and pleasant smell drifting up to Him from earth. What loving father does not like to hear the voice of his children?

5:9 And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

The four creatures, and the twenty-four elders, now begin to sing a “new” song. This type of song is not like the songs we are accustomed to today. In Bible times a song was “a poetical composition, generally brief, capable of being set to music and sung, whether or not it was intended for singing or was ever actually sung.”⁸⁸ Often the story of some great event was recounted and called a song, such is the case here. “*They sung a new song, saying.*” This shows that the message was spoken and not actually sung with music.

This song which they are speaking is a “new” song, which means it has never been heard before. This song extols the worthiness of the Lamb, Christ, to break open the seals of the book that He has just taken from God. The song then continues by explaining why He is qualified to open the seals, when no one else is. Christ was slain, or crucified, on the cross at Calvary. He died there to redeem, or buy back, mankind from sin. “*Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:14). “*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*” (I Peter 1:18-19).

“*Redeemed us to God by thy blood,*” means that Christ’s sacrifice of Himself paid the price for the sins of mankind, and broke down the wall that had been separating God and man, this wall was sin. “*But God commendeth his love*

⁸⁸ Davis, 1983, s.v. “song.”

toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:8-10).

“*Out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation,*” tells us that God’s people are no longer just a single nation, as had been the case with the Jews, but now He has people all over the world, of every nationality and race. God had told Abraham almost two-thousand years before the fact, that someday all nations would be blessed through him. “*And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, ‘In thee shall all nations be blessed’*” (Galatians 3:8). Then, finally, God revealed unto Peter in a vision that the gospel should be taken to the Gentiles. “*Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him’*” (Acts 10:34).

5:10 And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.

Christ had made those who had been obedient to Him “*kings and priests*” unto God. The idea of Christians being kings and priests just reflects the fact that they are to be rewarded for their service to God. He will reward them with greater spiritual wealth and authority than they could have ever imagined.

“*And we shall reign on the earth,*” does not mean that Christians can expect to be given actual positions of authority in world governments. After all, this is not where Christ reigns. Christ’s kingdom is spiritual, therefore His reign is spiritual also. He will never reign literally over the earth. The Jews were expecting a messiah to come and restore the glory of Israel, but this was not God’s plan. “*My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36).

By the world’s standard of greatness, Jesus’ life was a miserable failure. He never held any position of authority, let alone that of king. He never made anything of Himself, but then the world’s standards are not God’s. “*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Since Christ’s kingdom is not of this world, neither is His reign. Since the reign of Christians will be with Christ (Revelation 20:6), their reign will not be of this world either. Christ reigns spiritually, triumphant over death and sin. When someone becomes a Christian their sins are washed away and they receive the promise of eternal life. They then begin to reign, like Christ, triumphant over sin and death, through the power of God. They continue to reign as long as they are faithful to God.

*5:11 And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands;
5:12 Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.*

Now John hears a seemingly innumerable chorus proclaiming praises to Christ. The four creatures, and the twenty-four elders, which have been present for quite some time praising Christ, are now joined by multitudes of angels proclaiming the worthiness of the crucified Savior of mankind. The number of angels given is not meant to be specific, but rather just serves to illustrate the vast numbers who were present worshipping Christ. The praises that they are bestowing on Jesus are all because He was slain. Because of His willingness to lower Himself, and to suffer and die as He did, He is worthy to be exalted above all others. “*But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father*” (Philippians 2:7-11). Here the Apostle Paul expresses, in a very beautiful way, why Christ is worthy to receive the praises and worship of all creatures.

“Power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.” The angels that are praising Christ tell of His worthiness to receive all of these things. As we mentioned earlier He has been given all power by the Father. Riches, means spiritual riches, and certainly no one is wealthier. No one approaches His wisdom or strength. Above all others He is worthy of all honor, and glory, and blessing.

5:13 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, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

5:14 And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.

The worship continues, but now it is also extended to the One sitting on the throne, which is God. As the Apostle Paul pointed out, Christ suffered and died so *“That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Philippians 2:11). The one’s testifying to God’s greatness here are *“every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea.”* This includes all inhabitants of Heaven, all of mankind, all spirits of deceased men, and all animals. Obviously animals cannot consciously acknowledge God since they are not sentient. Their very existence, however, testifies to the greatness and power of God. *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead”* (Romans 1:20).

All men will also testify to the greatness of God. As Paul pointed out, *“At the name of Jesus every knee should bow,...and...every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”* (Philippians 2:10-11). Someday everyone, regardless of whether or not they are Christians, will bow before Christ and praise His holy and blessed name. Unfortunately, those who were not faithful will not be fortunate enough to enjoy the blessings of His presence for all eternity.

After hearing the praises coming from the earth below, the four creatures and the twenty-four elders say *“amen,”* which means “so be it.” In other words they were giving their approval to the praises which had been offered on behalf of Christ and God by the others.

Chapter Six

Opening of the Seven Seals - The Fall of Paganism

In chapter five we were introduced to the book, which at first no one could open. Finally the slain Lamb, Christ, was found to be worthy to loose the seals and reveal the secrets of the book. In this chapter we will see the opening of six of the seven seals. We will find that the seals will reveal conditions in Rome that will take us up to the point at which paganism falls. This does not mean the fall of Rome as an empire, but the fall of paganism in Rome. The reason this is so significant is that Satan had extensively used this great heathen power to try and destroy the Lord's Church. The pagan deities of Rome, by their very nature, were in direct opposition to God. When these time-honored gods were thrust aside it was testimony of the strength of Christianity in the Empire. What occurred in the Roman Empire certainly didn't end paganism in the world, but it did end a string of six successive pagan empires who had in turned ruled the Mediterranean world; Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media-Persia, Greece and then Rome. Until the fourth century A.D. paganism, in its various forms, had always been the world's dominant religion. Since then it has been Christianity.

Verses one through eight of this chapter contain the description of four men riding four differently colored horses. These four men are quite often referred to as the "Four horsemen of the Apocalypse." We will find, however, that they merely represent conditions within the Roman Empire during the first three centuries of the Lord's Church.

History also provides us with insight into the corruption that plagued the Roman Empire during this period, corruption that would play a vital role in its downfall.

"From the earliest days of the republic, the noble families of Rome had valued honesty, simple living, and strict moral conduct. But few could resist the lure of the riches that now poured into Rome from across the seas. Senators were required by law to hold most of their property in land and were forbidden to engage in business. Many of them, however, found ways of sharing in the new opportunities for profit-especially those who secured appointments as provincial administrators. Gradually the old republican virtues were eroded by the temptations of wealth. Plain living and discipline gave way to indulgence and moral decay."⁸⁹

6:1 And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see.

⁸⁹ Greer, 1987, p. 93.

After all of the ado about the book, we are finally going to see what it contains. John watches as Christ breaks the first seal. Then he heard one of the four creatures which had been worshipping God, call out to him. The creature told John to come forward and see what the first seal would reveal. The voice of the creature was mighty and powerful like thunder, similar to the other voices John has heard in Heaven (Revelation 1:10; 4:1; 4:5).

6:2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

John saw that the first seal revealed a white horse. Upon the horse was a warrior equipped with a crown and a bow, who went about conquering. This does not symbolize Christ as so many assume. The Bible never pictures Christ with a bow, He always has a sword. This horse and rider symbolizes the period of prosperity in the Roman Empire. The bow represents their military might, and the crown their great power and authority.

“...the Romans owed much of their military superiority to armies of skilled archers.”⁹⁰

This was the time when Rome conquered who they would; they were supreme upon the face of the earth; no one could stand in their way.

“(27 B.C. - A.D. 180) The reign of Augustus marked the beginning of the Pax Romana (Roman peace), which lasted for 200 years. No country was strong enough to wage a major war on Rome, or to pose a serious threat to the frontiers. Commerce flourished, and the standard of living rose.”⁹¹

“The dynasty of Vespasian and his sons (Titus, A.D. 79-81, Domitian, A.D. 81-96) became extinct on the murder of the last named, whose high-handed treatment of the senate earned him the name of a tyrant; his successor, Nerva (A.D. 96-98), opened the series of ‘adoptive’ emperors (Trajan, A.D. 98-117, Hadrian, 117-138, Antonius Pius, 138-161, Marcus Aurelius 161-180) under whose rule the empire enjoyed a period of internal tranquility and good government. Its boundaries were extended by the subjugation of northern Britain by Agricola, A.D. 78-84, by the annexation of the districts included in the angle of the Rhine and Danube under the Flavian emperors, and the conquest of Dacia (the modern Transylvania) under Trajan (completed in A.D. 106). Trajan also annexed Arabia Petraea and in his closing years invaded Parthia and formed provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia and Assyria; but these conquests were surrendered by his successor, Hadrian, who set himself to the task of consolidating the empire and perfecting its defenses. To him is due the system of permanent *limits* of frontier fortifications, such as the wall which protected northern Britain and the palisade which replaced the chain of forts established by the Flavian emperors from the Rhine to the Danube. The construction of these defenses showed that the limit of expansion had been reached, and under M. Aurelius the tide began to turn. A great part of his reign was occupied with wars against the Marcomanni, Quadi, Sarmatians, etc., whose irruptions seriously threatened the security of Italy. Henceforth Rome never ceased to be on the defensive.”⁹²

The period of peace and prosperity represented by the white horse prevailed during the first 150 years of the Church. It gave the fledgling Church time to grow and mature to the point that it was able to withstand the rough ride to come, as the Empire began to experience serious problems. The ending of the so-called ‘Pax Romana’ in A.D. 180 coincides with the end of the period of time covered by the church at Ephesus. This is no coincidence.

6:3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.

⁹⁰ Funk & Wagnall’s, 1973, s.v. “archery.”

⁹¹ World Book, 1985, s.v. “Roman Empire.”

⁹² Britannica, 1929, s.v. “Rome.”

6:4 And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.

Now the second seal is opened, and the second of the four creatures tells John to come forward and see what it will reveal. This seal reveals a horse, as did the first one, but this horse is red instead of white. The red color represents blood. The period of prosperity known as the ‘Pax Romana’ has ended and a period of great internal strife and chaos ensued. The rider of the horse had been given power to “*take peace from the earth,*” and that is exactly what he did. He did it with a “*great sword*” which shows his impact was to be very significant and very violent. “*That they should kill one another,*” implies that this is to be an internal struggle, where Romans would fight against Romans. History indeed records that this is exactly what happened.

“The third century was a time of revolts and civil wars and of fierce attacks against Rome’s distant frontiers.”⁹³

“During the turbulent third century even the pretense of lawful succession was discarded; the provincial armies battled to advance their favorite candidates. One ruler after another was assassinated, and the succession was determined by the clash of legions. (Because of this fact, the third century is often referred to by historians as the period of the ‘barracks emperors.’) Surprisingly, many of the emperors so chosen proved to be forceful and competent leaders. But this did not save them from violent death, and their terms of office were generally short. At a time when the Empire was crying out for wise leadership, its human resources were being squandered.”⁹⁴

“Rome’s two centuries of prosperity ended with the death of Emperor Commodus in 192. In the following years the political balance shifted to the military. Leaders of the Praetorian guard and the army began to murder emperors almost at will and to replace them with new rulers, who in turn were murdered one after another. During the third century dozens of emperors claimed the throne, but many of those men were really no more than political gamblers or warlords who for a short time purchased the loyalty of soldiers within the army.”⁹⁵

“(180 - 285) Warfare lasting 100 years followed the two-hundred years of peace. Rome found itself threatened in both the east and west by barbarian tribes. To meet these threats, the empire doubled the size of its army. The increased drain on men and resources caused an economic crisis. For almost 100 years, the army put emperors on the throne and removed them at will. During one 67-year period, there were 29 emperors and claimants to the throne, only four of whom died natural deaths. These ‘barracks emperors’ engaged in almost continuous fighting, and usually lived in camps near the frontiers.”⁹⁶

Clearly we can see that this period is very aptly described by a red horse. Roman blood flowed freely during this time, and most of it was shed at the hands of other Romans.

6:5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.

6:6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

Now the third seal is opened and the third of the four creatures tells John to come forward and see what is revealed.

⁹³ Greer, 1987, p. 118.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 120.

⁹⁵ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 142.

⁹⁶ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Roman Empire.”

Again it is a horse as was the case with the first two seals. This horse is black in color, representing doom and despair, a time of want, poverty, and famine. This is a natural consequence of the bloodshed and internal chaos that has just occurred. Rome is now feeling the results of the violence which has nearly torn it apart from the inside. The rider of this horse was carrying a scale in his hand which showed that he was to affect the buying and selling of goods. The scale represents commerce and trade, because most commodities, even today are weighed before they are sold.

“A measure of wheat for a penny.” A measure was approximately 1 quart. A “penny” or denarius, was about one days wages. These prices were about ten times normal, showing very high inflation. This period is reminiscent of the times predicted in Ezekiel 4:16-17 concerning Israel. “Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: that they may want bread and water, and be astonished one with another, and consume away for their iniquity.” The Roman Empire was now experiencing similar conditions. It was collapsing militarily, socially, and economically.

“The economy of the empire nearly collapsed during this period. Defense costs had risen as raiders plundered the holdings of the empire on several frontiers. Moreover, the emperors had been supplying the inhabitants of Rome with free food and public games—a fairly effective means of political domination, but a heavy drain on the economy. Adding to these financial problems was a shortage of silver, on which the imperial currency was based. The emperors resorted to depreciating the currency, but this forced people to hoard what silver they had and actually drove more of the metal out of circulation. The result was a disastrous inflation. In fact experts conclude that during the third century prices in Egypt soared to between fourteen and twenty times their earlier level.”⁹⁷

“To the north, German tribes continued to threaten the Empire’s borders, while the Parthian Kingdom challenged Rome’s frontiers in the East. The imperial coffers had been drained by the earlier military campaigns of Marcus Aurelius; finances were henceforth to be a problem that plagued all Roman leaders. Marcus Aurelius had made matters worse by devaluing the Roman currency 25 per cent and by selling imperial treasures to raise additional revenue. Now Severus devalued the money by another 25 per cent, and in addition raised existing taxes and devised new ones. One source of income came to be the confiscation of the property of Severus’ political enemies, or of those citizens who contributed too slowly to his campaigns.

But none of these measures was sufficient. Just as the age of peace had brought Rome prosperity for which all emperors could take credit, so the age of wars brought economic and social difficulties which no emperor could resolve. The increasing taxation which war required depleted the treasuries of provincial cities and also of individual citizens: some members of the upper classes were driven to forfeit their rank and retire to lower social orders where the financial burdens were less. Thus, paradoxically, higher taxes led to a decline in revenues. At the same time, the numbers of the poor increased. To ease their burden—and allay their unrest—Severus systematically distributed food, money and medicine, putting an additional strain on the imperial budget. The state, it seemed, could not meet all the demands that were placed upon it, yet could not endure without meeting them.”⁹⁸

The problems multiplied many times over as the Empire weakened and its enemies, who were now quite numerous, no longer trembled at the mention of the Roman name.

“Such was the state of Rome under the reign of Honorius, at the time when the Gothic army formed the siege, or rather the blockade, of the city. By a skilful disposition of his numerous forces, who impatiently watched the moment of an assault, Alaric encompassed the walls, commanded the twelve principal gates, intercepted all communication with the adjacent country, and vigilantly guarded the navigation of the

⁹⁷ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 142.

⁹⁸ Moses Hadas, *Imperial Rome*, (New York, NY: Time Inc., 1965), p. 183.

Tiber, from which the Romans derived the surest and most plentiful supply of provisions. The first emotions of the nobles and of the people were those of surprise and indignation, that a vile barbarian should dare to insult the capital of the world; but their arrogance was soon humbled by misfortune; and their unmanly rage, instead of being directed against an enemy in arms, was meanly exercised on a defenseless and innocent victim. Perhaps in the person of Serena the Romans might have respected the niece of Theodosius, the aunt, nay even the adoptive mother, of the reigning emperor; they abhorred the widow of Stilicho; and they listened with credulous passion to the tale of calumny which accused her of maintaining a secret and criminal correspondence with the Gothic invader. Actuated, or overawed, by the same popular frenzy, the senate, without requiring any evidence of her guilt, pronounced the sentence of her death. Serena was ignominiously strangled; and the infatuated multitude were astonished to find that this cruel act of injustice did not immediately produce the retreat of the barbarians and the deliverance of the city. That unfortunate city gradually experienced the distress of scarcity, and at length the horrid calamities of famine. The daily allowance of three pounds of bread was reduced to one-half, to one-third, to nothing; and the price of corn still continued to rise in a rapid and extravagant proportion. The poorer citizens who were unable to purchase the necessaries of life, solicited the precarious charity of the rich; and for a while the public misery was alleviated by the humanity of Laeta, the widow of the emperor Gratian, who had fixed her residence at Rome, and consecrated, to the use of the indigent, the princely revenue which she annually received from the grateful successors of her husband. But these private and temporary donatives were insufficient to appease the hunger of a numerous people; and the progress of famine invaded the marble palaces of the senators themselves. The persons of both sexes, who had been educated in the enjoyment of ease and luxury, discovered how little is requisite to supply the demands of nature; and lavished their unavailing treasures of gold and silver to obtain the coarse and scanty sustenance which they would formerly have rejected with disdain. The food the most repugnant to sense or imagination, the aliments the most unwholesome and pernicious to the constitution, were eagerly devoured, and fiercely disputed, by the rage of hunger. A dark suspicion was entertained that some desperate wretches fed on the bodies of their fellow-creatures whom they had secretly murdered; and even mothers (such was the horrid conflict of the two most powerful instincts implanted by nature in the human breast), even mothers are said to have tasted the flesh of their slaughtered infants! Many thousands of the inhabitants of Rome expired in their houses, or in the streets, for want of sustenance; and as the public sepulchers without the walls were in the power of the enemy, the stench which arose from so many putrid and unburied carcasses infected the air; and the miseries of famine were succeeded and aggravated by the contagion of a pestilential disease.”⁹⁹

The above passage obviously requires no comment on my part.

*6:7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
6:8 And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.*

Now the fourth seal is opened and John is told by the fourth creature to come forward and see what is revealed; it is yet another horse. This time it is pale in color, this represents sickness and death. As a body loses blood it becomes pale in color, revealing its imminent death. As a result of the black horse, which represented famine and want, times become even worse in the Roman world. Death from various causes became widespread throughout the Empire.

“After A.D. 200 the economic situation was made even worse by a decline in population. This came about mainly from repeated outbreaks of disease, first brought to Italy by Roman troops that had campaigned in Syria. The disease was evidently a type new to the Mediterranean region (possibly measles or smallpox), for the population showed little resistance to it. Many additional deaths were caused by the warfare and famine that accompanied the Germanic invasions of Italy.”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹ Gibbon, vol. I, 1963, pp. 152-3.

¹⁰⁰ Greer, 1987, pp. 119-20.

“The Severan Dynasty ended in 235 with the death of Severus Alexander, last of the line, who was murdered by his own troops on the Rhine frontier; they were outraged at his attempt to bribe invading barbarians whom they preferred to fight. In his place they proclaimed as Emperor a crude, towering Thracian soldier, Maximinus. A shepherd who had risen through the ranks, Maximinus had never even been to Rome. With his rise to power, also, the Empire’s internal peace came to an end. The reign of Maximinus ushered in a half century of civil wars, compounded by barbarian incursions, financial collapse, spreading famine and recurring plague. The Severan policy of placating the Army had brought Rome to a state of military anarchy.

Under Maximinus, the demands of Rome upon its people and provinces grew more rapacious than ever. Herodian says that ‘after reducing most of the notable houses to poverty, and finding the income obtained thereby small and insufficient for his purpose, Maximinus began to lay hands on the public treasuries.’

Maximinus lasted as Emperor only four years, but his successors did little better. In the chaotic fifty years from the death of Severus Alexander to the advent of Diocletian, there were some 20 emperors and a host of usurpers who held parts of the empire for short times. The reign of these emperors averaged about two and a half years and, with the exception of one who died with the plague and another who was captured by Persians, emperors and usurpers alike all met violent deaths. Most of them were made and unmade at the whim of the Roman soldiers, who proclaimed and assassinated emperors mainly for their own profit.

During these dark years, enemies breached the Empire’s frontier on almost all sides. In the East, the reviving Persian Empire menaced, Egypt, Syria, and the whole of Asia Minor; on the Rhine, Franks and Alemanni broke into Gaul and even Spain. In Africa, Berber tribes raided Roman cities and towns. Often the Roman armies sent against these invaders did as much damage to Roman communities as the aggressors.

As the wars raged-including civil wars: for 14 years Rome actually was governed as two separate nations-the finances of the Empire utterly collapsed. The denarius and the antoninianus, chief silver coins of the realm, lost more than 90 per cent of their silver content: in effect, they were copper coins washed with silver. Soldiers and civil servants were increasingly paid in goods and commodities. Inflation gripped the money market, and the price of goods soared. A peck of wheat which sold for half a denarius in the Second Century was fixed at 100 denarii by the end of the third. In the Egyptian town of Oxyrhynchus, bankers refused to handle Roman money and tried to return to the Ptolemaic coins used some 300 years earlier.”¹⁰¹

In reality the black and pale horses could be considered together. The want and famine of the black horse and the death of the pale horse are directly related; both were going on at the same time.

We have now seen a successive weakening of the once mighty Roman Empire. It is on the verge of total economic and social collapse. Its borders are being quickly eroded on several fronts by advancing barbarians. Although Rome had yet to fall it was definitely teetering.

6:9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:

Now the fifth seal is opened, but instead of a creature calling John to come see another horse, he sees something entirely different. He sees something very sad and disturbing, the souls of many faithful Christians who were murdered because of their faith. The fact that they are under the altar shows that they were “sacrificed” to God. Because of their faith they allowed themselves to be slain rather than deny the Lord. From the first days of the Church there had been persecution. At first most of it came from the Jews, but later on the Romans also joined in, fearing the rapid spread of Christianity to be a threat to the Empire. This persecution climaxed during a ten year

¹⁰¹ Hadas, 1965, pp. 143-4.

period from 303 to 313, during which the Roman Emperor Diocletian sought to destroy Christianity. In times of such great social and economic distress that we have just witnessed, leaders often look for scapegoats or diversions. Someone to either pin the blame on, or to distract the people's attention from the real problems. Christians were often a convenient target for desperate Roman emperors.

“Sporadic persecutions, the severity of which is hard to judge, and long periods of peace marked the history of the Church into the third century. Then only amid general social crisis, did some emperors attempt a systematic suppression of the Christians. Decius in 250-251, Valerian in 257-260, and above all Diocletian in 303-313, sought to extirpate the Christian name; their concern with this menace to the state was a tribute to its now established strength.”¹⁰²

“Diocletian was also desirous of reviving the ancient pagan religion of Rome. He himself took Jupiter as his patron, and Maximian chose Hercules. The Manichaeans, followers of a dualistic religion that stressed the conflict between good and evil, were persecuted under his regime. Their religion had been preached first in the 3d century by a Persian named Mani, and Diocletian probably persecuted them because he distrusted their eastern connections at the time of his campaign against Persia. At the opening of the 4th century the Christians had been largely undisturbed by the imperial government for more than 40 years. But largely, it seems, at the instigation of Galerius, who came more and more to dominate the aging emperor, Diocletian, by a series of edicts commencing in 303, began the ‘Great Persecution’-the last, probably the bloodiest, and the longest of the persecutions of the church.”¹⁰³

“At the ascension of Diocletian the Church lay under an ancient ban of the state, though it enjoyed de facto toleration. The numbers of Christians had grown so remarkably that perhaps 10 per cent of the Empire was Christian, including members of the imperial government and the army. On the other hand, pagan opposition on the intellectual level had become much sharper. Porphyry, pupil of Plotinus, had once spoken well of Christ but later wrote a slashing attack ‘Against the Christians’ in which he assailed Paul as incoherent and coarse and pointed out inconsistencies in the Bible. The eucharist, to Porphyry, was cannibalistic, and Christian doctrine nonrational. By 300, a considerable body of directly anti-Christian material was in circulation, ranging from the philosophic to the scurrilous.

In restoring order to the Empire Diocletian was unusually tolerant toward political foes, but displayed no enthusiasm for intellectual deviations. The first general prohibition of astrology came in his reign. The alchemists of Egypt were banned and their writings burned. In about 297 he fulminated against the Manicheans, who also seemed connected with the revolt in Egypt; his edict sweepingly proclaimed his ‘great desire to punish the obstinacy of wicked mind among the most evil men.’ Unlike Aurelian, Diocletian did not favor a syncretistic Sun worship and sought rather to reinvigorate the old state faith of Jupiter Capitolinus, ‘Jupiter conservator,’ as he was called on coins among other titles; to emphasize his divine protection Diocletian was called Jovius, and Maximian-the active protector of the realm-was termed Herculeus. Nevertheless Christianity continued to exist in an uneasy toleration down to 303, when Diocletian's illness perhaps reinforced his prejudices and weakened his political sensitivity.

The Diocletianic persecution was the worst the church ever experienced. In the opening blow, on February 23, 303, the Christian church at Nicomedia-in sight of the palace-was invaded and burned, and the Holy Scriptures within it were deliberately given to the flames. Edict followed edict to sharpen the punishments for the recalcitrant and broadened the persecution from the honestiores and office-holders to include the clergy and then all the laity; but at the abdication of Diocletian the persecution had not achieved its ends. Galerius, who may have had considerable responsibility for starting it in the first place, continued the assault intermittently down to 311, when he issued an anguished decree of toleration on April 30.”¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 153.

¹⁰³ *Encyclopedia Americana*, (New York, NY: Americana Corporation, 1989), s.v. “Diocletian.”

¹⁰⁴ C. G. Starr, *A History of the Ancient World*, (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 678-9.

“It is somewhat surprising that having for many years maintained his predecessors’ policy of tacit toleration of the Christians, Diocletian should have taken drastic action toward the end of his reign, and it seems likely that, as stated by Lactantius, Galerius, who was undoubtedly a rabid pagan and whose influence increased in Diocletian’s latter years, was the prime mover of the persecution. It is unlikely, however, that Diocletian acted contrary to his own convictions. He seems to have been a religious man of rather old-fashioned piety. There is extant a law of his against incestuous marriages which is strongly religious in tone: in it he declared that the continued favor of the immortal gods to the Roman empire was dependent on the subjects’ leading pious, religious and chaste lives. In another law he enacted the severest penalties against the new sect of the Manichees, partly because they derived their doctrines from the hostile race of the Persians, but more on the general ground that the established religion was inspired by the immortal gods and that all innovation was impious. Diocletian is therefore unlikely to have viewed with favor a sect which denied all the gods in favor of a newfangled deity, but it was apparently with reluctance that he undertook the formidable task of trying to extirpate it.

According to Lactantius he was first roused to action when at an official sacrifice the priests, unable to obtain omens, declared that Christians present, by making the sign of the cross, had offended the gods. Infuriated by this contumacious obstruction of public worship, Diocletian ordered that all Christians be discharged from the army and civil service unless they sacrificed. This probably happened about 298, and it was not until about five years later that Diocletian, having consulted the oracles, issued his first general edict against the Christians (Feb. 23, 303). It enacted that all copies of the scriptures should be surrendered and burned, that all churches should be closed and meeting of Christians banned. Two fires in the palace at Nicomedia-alleged to have been engineered by Galerius-were imputed to Christian incendiaries, and a second edict was issued, ordering the arrest of all the clergy. Some months later the imprisoned clergy were all forced to sacrifice, and then, with the exception of a few obstinate recusants, released. Finally in the spring of 304 an edict was issued, ordering all the inhabitants of the empire to sacrifice. The persecution ceased in the west after Maximian’s abdication, but in the east continued intermittently until 313.”¹⁰⁵

This was without doubt the most intense period of persecution the Church has ever seen. There are no accurate records of how many Christians died during this time, but certainly many lost their lives holding on to their faith. This is all synonymous with the ten figurative days or ten literal years spoken of by Christ in His letter to Smyrna. “*Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10).

6:10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?

The martyred saints asked God how long He would allow to stand the nation which had so cruelly brutalized and murdered many of them. There were murdered saints present from almost three centuries of persecution. The Roman Empire had been responsible for their deaths both directly and indirectly. At first indirectly by consenting to the Jewish persecution of Christians, then, later by directly persecuting Christians as a danger to the Empire. These saints wanted to know how long it would be before God would bring judgment on this pagan Empire.

In this request by the saints their reverence for God’s wisdom can be seen. They refer to Him as “*holy and true.*” They know that His judgments are just and that when the time is right He will indeed take vengeance on these murderers. “*Avenge our blood*” simply means to avenge their deaths. The Bible equates blood with life; “*For the life of the flesh is in the blood*” (Leviticus 17:11). Therefore, the shedding of blood can be equated with death. When the saints ask God to avenge their blood, which was shed in their deaths, they are actually asking Him to avenge their deaths.

¹⁰⁵ *Britannica*, 1972, s.v. “Diocletian.”

6:11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

The sad picture of all these saints who were brutally murdered, turns out not to be so bad after all. They may have met an untimely and cruel end in their physical lives, but they are being rewarded beyond measure in their spiritual lives because of their faith. White robes were given to them which signifies their purity and innocence, having been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.

Then they received an answer to their question which was asked in the previous verse. They were told to wait and be patient for a little time and then their deaths would be avenged. There were still others who had to meet a fate similar to theirs before God brought an end to paganism in Rome. As mentioned earlier this long period of persecution was capped off during a very harsh ten year period from 303 to 313. Finally, in 313 the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Toleration which officially recognized Christianity and ended the persecutions. Certainly God did not enjoy seeing His people suffer, but He knew what was best. He knew when the proper time would come to bring down the pagan Empire which had so terrorized His people.

6:12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;

6:13 And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.

We have now come progressively forward in this chapter from the first century to the year 313. All of the first five seals have revealed something describing conditions in the Roman Empire, but now we come to the sixth seal. This is the first occurrence of the type of language in Revelation which some people find very disturbing. We must keep in mind that these things are symbolic and only represent some significant world event. When the sixth seal was opened there was an earthquake, which represents a time of great upset and trouble for the Roman Empire. The sun, moon, and stars are often used in the Bible to represent positions of authority and power.

Joseph had a dream in which he saw the sun, moon, and stars bowing down to him. The sun represented his father, the moon his mother, and the stars his brothers. *“And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, ‘Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me.’ And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, ‘What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?’ ...And Joseph was the governor over the land, and he it was that sold to all the people of the land: and Joseph’s brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth”* (Gen 37:9-10; 42:6). Here in Revelation, these heavenly bodies are used to symbolize those in positions of high rank and esteem within the Roman Empire. Some great catastrophe is about to occur which will be very devastating to them.

If the sun were actually to become black this would be devastating to all the inhabitants of the earth. Without the light and warmth of the sun life could not exist here. This symbolically shows that the light and comfort which the Roman Empire has given to its citizens will cease. This will then leave them ‘out in the dark,’ as it were.

Figs are an important source of food in the area of Palestine, everyone looks to the fig tree to supply good things. Similarly, many look to the stars of the sky for assistance; the stars provide a means for navigation at night, they also can be used to determine the time of year. Were these stars to fall from the sky their usefulness would fall with them. Similarly, if a fig tree loses its figs in a windstorm before they are ripe, then they are of use to no one. This portrays the great feeling of loss in the Roman Empire from the impending disaster.

This is one of the places where we are able to determine with certainty that the language is figurative and not literal. Stars could not literally fall to the earth. The reason for this is that all stars are much more massive than the earth. If one star were to “fall to the earth” the earth would be completely annihilated by the impact. The so-called ‘shooting stars’ which are often witnessed at night throughout the year are not actually stars at all. Rather, they are pieces of space debris, generally fragments of rock and ice from comets which have crossed our orbit sometime in recent centuries, which burn up in a most spectacular fashion as they impact the earth’s atmosphere at tremendous speeds.

If the earth ever were to collide with an actual star we would never survive to see it happen. All life on earth would have ceased to exist long before the actual collision, since no known life form can withstand the heat and radiation from a star.

6:14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.

“*The heaven departed as a scroll,*” means that the sky just curled up into a roll. Of course this will not literally happen, but it demonstrates the feeling of many in the Roman Empire. Their lives were going to be so altered, that it would seem like the sky was rolling up away from them.

Mountains and islands represent world powers and governments in the Bible. This is illustrated by a prophesy which predicted the establishment of the Church, which is here referred to as the “*mountain of the Lord’s house.*” “*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem’*” (Isaiah 2:3). This great upheaval, which John speaks of that is about to occur, will affect many governments and powers around the world.

6:15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains;
6:16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb:
6:17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Continuing the description of the impending disaster, John says that men, both small and great, will feel the bitter effects of what is about to happen. It is going to be widespread and affect all kinds of people. No amount of power or wealth will exempt anyone from what lies ahead. Its effect will be such that men will want to run away and hide from it, even preferring to be crushed by falling rocks than to be forced to endure the horrible crisis. They will also realize that God is the one who is bringing about these events as punishment for their evil deeds.

These last six verses have painted a very disturbing and unsettling picture. What could possibly be represented by all of these ominous signs? We must again recall that all of this is speaking of the Roman Empire. The fifth seal has brought us up to the year 313, now we need to look for the next great world event, and see if its impact on Rome would fit the description we find here in Revelation.

The same emperor, Constantine, who had put an end to persecution of the Church, was the very one who presided over this period of great turmoil and strife. First let us get a flavor of Roman life during this time.

“Constantine expanded the bureaucracy that Diocletian had established. By the end of his reign in 337 Constantine had set the pattern that remained throughout the fourth and later centuries. The whole state was now one rigid structure, almost one massive corporation, that brutally discouraged individual initiative.

Economic life suffered. Members of all trades and professions were grouped into corpora, or corporations, and to change profession was difficult. To make sure that the various services would be performed, the state made professions hereditary. We have seen that the state bound the tenant farmers, or coloni, to the soil. A small class of independent farmers clung to their existence, but the general trend was toward converting agricultural workers into near slaves.

Taxation continued to be oppressive. Constantine installed a system by which farmers paid taxes in the

form of goods, but it is not clear that this change improved the plight of common citizens. There was a deep gulf between the monarch's court and the common people."¹⁰⁶

We can see the worsening conditions within the Empire were affecting everyone. The common people as well as the upper class were suffering the effects of the changes sweeping the Empire. The acceptance of Christianity in 313 was another severe blow to many within the Empire. For almost a thousand years the same Gods had ruled the Mediterranean region. (The Romans adopted the Gods of the Greeks into their religious system and renamed them.) Now suddenly they were being thrust aside in favor of Christianity. To the devout pagans in the Empire this was a catastrophe. It would be just like the American government today declaring Islam the official religion of the United States. All Christians would feel crushed, and would seek some way to escape these changes.

"Constantine, however, observed that persecution had failed to crush the determined and well-organized sect. Instead, martyrdom seemed only to nourish its growth. At last, in 313, Constantine gave his personal support to Christianity and ordered complete freedom of worship throughout the territories under his control (Edict of Milan).

Although he continued to tolerate other faiths after 313, the emperor showed his preference for Christianity. The pagan cults survived for another century or more, but most citizens followed the emperor's example."¹⁰⁷

"The last persecutions, which took place at the beginning of the fourth century, were failures. Many martyrs earned their reward, but public opinion had shifted from contempt to compassion for the Christians. It was clear that the Church could not be broken. At last, when Constantine came to power and was won over, people began to accept the fact that the cross had conquered the crown and had actually enlisted it as an ally against the pagan rear guard."¹⁰⁸

The final blow to the pagan Empire came in 330 when Constantine moved the capital of the Empire from Rome to Constantinople.

"Constantine, having rebuilt Byzantium in 324, moved the imperial capital to Byzantium, which he dedicated in 330 as the city of Constantine, or Constantinople, now Istanbul. From his new capital, he ruled unto his death."¹⁰⁹

Rome had been the center of the world for almost 500 years. Now, suddenly, it had lost its importance and became second city in the Empire. So much of the city was built around the government, as is the case with any capital. Imagine how Washington D.C. would react if the U.S. government said it needed to be more centrally located, and moved the federal government to Nebraska. The loss of jobs and tax revenues would destroy the city. It would lose its glamour and appeal. Its population would drop dramatically. For the people remaining behind there would be widespread unemployment, poverty and a certain increase in crime. What of all the businesses which depend on the city for their livelihood? The economic and political consequences would be disastrous for that region.

This is exactly what happened to Rome. Their heart was ripped right out from their chest. All the people of Rome felt great despair and horror. A calamity worse than anything they could have ever imagined had just happened to them. It was much worse with Rome than it would be with Washington D.C. Rome was almost literally the center of the world. As the old saying went "All roads lead to Rome." Rome had been the center of all economic, political, social, and religious activity for centuries. Now, suddenly, all of that changed.

¹⁰⁶ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 162.

¹⁰⁷ Greer, 1987, p. 123.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁰⁹ *Funk & Wagnall's*, 1973, s.v. "Constantine I."

It is reminiscent of the stock market crash of 1929, the so-called “Black Thursday.” People actually threw themselves out the windows of tall buildings because of the money they had lost in the stock market. Their world had come crashing down, and they could not bear to even think about it. Just like John’s description “*And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.*” The people of Rome, for the most part, would not have known that all of their problems were the result of the wrath of God coming upon them. They could certainly see that the acceptance of Christianity occurred at the same time as their great disaster. The first emperor to embrace Christianity was the one who shattered their world. Thus they could have quite easily felt that there was some relationship between the two events. This is the reason they would say, “*For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?*”

Satan had attempted to destroy Christianity with paganism, but he failed. Instead of Christianity succumbing to paganism, just the opposite occurred. Satan’s hopes of triumph over God’s people now seem to have been shattered right along with the lives of those in Rome. But we should not think Satan will give up so easily. Throughout history he has been repeatedly defeated by God, yet, to his credit, he always keeps coming back and trying again. The destruction of paganism in Rome will not be the end of Satan. He still has a few tricks left up his sleeve, as we shall soon see.

Chapter Seven

Preparation of the Seven Trumpets

In the sixth chapter we saw the opening of six of the seven seals. As we move into chapter seven we might expect to see the opening of the seventh seal, but our story will now pause momentarily before moving on to the last seal, which we will find in chapter eight. The first six have brought us to the end of paganism in Rome, but the seventh will not be connected with these, and thus it is logical that it would be somewhat separated from them in Revelation.

7:1 And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree.

“*After these things,*” means after the first six seals had been opened, and the events which they symbolized had been completed. Now John sees four angels of God standing on the “*four corners of the earth.*” Up until a few centuries ago, this verse was the source of much controversy. There were many who believed that this verse proved the earth was flat. They said it had to be flat in order to have four corners. Others said that physical evidence proved the earth to be round, and thus a sharp controversy developed. We now know, of course, that the earth is round. Does this fact contradict the Bible? Again we must stop and realize that all of these things we are seeing in Revelation are symbols. They are not to be taken literally, but are meant to convey ideas to us which will allow us to understand what they actually represent.

Revelation is not the first place the phrase, “*four corners of the earth,*” has been used. “*And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth*” (Isaiah 11:12). Israel and Judah were taken captive by Assyria and Babylon respectively. We know that these captives of Israel and Judah were never taken out of the area known today as the Middle East. Yet, here it is said that they were scattered to the four corners of the earth. Even if the earth were flat with four corners this verse still could not be interpreted literally, since the people were not scattered that far. All this phrase really means is that they had been widely scattered in all directions. Consequently, this term has nothing to do with literal corners of the earth, but rather represents the four cardinal directions. The angels that John saw were distributed around the earth, which shows their effect was not localized but widespread.

The winds spoken of here represent armies which are to act as agents of destruction. This is shown in other passages in the Bible; “*The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying, thus saith the Lord of hosts; ‘Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come. For I will cause Elam to be*

dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them even my fierce anger, saith the Lord; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them” (Jeremiah 49:34-37). Here God clearly intends to destroy Elam with foreign armies. In verse thirty-seven He says He will “*send the sword after them.*” But at first He refers to these armies as “*the four winds.*” As was often the case, God had decided to use one nation to bring about the desired punishment against another. This time the nation was Assyria, and history tells of this event.

“Elam was a region beyond the Tigris, east of Babylonia. It was bounded on the north by Assyria and Media, on the south by the Persian Gulf, on the east and southeast by Persia. In the time of Abraham, Chedorlaomer, king of Elam, was recognized as sovereign by the Babylonian states, and laid even the country on the Jordan under tribute (Genesis 14:1-11). In the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., when Assyria was the dominant power in western Asia, Elam was its doughty opponent; but was subjugated after repeated campaigns of the Assyrians under Sargon, Sennacherib, and Ashurbanipal. Shushan (the capital of Elam) was at length taken about 645 B.C.”¹¹⁰

What John sees here in Revelation is the same type of thing spoken of by Jeremiah. The four winds are four armies that are eventually going to come, from different directions, and fight against Rome.

“*That the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree,*” simply means that for the present time these armies will not be allowed to do any damage, but must wait until the time appointed of God. Soon we will discover why they must wait.

7:2 And 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 given to hurt the earth and the sea,

The east has been used previously in the Bible to denote the direction of God’s presence. “*Afterward he brought me to the gate, even the gate that looketh toward the east: and, behold, the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and the earth shined with his glory. And it was according to the appearance of the vision which I saw, even according to the vision that I saw when I came to destroy the city: and the visions were like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar; and I fell upon my face. And the glory of the Lord came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect is toward the east”* (Ezekiel 43:1-4). God’s representatives, Moses and Aaron, also camped on the east side of the tabernacle. “*But those that encamp before the tabernacle toward the east, even before the tabernacle of the congregation eastward, shall be Moses, and Aaron and his sons, keeping the charge of the sanctuary for the charge of the children of Israel; and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death”* (Numbers 3:38). From this we can see the significance of the east in the Bible; it is used as the direction of God. As the sun rises in the east to shed its light on the earth, so also God symbolically sheds His spiritual light on the earth from the east. So when this angel comes from the east it means he is coming from God. Thus we know he is on a mission from God, and his purposes are righteous.

Seals have been discussed previously where they were found to be symbols used to represent ownership and power over what is sealed. Kings would often affix their seals to documents to prove their authenticity. The angel carrying God’s seal can use it to affix the seal of God to something, and thereby show God’s ownership of that object. Now the angel speaks with a loud voice to the four angels who are holding back the four winds. The next verse will tell us what his message was.

7:3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

The angel of God, who is carrying God’s seal with him, speaks to the four angels who are holding back the four

¹¹⁰ Davis, 1983, s.v. “Elam.”

winds. He tells them not to hurt the earth, sea, or trees, which means they are to continue to hold back the destructive power of the winds. This is to be done until “*we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.*”

In the discussion on seals in chapter five it was mentioned that the emblem would be pressed into soft clay or wax. The material would be allowed to harden, and then could not be altered without breaking it. What this means here is that God had put his seal upon the earth, in the form of the Church. The wax needed a little more time to dry before it could be handled. In other words, the Church needed a little more time to grow and mature, before the winds of destruction could be loosed. God had brought an end to paganism in Rome, and now He had set His sights on Imperial Rome itself. Before He destroyed them, He had to be sure the Church could withstand the turmoil about to come. God had built His Church during the height of the greatest Empire the world has ever known. It was a period of great peace and stability. This was in order to provide a good stable environment in which it could grow and flourish. Once it became strong enough, He was going to bring an end to the Roman Empire, which had been to the Church both persecutor and protector.

The fact that the seal was in the forehead also has significance. The forehead represents the seat of understanding and thinking, or in other words, the mind. A person could only be “sealed” by God if he chose to accept this sealing. God was not going to conscript anyone. A person makes a voluntary decision in their mind to follow God. Thus the seal of God, the designation that they are His, is in their forehead. The fact that the seal had to dry, means that the Christians needed time to grow stronger, so that they would not be dissuaded from following God, when the upset and turmoil came upon the land. It is a situation very much analogous to part of the parable of the sower told by Christ. “*Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*” (Matthew 13:21). The Church was still a bit immature and needed to grow stronger and deeper roots in order to withstand the coming storm.

7:4 And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

In the previous verse we found that there was to be a pause in the turmoil affecting the Roman Empire until such time that the servants of God are “sealed.” The present verse now tells us about some of those who were sealed. John says he “*heard the number of them which were sealed.*” Someone, likely an angel, told John that 144,000 of the Children of Israel were converted to Christianity. In chapter fourteen, we will find that this 144,000 represents those who were converted before the gospel was given to the Gentiles. But the question is, why is this information important to us here? What we are interested in here is the condition and strength of the Church as it is about to enter this time of turmoil. Instead it seems we have been taken back to the beginning of the Church.

It began with the Jews, and as we can see here, a very large number of Jews. They were most certainly the backbone of the Church for many years. The Jewish converts were then scattered among the Gentiles after the destruction of Jerusalem, which aided the swift inclusion of many Gentiles into the Church. The number of 144,000 which is given here should not be taken literally but is merely given to tell us that a very “large” number of Jews were converted. This will be borne out further in the next four verses.

7:5 Of the tribe of Judah were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand.

7:6 Of the tribe of Asher were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Naphtali were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasseh were sealed twelve thousand.

7:7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand.

7:8 Of the tribe of Zebulun were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

John now tells us that twelve-thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel became Christians. These numbers, as well as the total of 144,000, are not exact, but serve to denote the magnitude of converts, and to tell us that there were many from each tribe in the early Church. The real concern here is not tribal identity, in many cases that had already been lost anyway, but national identity. God is showing us that despite the continued stubbornness and

rebellion, there were still many Jews who were willing to accept the Messiah when He came. And He tells us further, by listing the individual tribes, that the converts did not just come from one tribe or one region of the country. Rather, there were those scattered throughout the land, and of various tribal origins, who were sincere and willing to follow God.

There are also some interesting observations to be made concerning the twelve tribes as they are listed here. Jacob, or Israel, had twelve sons, but when the land of the inheritance was divided up it was given to ten of Israel's sons and two of his grandsons. One of his sons, Levi, was separated from the rest to serve as priests. They received no land of their own, but were dispersed among the other eleven tribes. To bring the number of tribes back to twelve, Joseph was allotted a double portion and it was given to his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim. The list we have here in Revelation does not match either the list of twelve sons or the list of the twelve who inherited the land. Table IV should serve to illustrate the differences.

Listings of the twelve tribes of Israel		
Sons of Israel	Received inheritance	Listed in Revelation
Asher	Asher	Asher
Benjamin	Benjamin	Benjamin
Dan	Dan	
	Ephraim	
Gad	Gad	Gad
Issachar	Issachar	Issachar
Joseph		Joseph
Judah	Judah	Judah
Levi		Levi
	Manasseh	Manasseh
Naphtali	Naphtali	Naphtali
Reuben	Reuben	Reuben
Simeon	Simeon	Simeon
Zebulun	Zebulun	Zebulun

Table IV

Ephraim and Manasseh are missing from the first list because they are grandsons rather than sons of Israel. In the second list, Levi is removed and Joseph is divided into Manasseh and Ephraim to fill the empty slot. The third list, surprisingly, does not even come close to matching either of the first two. Levi is placed back in the list, but instead of Manasseh and Ephraim being reformed into Joseph, Manasseh and Joseph are both listed and Ephraim and Dan are missing.

The entire nation of the Israelites was disobedient to God and He had to continually punish them for their rebellious behavior. The tribe of Dan apparently exceeded all of their brethren in wickedness, and, for this cause, God destroyed them. In the time of the Judges the Danites ordained as priests men who were not of the sons of Levi, and therefore not qualified for that position. These men were chosen because Dan desired to worship a graven image and not God. The Levites would not go along with this false worship so the Danites found someone who would. They were, to use the words of the Apostle Paul, “*after their own lusts heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears*” (II Timothy 4:3). “*And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan*” (Judges 18:30).

In the very extensive genealogies of I Chronicles 2-12 the tribe of Dan is conspicuously absent. Dan is mentioned as a son of Israel in I Chronicles 2:2, but in subsequent chapters where the descendants of his brethren are listed, his are missing. This shows that they had fallen into severe disfavor with God, and had already been destroyed by this time. This does not mean that every single descendant of Dan had been killed, although most of them might well have been, but it does mean that God had disowned them and no longer considered any who remained to be His people.

Ephraim likewise was destroyed for their great multitude of sins. Isaiah spoke of their coming doom, and then Jeremiah confirmed that their destruction had occurred. “*Within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken,*

that it be not a people” (Isaiah 7:8). “And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim” (Jeremiah 7:15).

We also find a very interesting connection between Dan and Ephraim. When the kingdom of Israel was divided in the days of Rehoboam, the new king of Israel, Jereboam, set up two idolatrous altars. These altars were located interestingly enough in Dan and Ephraim! *“Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.’ And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi” (I Kings 12:28-31).*

Bethel was a city on the border between Benjamin and Ephraim, but it belonged to Ephraim. *“And the house of Joseph, they also went up against Bethel: and the Lord was with them” (Judges 1:22).* The house of Joseph could mean either Ephraim or Manasseh, but half of the tribe of Manasseh had received their inheritance on the east side of the Jordan River, and the other half received theirs to the north of Ephraim. Clearly then we must be talking about Ephraim here taking Bethel. In describing the possessions of the children of Ephraim the Bible says, *“And their possessions and habitations were, Bethel and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof” (I Chronicles 7:28).*

Why would Jereboam choose these two locations for his idols? First of all, it was desirable to make them readily accessible to the people, but I think we must also consider the character of these two places. They were already thriving hotbeds of idolatry and no doubt welcomed these new idols with open arms. It is no accident that these two very idolatrous tribes were omitted here in Revelation. Spiritual idolatry is a recurrent theme in this book and people (Rome in particular) are continually condemned for it. The omission of Dan and Ephraim points once again to God’s abhorrence of idolatry. Although every tribe was guilty of great sin and they all rejected God, the sins of Dan and Ephraim were so vile that God cut them off from among His people. One thing we learn from all of this is that God’s longsuffering does have a limit. While God did preserve the nation despite their sins, He disowned and destroyed two entire tribes because their sins were too great for Him to tolerate.

An interesting question now arises, who were the twelve-thousand sealed from the tribe of Joseph? Joseph had two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim. Manasseh is included in this list so his descendants cannot be included in the tribe of Joseph or they would be counted twice. As we have just seen Ephraim was destroyed, so there was seemingly no one left for Joseph. I believe that this serves well to illustrate the point for us that we are not really concerned with tribal identity here. God is showing us here that there are no ‘lost tribes’ or other such groups of the Children of Israel who missed out on the opportunity to accept Christ. The listing of each tribe allows us to see that all Israel was given access to God through Christ, and many of them, from various backgrounds, accepted God’s invitation.

7:9 After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands;

After showing us the roots of the Church, the scene now shifts back to the fourth century. This time frame will be established in subsequent verses. Here we are shown the diversity and the strength of the Lord’s Church. By diversity I refer to the various peoples involved, and not to doctrines. By the fourth century the Church was well established in most of Europe and large areas of Asia and Africa. It included people of many nationalities, colors, cultures, and religious backgrounds. All of these had been brought together as one people in Christ.

John says this multitude was so large that it was innumerable. This does not mean that it would have been impossible to count them, but it would have certainly been unreasonable. Note that John did not count the 144,000, but rather he *“heard the number of them which were sealed.”* All this really tells us is that in the three and one-half centuries that had passed since its establishment, the Church had passed from being a relatively small and primarily Jewish dominated sect, to being a very large and influential force comprised of peoples of very different backgrounds. The effect of the Church was now felt in all corners of the known world.

All of these redeemed ones stood before the throne of God, and before the Lamb, which is Christ. This of course

would not actually be possible until after the end of the world. What is shown here is their ultimate victory and reward for their faithful service to God. The saints had on white robes which we have seen before. The white refers to the purity and innocence of those who have been washed in, and redeemed by, the precious blood of the Lamb.

The redeemed also had palm leaves in their hands. “Its great leaves were used as tokens of victory and peace.”¹¹¹ This certainly fits the scene in Heaven. The saints have been victorious over Satan and all of his evil devices. They are now being rewarded with an everlasting peace in the presence of God.

7:10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.

Now all of the saints begin to praise God, and to thank Him for the salvation which He brought to the world in the form of the Lamb, Jesus, whom they are also praising. They had lived lives marked by oppression and persecution, yet they remained faithful. Now they are receiving their just reward, and are thanking God for their deliverance.

7:11 And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God,

Now others join the saints in the worship and praise of God. The twenty-four elders, which represent the Old and New Covenants, the four creatures, and the heavenly host of angels, all join in. We saw all of these worshipping God previously in chapter five. While the angels and the four creatures were not directly affected by the salvation of man, certainly they rejoiced to see it and are seen here praising God for what He has done. Christ said “*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*” (Luke 15:10). Can you imagine the joy in Heaven when all of the redeemed are welcomed home?

7:12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

The praises of the great multitude in Heaven continues. One definition of “amen” is “fixing, as it were, the stamp of truth upon the assertion which it accompanied, and making it binding as an oath.”¹¹² The items mentioned here are meant to describe God without there being any doubt that He is worthy of these words of praise. Certainly no one is more worthy of blessing, glory, wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and might than God the Creator of all that is seen and unseen.

7:13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? And whence came they?

Now one of the twenty-four elders, who had been worshipping God, asked John a question. John had seen the innumerable multitude before the throne, and had described their appearance, but he had made no attempt to identify them. Now he is asked by the elder who these people are, and where they all came from. Certainly the elder knew who these people were, but he wanted to draw John’s attention to them and get him to thinking about them.

7:14 And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹¹¹ Ibid., s.v. “palm.”

¹¹² Smith, 1986, s.v. “amen.”

John's reply to the elders question was basically, "Sir, you know the answer, but I do not?" Then the elder tells John that these have all come "out of great tribulation." In our sequence of time we are now near the end of the fourth century. Thus far the Church has come through many periods of sporadic, but often intense, persecution. It would be very accurate to say that the first four centuries were a period of great tribulation for the Lord's Church. Throughout all of this, the Church grew and flourished. The washing of their robes denotes the fact that they have been cleansed from sin in the blood of Christ, making them white, which denotes their purity and innocence.

7:15 Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.

The elder continues to explain to John the life of the redeemed in Heaven. The main occupation will be the worship of God. Night and day, does not mean that there will be actual periods of light and darkness in Heaven. The sun and stars will be destroyed with the earth at the end of time. "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Peter 3:10). The "heavens" refers to the atmosphere and the place of the heavenly bodies. If the sun is destroyed, the normal occurrence of days will not continue.

We will find later on in Revelation that God is described as the source of light in Heaven. "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 21:23; 22:5). The meaning of day and night in this passage is that the service of Christians to God will be "around the clock." They will not just serve God once in a while, but all the time. "In His temple," just refers to Heaven. "He that sitteth on the throne" is God, and He shall dwell among the saints in Heaven.

7:16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat.

Now the elder speaks of some of the wonderful benefits of life in Heaven. First of all, there will be no more hunger or thirst. Man spends most of his time and effort in this life in the pursuit of food and water. Even today we must work to at least have enough money to purchase these necessities of life. We can trace our struggle all the way back to the Garden of Eden. "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3:17-19). The paradise man had been given by God was gone. Life would no longer be easy, but rather fraught with trial and tribulations. Far too often, people are unable to acquire the necessities of life and perish. Droughts and famine have been regular occurrences around the world throughout history, and have often had a devastating impact on many people's lives. We will regain that lost paradise in Heaven. "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse" (Revelation 22:2-3a). In Heaven this great burden will be lifted from man. Having a spiritual body, there will be no need for man to eat or drink physical food and water any longer. No one in Heaven will ever be hungry or thirsty again; God will supply all that is needed.

The sun is also quite often a burden to man. Although it brings warmth to man, and nourishes plants and does so many other beneficial things, its heat can also be very oppressive. Extended exposure to it can even result in premature aging of the skin, freckles, and even skin cancer. In Heaven, the sun will no longer exist, so these things will be but past memories. Again, God will provide whatever is needed, and unlike the sun, there will be no harmful side-effects.

7:17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

“The Lamb...shall feed them, and lead them unto...waters,” is all figurative. Man will no longer have a need to eat or drink physically, so this is all meant in a spiritual sense. While speaking with the Samaritan woman at the well Christ spoke of the water that he had to offer, which, if a person drank of it, they would never thirst again (John 4:14). Earlier in Revelation, He spoke of giving the redeemed to eat of the tree of life (Revelation 2:7), and the hidden manna (Revelation 2:17). These items are all symbolic. The presence of God and Christ will be more than enough to satisfy all spiritual appetites. There will also be no tears in Heaven. This indicates that all reasons for crying will be done away with. There will be no reasons to be sad or depressed.

The preceding verses serve to show the value of serving God. The Church is about to enter rough times as God pours out His great wrath upon Imperial Rome. It might be very troubling to know that you are about to enter such a time, so here words of encouragement are offered to those who are sealed. They are allowed to see a glimpse of the rewards to be enjoyed by their predecessors, and which can someday be theirs if they remain obedient to God. There is also something else which we have not been told yet. The Church will soon enter a period of 1,260 years during which it will be forced to go into hiding because of persecution and oppression. This passage would also be a comfort to those who will live during that time. Here God has shown us the reward of those who have already passed through very troublous times. This should serve to comfort those who will be forced to endure the trials of a Christian life which still lie ahead. *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (II Timothy 3:12).

Chapter Eight

Blowing of the seven trumpets - The fall of Imperial Rome: the first four trumpets

8:1 And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

After the preparations were made in chapter seven, we pick back up where we left off in chapter six with the opening of the seventh seal. The servants of God have now been sealed, and it is time for the four winds held back by the angels to blow. In other words, the Church is strong enough now to withstand the armies coming to destroy Rome.

When the seventh seal is opened nothing happens, there is just silence for the next half hour in Heaven. This represents the period of relative peace and stability in the Roman Empire during the reign of Constantine. It is true that the city of Rome itself had been humbled, but the Empire as a whole, was doing better than it had for quite some time. This was the proverbial “calm before the storm.” Most citizens of Rome itself felt like their world had crumbled, but the average citizen elsewhere in the Empire was better off under Constantine’s capable and stable leadership than they had been for quite some time.

8:2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

The first six seals each revealed something pertaining to the Roman Empire, but the seventh seal did not reveal anything of the sort. Instead it revealed, as we see here, seven trumpets. We will find the pattern repeats itself with the seventh trumpet. Our story will pause momentarily between the sixth and seventh trumpets, and then when it does finally blow it will not reveal any world event, but will instead reveal seven vials.

Now the seven seals are past, and the seven angels, which we have already seen several times, have been given seven trumpets. As each of the first six blows we will see an important world event concerning Rome symbolized by it. The first four trumpets will reveal invasions of the western section of the Roman Empire. These are the “four winds” spoken of in chapter seven.

8:3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.

8:4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel’s hand.

The burning of incense was one of the regular priestly duties under the Old Law. “*And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresseth the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations*” (Exodus 30:7-8).

A censer is “A small portable vessel of metal fitted to receive burning coals from the altar, and on which the incense for burning was sprinkled.”¹¹³ Here an angel is burning incense in a censer and mixing it with the prayers of the saints. In chapter five the four creatures and the twenty-four elders each had golden vials full of odors, which were said to be the prayers of the saints. It was noted that God enjoys receiving the prayers of His people. They are like sweet scents drifting up from the earth, and are very pleasing to Him. As the psalmist David wrote, “*Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice*” (Psalm 141:2). The mixing of incense and the prayers of saints is a very natural thing, as they are both pleasant odors to God.

This angel had a golden censer, which shows its value and importance, and would therefore qualify it to be used before God. The angel was given “*much incense.*” This shows that it is an important offering. The smoke from this incense, along with the prayers of the saints, ascended up to God, where it was certainly pleasing to Him.

8:5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

After burning the incense, the angel filled the censer with coals and fire from the altar, and threw it upon the earth. This resulted in voices, which represents the murmuring and complaining of those on the earth who were affected by the angel’s actions. Thunderings, lightnings, and an earthquake all serve to characterize another traumatic event for Rome. We have already entered a period of decline, turmoil, and chaos in the Roman Empire. After the death of Constantine, in 337, the relative peace and stability he, and Diocletian before him, had brought to the Empire was quickly lost.

“When Constantine designated Constantinople as the capital it was further sign that the Western lands were in a period of decline. After Constantine’s death in 337, the chief administrative question for more than a century was whether one man could be strong enough to rule as sole monarch. For most of the time this proved impossible, and some kind of shared rule on the pattern established by Diocletian became regular. On the death of Theodosius, in 395, the Empire was divided into an Eastern half and a Western half, with the dividing line just east of Italy.

In the last centuries of the Western Empire, society became more and more rigid; it did not, and perhaps could not, allow people to move freely from one class to another. The *coloni* were bound to the soil chiefly because foreign conquest could no longer provide a regular flow of slaves who might replace them in agriculture. As the central government weakened, estates, usually called *villas*, became more independent, and the *coloni* became more dependent on the owners for protection; thus the *villas* developed into the political units to which the *coloni* felt allegiance. Many *villas* were self-sufficient units resembling the later manors of the Middle Ages, with hunting lands and workshops that supplied the goods that the local population needed; they therefore became the main economic and political units of the Western Empire. The strength of the Empire was thus no longer centered in Rome. At the same time trade was declining because of the shortage of new markets and the constant threat of invasions along the frontiers. Moreover, a shortage of labor caused fertile lands to lie fallow and mines to remain unexploited.”¹¹⁴

The dividing of the Empire in 395 was a major blow to Rome. Not only had it been removed from its prominent position as the capital of the Empire, but now the Empire has suddenly been divided in two. Earlier we used the

¹¹³ Ibid., s.v. “censer.”

¹¹⁴ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 163.

illustration of moving the capital of the United States from Washington D.C. to Nebraska to show the impact on Rome when the capital was moved to Constantinople. Now imagine if, a few years after this had happened, the country was suddenly divided along the Mississippi River. Now, not only would Washington not be the capital, but they also would now be part of a much smaller and weaker nation. This would make everyone east of the Mississippi very unhappy. This was certainly a very traumatic event for residents of the western portion of the Empire, but there was another event which was probably even more devastating for many.

“In 381 the Emperor Theodosius I (‘The Great’) made Christianity the sole legal religion. But he was the last to rule a united Empire; before he died in 395, he made a permanent division. Theodosius split the Empire along the lines established by Diocletian, naming one of his two sons emperor of the West (at Milan) and the other emperor of the East (at Constantinople).”¹¹⁵

The outlawing of paganism was probably more crushing to many than the dividing of the Empire. A further slap in the face was when Milan was chosen as the capital of the West instead of Rome. Rome had gone from being the capital of the Western world to being the second city in one portion of a divided and crumbling Empire.

Certainly these two events, the outlawing of paganism, and the dividing of the Empire, separated by a mere fourteen years, were the main intent of the phrase “*thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*” Taken together, these two events were the two most devastating things to yet happen to the once mighty Roman Empire.

Regardless of how bad this may have seemed to the residents of Rome, and indeed the entire Western half of the Empire, the worst was by far still to come. This was just setting the stage for the events which were soon to occur. With the internal decay and strife reaching new heights, the Empire was ready to be toppled; it was fruit ripe for the picking. The time for God to reap with vengeance was at hand.

8:6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

Although the seven angels would not sound simultaneously, they all prepared and made ready for the time when they would be called upon to sound. Unlike man, who is often lazy and negligent of his duties, the angels of God are always alert to their responsibilities.

8:7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

The first trumpet is blown, and from the graphic terms found in this verse it certainly describes some great and terrible event which befell Rome. What could be more devastating and humiliating than for an invading army to sack the Eternal City which had stood so proud and defiant for nearly a millennium? This invasion came from a Germanic people known as the Visigoths.

“Meanwhile, the Germanic tribes were pressing more and more insistently against the frontiers. Until the fourth century the emperor had managed to hold these barbarians in check north of the Rhine-Danube line, an area in which they had been wandering about for centuries.

During the fourth century a major Germanic tribe, the Visigoths, appeared along the lower Danube River. They had originated in the Baltic Sea area but had later settled north of the Black Sea. During the third and fourth centuries, a great horde of Huns swept out of Asia and drove the Visigoths from their settlements. On the move once again, they turned toward the frontiers of the empire, and in 376 crossed the Danube and advanced toward Constantinople. Not far from the capital their warrior horsemen won a crushing victory over the imperial foot soldiers, and the Visigoths subsequently obtained a substantial grant of land from the

¹¹⁵ Greer, 1987, p. 123.

Emperor Theodosius I. They were by no means satisfied, but the succeeding rulers at Constantinople managed, through diplomacy and bribery, to persuade them to move westward.

The emperors in the West, with fewer resources at their disposal, were less effective in resisting the invading barbarians. Alaric, a Visigoth king, shook the Roman world in 410 by sacking the Eternal City itself. (This was the first time in eight-hundred years that Rome had been taken by outsiders.)¹¹⁶

The taking of Rome by outsiders was more a blow to the Roman ego than anything else. You can imagine how America would feel if a band of Mexicans marched to Washington D.C., sacked it, and left. How weak would that make the United States look? It would be utterly humiliating. This is exactly how it was for the once mighty Roman Empire. They had literally ruled most of the known world for over 500 years. Now a horde of barbarians waltzes in and sacks the great city of the Empire. The following historical comments sum up the feeling in the Empire after this earth-shattering event.

“Rome was given over to complete pillage and fire, and the sack lasted three days. The news of the capture of the ancient capital caused profound shock and consternation all over the Roman world. For the first time men began to see that the foundations of their life were crumbling, and there were mutual recriminations of pagan and Christian.”¹¹⁷

“Alaric’s capture of Rome was less significant for the city, which soon recovered physically, than for the Mediterranean civilization as a whole. Roman prestige declined among the Barbarian tribes of the north, who became more confident of their strength. The fall of Rome indicated to many the end of law and order and symbolized the decline of the western Roman Empire.”¹¹⁸

After taking Rome, Alaric led his forces down the Italian Peninsula, hoping to sail to Africa, but here his luck ran out.

“Alaric was a king of the Visigoths. He attacked Rome in 408 and in 409, but accepted huge ransoms to end both sieges. In 410 he captured and looted Rome, but spared its churches. Alaric planned to settle in Africa, but a storm forced him to stop at Cosenza in southern Italy. He died there suddenly, late in 410.”¹¹⁹

The sudden and unexpected death of Alaric soon after taking Rome, may well have saved Rome another, and more brutal, invasion a few years later. As Attila was planning to lead his Huns on a march toward Rome, he was intercepted by the bishop of Rome, Leo I. Some accounts relate that Leo persuaded Attila not to chance an invasion of Rome, because the last man who had done so, had not lived long afterward. Whether this is true or not, is for the historians to debate, but it is an interesting supposition.

The reference to the “*third part of trees...and all green grass,*” describes the way in which the Visigoths burned and pillaged the land as they went forth conquering. Being from northern Europe, they were accustomed to seeing an abundance of vegetation. It held no special significance to them, so they simply burned a path as they went.

The figure one-third, mentioned in this verse, has a very important meaning. We need to pause for a moment and examine the continuing history of the entire Roman Empire for this to become clear. Although Rome will be taken once and for all late in the fifth century, this does not truly mark the end of the Roman Empire. Even though Rome was no longer a part of it, a section of the Empire lasted for nearly another one-thousand years. Before Alaric ever led the Visigoths into Rome, there had been a major division within the Empire. It had been split into two parts, the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 123-4.

¹¹⁷ Colin D. Gordon, *The Age of Attila*, (New York, NY: Ambassador Books Ltd., 1960), pp. 34-5.

¹¹⁸ *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “Alaric.”

¹¹⁹ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Alaric.”

East and the West. The West went into decline and soon fell victim to the marauding tribes descending the continent from northern Europe. The East also had its problems with the invaders, but managed to stand until 1453. In 330 Constantine had moved the capital of the Roman Empire to Constantinople, this was the major event which facilitated the eventual division of the Empire. Rome became the leading city of the West if not its capital, and Constantinople was both the leading city and the capital of the East. Rome was finally taken in 476, but Constantinople survived until 1453. In reality, the last of the Roman Empire was far from its demise when its namesake, Rome, was itself suffering humiliation.

In addition to the two sections just discussed, there was also a third part which will be considered separately. The entire northern coast of Africa as well as Palestine was part of the Roman Empire, and later the Byzantine Empire which was the name of the Eastern Roman Empire after Rome's fall. There were actually three parts of the Roman Empire and all met their respective ends at different times. The first section was the western part, which included most of present day Spain, France, Britain, southern Germany, Italy, and the surrounding areas. The eastern section contained most of present day Greece, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey, and the surrounding areas. The southern section contained the northern coast of Africa from immediately south of the Iberian Peninsula, all the way over to and including Egypt. Also part of the southern section was the area of Palestine, which today contains Israel, Lebanon, and most of Jordan and Syria. The following passage will serve well to give evidence of the recognition of the three parts of the Empire.

“The passing of Greece and Rome brings us to a new phase in Western history. Geographically the focus shifts from the Mediterranean lands to Europe—that favored region jutting into the Atlantic from the Eurasian land mass. Britain, Gaul, Germany, and Italy formed the core of what was to become a distinctly European culture. In the seventh century the rest of what was once the Roman Empire split into two parts: Byzantium and Islam. Byzantium (heir to the eastern portion of the empire) included Greece and Asia Minor, while the power of Islam rolled across the rest of the Middle East and the southern rim of the Mediterranean, then north through Spain to the Pyrenees Mountains. Thus, the ‘one world’ of Pax Romana was broken into three separate areas.”¹²⁰

These three parts of the Roman Empire are the basis of the phrase “*third part of...*” which we will see several times in Revelation. We will eventually see that the fall of each third is predicted, and that history coincides with these predictions. In our present case it serves to tell us that the effects of the winds are primarily brought to bear against only one third of the Empire, namely against the western third.

The Roman Empire has now been humiliated by Alaric and his forces, but yet it still stands. Alaric, and his Visigoth warriors, had no interest in staying there. They were primarily interested in looting and wanton destruction not in conquering and ruling. After his death, Alaric's forces eventually worked their way back up the Italian Peninsula, and are said to have settled in the area of Gaul. The first hurdle has been successfully crossed, but now the second wind is about to blow upon the ever weakening Rome.

8:8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became blood;
8:9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

When the first trumpet sounded the trees and grass were affected. History told us that the Visigoths had indeed come through destroying and burning much of the vegetation in their path. Now we see that when the second trumpet sounds the sea is affected. So, if the pattern holds true, we should be able to look toward the sea and find some army coming from that direction which will have a great impact on the western part of the Roman Empire. Looking at history we do indeed find this very thing occurred.

¹²⁰ Greer, 1987, p. 160.

“Later, a small but aggressive tribe called the Vandals swept across the Rhine River, through Gaul and Spain, and down into North Africa. From a base there, they made a sea raid on Rome in 455, leaving their name in history as a synonym for looters and destroyers.”¹²¹

“Another tribe pushed by the Hunnic conquests were the Vandals. They broke across the Rhine River into Gaul in 406 and embarked upon a career of conquest that within three years took them over the Pyrenees into Spain and south to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The Vandals crossed to North Africa, where they established a permanent kingdom in 429. They were the only barbarians to become a power on the Mediterranean Sea, and from their base in North Africa they subjected Rome to fourteen days of ferocious plundering in 455 and harassed shipping on Western waters until destroyed by the Byzantines in the next century.”¹²²

“In the confused years of the early 5th century, the Vandals began a new migration by crossing the Rhine into Gaul (405). An attempted invasion of Italy was repulsed, and by 409 they had been driven from Gaul into Spain by the Franks. They were soon confined to the extreme south of the Iberian Peninsula by the pressure of the Visigoths.

The fortunes for the Vandals took a turn for the better under King Gaiseric (Genseric), who ruled from 428 to 477. Count Boniface, the governor of Roman Africa, invited the Vandals to enter his territory as allies because of a quarrel with Valentinian III, the Roman emperor. Gaiseric then led his people, numbering about 80,000, from Spain into North Africa (429-430). Boniface meanwhile had composed his differences with Rome, but it was too late to stop the Vandals from swarming into the Province. Town after town was captured, and as the ailing Saint Augustine expired in Hippo, the besieging Vandals howled outside the city walls. Carthage was finally taken in 439 after the collapse of a four year peace negotiated between Gaiseric and Valentinian. The Vandals later extended their holdings to the Balearic Islands, Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily, while their powerful fleet engaged in piracy in the western Mediterranean.

The death of Valentinian in 455 provided Gaiseric with an opportunity to invade Italy, Empress Eudoxia having appealed to him for aid against the usurper, Petronius Maximus. The Vandals captured and sacked Rome, and then retired to North Africa with all of the portable treasures of the imperial city as well as the empress and her two daughters.”¹²³

Thus we see the exact thing which had been predicted did actually happen. The Vandals swept in from the sea and once more humbled the once great city of Rome. The Vandals were also notorious pirates on the Mediterranean Sea, with two of the above references mentioning their activities in this sphere. This is also in accord with the prediction which had mentioned ships being destroyed.

Again, the “*third part*” has reference to the western third of the Roman Empire. Two winds, or armies, have now been allowed to blow on Rome, but both times the invaders have left, so for the time being Rome still stands.

8:10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters;

8:11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

The third angel sounds and this time we see that the rivers are affected. Again, we must not allow ourselves to become caught up in the ominous wording of these verses. All they mean to do is reveal some force coming against

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 124.

¹²² Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 172.

¹²³ *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “Vandals.”

Rome. We have mentioned previously that stars, as well as other heavenly bodies, are often used to represent prominent powers and authorities. Here we have a “*great star*” which falls from heaven to affect Rome. This leads us to believe that a very powerful force is now poised to come against the Empire. This force will be led by a great leader symbolized by this star. The first two invaders did not have leaders that are known today to the average person. This will not be the case with the third invaders. This great leader and his followers will inflict serious damage on the Empire and add to its humiliation. The passages cited to help explain the first two trumpets have already provided clues to the identity of this great and powerful force. Both the Visigoths and Vandals were on the move because of the advance of an extremely powerful enemy from the East, the Huns.

According to Strong’s, wormwood means bitterness or calamity.¹²⁴ That this event is a calamity, at least for Rome, goes without saying. History tells us that in the middle of the fifth century Attila and his Huns marched through much of central and southern Europe leaving death and destruction in their wake. What was interesting about his quests is that for some reason, he chose to move along rivers destroying all the cities he came to which were situated along their banks. For those living along the rivers, this was certainly a “bitter” experience. Many men did indeed die because the “water had become bitter.” The reference to the third part of the rivers again means that this calamity was to primarily affect the western third of the Roman Empire.

“During the early years of his (Attila’s) reign, from A.D. 434 to 441 he seems to have been engaged in extending his power in the east toward the Caucasian Mountains. But in A.D. 441 an irresistible opportunity offered itself for attacking the provinces of Theodosius (Emperor of the eastern Roman empire), for in that year the Imperial armies were engaged in operations against both the Vandals and the Persians.

He condescended to allege reasons for his aggression. He complained that the tribute had not been regularly paid, and that deserters had not been restored. When the Imperial government disregarded his complaints, he appeared on the Danube and laid siege to Ratiaria. Here Roman ambassadors arrived to remonstrate with him for breaking the peace. He replied by alleging that the bishop of Margus had entered the land of the Huns and robbed treasures from the tombs of their kings, and he demanded the surrender of these treasures as well as of deserters. The negotiations broke down, and, having captured and plundered Ratiaria, the Hunnic horsemen rode up the course of the Danube to take the great towns on its banks. Viminacium and Singidunum itself were overwhelmed in the onslaught. Margus, which faces Constanina on the opposite side of the river, fell by treachery; the same bishop whom Attila accused as a grave-robbet betrayed a Roman town and its Christian inhabitants to the cruelty of the heathen destroyer. Advancing up the valley of the Margus, the invaders halted before the walls of Naissus, and though the inhabitants made a brave defence, the place yielded to the machines of Attila and the missiles of a countless host. Then the marauders rode southeastward and approached Constantinople. He did not venture to attack the capital, but he took Philippopolis and Arcadiopolis and the fort of Athyras.

The Illyrian and Thracian provinces enjoyed a respite from invasion for three years. But in A.D. 447 the Huns appeared again south of the Danube. The provinces of Lower Moesia and Scythia, which had suffered less in the previous incursions, were now devastated. Marcianopolis was taken, and the Roman general Arnegisclus fell in a battle on the banks of the River Utus (Wid). At the same time, another host of the enemy descended the valley of the Vardar and advanced, it is said, to Thermopylae.”¹²⁵

After much success Attila was finally defeated soundly in Gaul by a combination of Roman and Visigoth forces. After a little time to reorganize and rearm his army Attila was once again on the warpath.

“Attila lost little time in seeking to take revenge for the unexpected blow which had been dealt him. He again came forward as the champion of the Augusta Honoria, claiming her as his affianced bride, and

¹²⁴ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #894.”

¹²⁵ J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire: From the Death of Theodosius I to the Death of Justinian*, (New York, NY: Dover Publications, 1958), pp. 273-5.

invaded Italy in the following year. Aquileia, the city on the Venetian march, now fell before the Huns, and was razed to the ground, never to rise again; in the next century hardly a trace of it could be seen. Verona and Vicentia did not share this fate, but they were exposed to the violence of the invader, while Ticinium and Mediolanum were compelled to purchase exemption from fire and sword.

The path of Attila was now open to Rome. Aetius, with whatever forces he could muster, might hang up his line of march, but was not strong enough to risk a battle. But the lands south of the Po, and Rome herself, were spared the presence of the Huns. According to tradition, the thanks of Italy were on this occasion due not to Aetius but to Leo, the bishop of Rome. The emperor, who was at Rome, sent Leo, and two leading senators, Avienus and Trygetius, to negotiate with the invader. Trygetius had diplomatic experience; he had negotiated the treaty with Gaiseric in A.D. 435. Leo was an imposing figure, and the story gives him the credit for having persuaded Attila to retreat.

The fact of the Embassy cannot be doubted. The distinguished ambassadors visited the Hun's camp near the south shore of Lake Garda. It is also certain that Attila suddenly retreated. But we are at a loss to know what considerations were offered to induce him to depart. It is unreasonable to suppose that this heathen king would have cared for the thunders and persuasions of the Church. A trustworthy chronicle hands down another account which does not conflict with the fact that the embassy was sent, but evidently furnishes the true reasons which moved Attila to receive it favorably. Plague broke out in the barbarian host and their food ran short, and at the same time troops arrived from the east, sent by Marcian to the aid of Italy.”¹²⁶

Once again I will mention that some accounts relate that Leo persuaded Attila not to chance an invasion of Rome, because the last man who had done so, had not lived long afterward. Again, this is far from a proven fact, but is none the less an interesting side note. Whatever the cause, Attila left Italy without attacking Rome. Despite this small consolation the Empire had still suffered greatly from his exploits.

As the verses had indicated, this third wind affected the waters of Europe. Attila used a much different style than most other military leaders of that era and chose to travel along the courses of the numerous rivers and other waterways in Central and Southern Europe.

It should also be mentioned that the attacks of the Vandals and Huns might seem to be reversed chronologically. Here in Revelation, the Vandals appear before the Huns, but history records that it was the Huns who were the first of the two to approach Rome; the Huns doing so in 452 and the Vandals in 455. However, a closer examination will show that the most of the Vandal's activities in Europe, except the sack of Rome itself, had been done by 430 when they sailed for the north African coast. Since the majority of the Vandals exploits occurred before those of the Huns, they appear first in Revelation

Some consider Attila to have been the most powerful man on the European continent at one point in his career. Whether or not this is true is debatable, but one thing is certain. By the time Attila's career of plunder was over at his death in 453, he had effectively left the entire western third of the Roman Empire in shambles. Whatever strength they might have had in the past to resist the encroaching barbarians was now gone. This is evidenced by the Vandals raid on Rome two years after Attila's death. It was no longer a question of "if" Rome would fall permanently into the hands of the barbarians, but rather how long it would take, and who would actually do it. The fourth and final wind will soon answer this question for us.

There is one interesting side note that I would like to point out at this juncture. Back in chapter six we saw the white horse carrying a bow representing the period of peace and prosperity in the Roman Empire. It was there mentioned that the skill of the Roman archers was what gave them a military edge over most of their foes. The old saying that 'he who lives by the sword, dies by the sword,' is apparently true for bows also.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 294-5.

“... the Romans owed much of their military superiority to armies of skilled archers. At the beginning of the medieval period the Romans were in turn defeated by the more highly skilled archers of the Goths, Huns and Vandals.”¹²⁷

8:12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

The fourth angel sounds, which is also the fourth wind. If our interpretation is correct, then this should signal the end of the western third of the great Roman Empire. The language of this verse is certainly fitting for such a noteworthy event. Earlier it was mentioned that the sun, moon, and stars are often used in the Bible to represent positions of authority and power. Here we see that they are smitten and darkened. To say that the sun is darkened is to say that life will cease to exist. This is exactly what happened to the western third of the Roman Empire. The sun set on it for the final time.

The fact that the powers of Rome are to be smitten and blackened shows that the great catastrophe which is about to occur will be extremely devastating to them. It is not hard to see that the fall of Rome itself would be much more devastating than anything else that could happen. The impact was certainly the greatest for those who had previously enjoyed positions of authority and power within the Empire. The poor man would just find himself serving another master, but the upper class might well lose everything. Their wealth might be taken from them, and their positions of influence would most certainly be gone. In short, their whole world was being turned inside out. The reference to the “*third part*” is once again telling us that these events are only affecting the western third of the Empire.

The final blow to Rome turned out to be somewhat ironic. For centuries the Roman army had been forced to enlist men from many different countries who had become part of the Empire. As the Empire began to weaken, being less able to defend themselves from the many tribes of barbarians advancing in their direction, they were forced to become more and more dependent on the foreign soldier. Many of them even rose to very high ranks in the army; some even becoming generals. But the very ones enlisted to protect Rome, proved to be her final undoing. Even before the “official” end of the Roman Empire, it was no secret that the Germans were the ones really in charge, and the Roman emperors little more than puppets.

“One of those barbarians, Odoacer, deposed the last emperor in 476. Although no more than a palace mutiny, this coup marks the final passage of power from Roman to German hands.”¹²⁸

“Odoacer became a leader of a band of Rugians, Herulians, Scyrians, and Turrilingians. He entered the Roman army about 470, and in 476 was a member of the imperial bodyguard. When Orestes deposed Nepos and made his own son, Romulus Augustus I, emperor, Odoacer headed the rising of the dissatisfied German soldiers, killed Orestes, and forced Romulus to retire.”¹²⁹

Odoacer then proclaimed himself King of Italy, and reigned there for several years. The mighty Roman Empire has finally fallen, but instead of a loud crash, it was really more like a whimper. Something so large and complex does not simply crash to the ground like a tree, but rather changes form from one thing to another. In reality this change took centuries. The western third of the Empire is gone, but the other two thirds remain. They will likewise be dealt with in turn.

8:13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe,

¹²⁷ Funk & Wagnall's, 1973, s.v. “archery.”

¹²⁸ Chambers, et. al., 1983, p. 172.

¹²⁹ Americana, 1989, s.v. “Odoacer.”

woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

The first four of the seven angels have now sounded their trumpets, bringing to an end the western third of the Roman Empire. In this verse we do not see another trumpet being blown, but the remaining three are discussed. An angel flies through Heaven proclaiming, with a loud voice, a very ominous message about the remaining trumpets. He is going about proclaiming “woe” to the inhabitants of the earth. According to Strong’s woe is an exclamation of grief.¹³⁰ This grief will be brought about, the angel says, because of the last three trumpets which have yet to sound. When we come to these last trumpets, we should look in history to find events which will be very grievous to those affected. These last three trumpets will be referred to as “woe” trumpets.

¹³⁰ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #3759.”

Chapter Nine

Blowing of the seven trumpets - The fall of Imperial Rome: the fifth and sixth trumpets

9:1 And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.

Now as the fifth angel sounds his trumpet, John sees a star fall from Heaven. We have now mentioned several times that heavenly bodies are often used to represent positions of power and authority. Here we are seeing someone who is very powerful represented by the figure of a star, just like Attila. This person is said to have the “*key to the bottomless pit*.” This bottomless pit is used to represent Hell, the place of abode for Satan and his angels. The word bottomless is translated from the Greek “abussos,” which Strong’s defines as “depthless, i.e. (specifically) (infernally) ‘abyss’ -:deep, (bottomless) pit.”¹³¹ Symbolically the bottomless pit is the source of anything and everything evil and wicked.

This person that falls from Heaven has the key to the bottomless pit. A key represents authority. The one who possesses the key to a door has control over what lies behind the door. The fact that this person was given the key to the bottomless pit shows that he has the power to unleash upon the world some wholly evil force that lurks behind the door.

Who might this person be? It is very easy to pinpoint the person who has had the most impact on the world since Christ. In fact, it can probably be said that next to Jesus, this person has had the most impact on making the world what it is today since the world began. Not surprisingly, this person lived shortly after the fall of the Western Roman Empire, exactly the period of time we are looking at. This person is going to open the door to the bottomless pit and allow some wholly evil force to escape to the outside where it would have a devastating effect on the world. He is Satan’s latest ally in his efforts to defeat God’s people.

9:2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit.

This person now uses his key to open the door of the bottomless pit. As the door opens, John sees a great amount of smoke coming from the pit. He likens it to the smoke of a great furnace. Anyone who has ever been near a steel mill, a coal burning power plant, or certain other industrial facilities while they were operating, should easily be able to

¹³¹ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #12.”

recall the tall smoke stacks that were spewing columns of smoke into the sky. This is a good picture of what John saw. He could not see the source of the smoke, for it was deep within the pit, but he could still see the enormous amounts of smoke billowing upward from its mouth.

John then gives us an idea of the magnitude of the smoke. He said there was so much smoke that the sun and the air were made dark because of it. This brings to mind the very disturbing pictures from Kuwait soon after its liberation from the hands of Saddam Hussein, and the Iraqi army in the first Gulf War. Before leaving, they set many oil wells on fire. The resulting blanket of smoke smothered the entire country. Often, during the middle of the afternoon, it was so dark in the capital, Kuwait City, that it resembled twilight. The streetlights were on, and motorists had to drive with their headlights turned on. It is also reminiscent of the eruption of a volcano where hundreds of tons of ash can be scattered across the skies.

The smoke that John saw rising from the pit was having this kind of devastating effect. It was overspreading the land with its evil. Just as real smoke will block out the sun everywhere it goes, this smoke blocked out spiritual light everywhere it went. This conclusion is very evident since we know that the abode of Satan is the source of the smoke in this case. One of the most well known effects of smoke is its irritation of human eyes. Satan will use this property to his advantage. He will use this smoke to “blind” people in order to deceive them. He will spread darkness, as it were, over all of the territory affected by this evil smoke.

9:3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

Now the picture becomes a little clearer. The smoke that John saw blotting out the sun has given rise to something else. It was a great swarm of locusts, which that part of the world is prone to periodically. These locusts have come from the smoke-screen which Satan threw up to deceive the world. Because they were blinded by the smoke, the world was unable to learn that the origin of these locusts was the bottomless pit. We can be certain that these people will not be Christians, but will work against Christianity.

One of the plagues God brought upon Egypt in persuading Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to leave, was a great swarm of locusts. These locusts brought great destruction to the land just as we can imagine the ones we are presently considering will do. *“Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast: and they shall cover the face of the earth, that one cannot be able to see the earth: and they shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field...and the locusts went up over all the land of Egypt, and rested in all the coasts of Egypt: very grievous were they; before them there were no such locusts as they, neither after them shall be such. For they covered the face of the whole earth, so that the land was darkened; and they did eat every herb of the land, and all the fruit of the trees which the hail had left: and there remained not any green thing in the trees, or in the herbs of the field, through all the land of Egypt”* (Exodus 10:4-5, 14-15).

Notice how it was stated that they covered the land so thoroughly that it was actually darkened by their presence. Our locusts here in Revelation will cast a spiritual darkness over the land.

“Unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power.” All of this descriptive language here, does not of course, refer to actual locusts or scorpions, but is describing some great force that God will bring to bear against the remainder of the Roman Empire. This comparison with locusts refers to the huge size of this force, and the blanketing effect they will have as they overspread the land. The comparison with scorpions refers to their ability to do harm to men. Thus we have a picture here of a very great army which will come through destroying part of what remains of the Roman Empire.

We have seen that at first John saw smoke, but then he was able to see a great horde of locusts emerging from the smoke. In the next few verses we will see John’s perceptions become even clearer. It appears that what he is seeing is continually moving closer and giving him a better view. Consequently, he will be able to give us more elaborate details as time passes. I feel that it is important for us to have in our minds the picture of a great army riding toward John. This will make the symbolism of this chapter much clearer.

9:4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads.

After comparing this great army with locusts, because of their number and the effect they would have, John now shows us a difference in this army and a real swarm of locusts. Whereas locusts will devastate all of the vegetation in their path, this army would not do any harm to the vegetation that it encountered. This is further evidence that he is not speaking of actual locusts here. Their aim is not to consume vegetation, but to consume territory and people.

This description gives us a clue that will help identify this army. Back in chapter eight we saw the Visigoths come through bringing destruction to the Roman Empire, and eventually sacking the city of Rome itself. One characteristic of these people was their lack of respect for vegetation. *“The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up”* (Revelation 8:7). The Visigoths burned and pillaged the land as they went forth conquering. Being from northern Europe, they were accustomed to seeing an abundance of vegetation. It held no special significance to them, so they simply burned a path as they went.

The force pictured here will have a completely different attitude about vegetation. They will not harm it because they will have respect for it. This indicates that this great army will arise from some part of the world that is very arid, and which lacks the great abundance of vegetation that characterized the Visigoth’s world.

Instead of harming vegetation, the goal of these locusts will be to do harm to men. Those who are sealed (faithful to God) will, however, be spared this fate. These locusts will be very specific in who they harm. The fact that these locusts will go after men and not vegetation is still further proof that they are not literal locusts but warriors in a great army.

The *“seal of God in their foreheads”* was discussed in depth back in chapter seven. We saw there that seals denote ownership. Correspondingly, the seal of God upon a person denotes His ownership of that person. God “owns” Christians in the sense that they have voluntarily submitted themselves to Him. This is why the seal is said to be in the forehead. The forehead represents the seat of understanding and thinking; in other words the mind. A person could only be “sealed” by God if he chooses to allow it. A person makes a voluntary decision in their mind, or in their forehead, to follow God. Thus the seal of God, the designation that they are His, is in their forehead. Those who have the seal of God will not be harmed by these invaders. In other words these people will practice religious toleration to some degree.

9:5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

The “hurt” which these locusts will do to the men of the Roman Empire, will not be death, but torment. The Greek word for torment here is “basanizo,” which Thayer defines as “to vex with grievous pains (of body or mind), to torment.”¹³² We can see that these scorpions will cause severe distress on those whom they come in contact with. This indicates that their motive for conquest will not simply be wealth accompanied by wanton destruction, as was the case with those who invaded Rome in the fifth century. They will not slaughter men, except for those killed in battle, but will torment them by separating them from the Empire. This might be similar to how the residents of Texas would feel if Mexico went to war with the United States and was able to take Texas away. Although the Mexicans might treat the population of Texas humanely, they would still be very distressed about the turn of events. This is exactly how the residents of the lands captured by this force will feel, even though most will not be physically harmed.

“Five months” is the period of time that these locusts will have their power to torment men. Or in other words, they

¹³² Thayer, 1989, s.v. “βασανίζω.”

will be a thorn in the side of the remains of the Roman Empire for 150 years. As discussed in the introduction, in prophesy a day translates to a literal year. A prophetic month is exactly thirty days long. Here we have five months, which is equivalent to 150 days. In actual time, these “locusts” will have their power for 150 years.

“*The torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man,*” refers to the type of suffering that men will be subjected to at the hands of these locusts. They will have the ability to make men suffer the same way someone does when he has been stung by a scorpion. “The sting, which is situated at the end of the tail, has at its base a gland that secretes a poisonous fluid, which is discharged into the wound by two minute orifices at its extremity. In hot climates the sting often occasions much suffering, and sometimes alarming symptoms.”¹³³ “A scorpion wound is painful, but does not usually cause death.”¹³⁴ This harmonizes with the idea that this army will torment, but not kill, those who it encounters.

For 150 years some part of the remainder of the Roman Empire will be forced to endure a great deal of pain and suffering at the hands of a large and powerful army that God will bring against them. This pain and suffering will be primarily mental and emotional. They will be very distressed at the way their empire is being dismantled by this powerful enemy.

9:6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

The torment and suffering mentioned in the previous verse will be so severe that men will wish they were dead instead of having to continue to endure the affliction. “*And shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them,*” does not mean that they will be unable to take their own lives if they desire to do so. Rather it has reference to the locusts propensity to “hurt” but not kill. Many men will wish their oppressors would kill them so that they would not have to be subjected to their rule. The mental anguish will leave the general population very distressed. Many people will feel as if the world is collapsing, and will feel that life just is not worth living any longer.

This situation is very similar to that encountered in chapter six, where men were so distressed that they “*Said to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.’*” Again these men could have committed suicide had they chosen to, but that is the cowards way out. They wanted very badly to be out of the terrible situation they were in, but they were not about to take their own lives to accomplish this. Here we have a similar situation where men will have a great desire to have the torment removed from them, but they will not be able to do anything about it.

9:7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men.

Now John is able to give us clearer details about this army he is seeing. What once appeared to him to be locusts he now sees as something quite different. These locusts have moved closer and their true shapes are coming into focus for John. He tells us that they were shaped like horses that were equipped for battle. In reality these were horses John was seeing. Horses with riders prepared to ride into battle.

Although John has a much better view now than he had at the beginning, he is still just able to make out the outline of the creatures. This explains the phrase “*And their faces were as the faces of men.*” When you see a horse and rider at a distance, the majority of what you will see is the horse because it is much larger than the rider. The shape of the horse could be distinguished long before anything could be told about the rider. As the object moved closer, your attention would be drawn to its head. Naturally, a man sitting on a horse would be higher than the horses head. As a

¹³³ Smith, 1986, s.v. “scorpion.”

¹³⁴ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “scorpion.”

result, what you would see as the “head” of the creature would be the head of the rider. Thus, the object’s face would look like the face of a man, because that is what you would actually be seeing.

“*Crowns like gold*” indicates that they were wearing something, which at a distance, appeared to John to resemble crowns of gold. Obviously, no large group of soldiers would actually go into battle wearing gold crowns on their heads. These were not real gold crowns but something which gave the same general appearance. After all, John never said he actually saw crowns, but that what he saw on their heads was “*as it were crowns like gold.*”

Therefore we should look for some group of people who traditionally wore head gear during that time in history, which could be mistaken for golden crowns at a distance. We saw in verse four that the men most likely will come from an area of the world where vegetation is scarce. One area which will fit both of these criteria is the Middle East. The inhabitants of that area have a long history of wearing turbans on their heads. If they were wearing turbans of a yellow or orange color, it might appear at a distance that they were wearing crowns of gold on their heads. This area is also in very good proximity to both the eastern and southern thirds of the Roman Empire, which are the possible candidates for this army to afflict.

9:8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.

The one thing that distinguishes a woman’s hair from a man’s is its length. What John was referring to here is the apparent length of these warrior’s hair. What he was really seeing, however, was the tail of the turbans trailing behind the men as they rode along on the horses. At a distance, the cloth tail of a man’s turban waving in the wind as he rode a horse, would look very similar to a woman’s hair blowing in the wind.

The “*teeth of lions,*” cannot refer to any physical similarity between the teeth of these men and the teeth of real lions. Rather, John is describing their tendency to devour prey like a lion. They will be extremely ferocious and brave in battle. This great army will come through devouring everyone and everything in their path. But as we have already seen, they will not kill, except in battle.

9:9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle.

The breastplates they were wearing actually were of iron. Armor had been used by warriors in battle since before the time of Christ. It would indeed have been strange if these men did not wear armor. Still referring to them as locusts, John says the sound of their wings was like a great herd of horses. Again, the locusts that John saw were actually mounted warriors. So, in reality, John actually could hear horses running to battle. He indeed could also hear the sound of the chariots many of the horses were pulling.

9:10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

This is just a repetition of a couple of items from earlier verses. Their tails being like scorpions means they would harm men, but not kill them, as a scorpion’s sting will normally do. The five months is actually 150 years during which this army will have its power to hurt men.

9:11 And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

The bottomless pit was first encountered earlier in this chapter. It was explained to be a reference to Hell, the dwelling place of Satan. The true king of this great army was the angel of the bottomless pit, which is Satan. To say that Satan was the king of this great army does not mean that he will take a physical form and literally lead them into battle. Rather he is their spiritual head, just as Christ is the king over all Christians. It is from him that they derive the inspiration for their evil beliefs and practices. The king referred to here obviously could not have been a man

since they had power for 150 years, which far exceeds the life span of any man. Satan, however, their real king and the one behind all evil, was there the entire time motivating this people to perform his evil desires.

At one time Satan was an angel of God in Heaven, but after sinning, was cast out into the earth. It is in the earth that he now dwells and where he continues to fight against all things righteous. Later in Revelation we will be given an even more explicit description of Satan's fall. "*And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him*" (Revelation 12:7-9). Since the day man was created Satan has been trying to defeat God's purposes. He is always behind the evil forces of this world.

The Hebrew "Abaddon" is defined by Strong's as "a destroying angel."¹³⁵ Thayer defines it this way, "as a proper name it is given to the angel-prince of the infernal regions, the minister of death and author of havoc on earth, and is rendered in Greek by Destroyer."¹³⁶ The Greek "Apollyon" is defined by Strong's as "a destroyer (i.e. Satan)."¹³⁷ We should now feel secure that this king was indeed Satan. We will find more and more mention of him as we continue through Revelation. He will clearly be shown as the driving force behind all of the evil that we will see.

Now comes the time to identify the people who have been described in this chapter. We know they came from the smoke-screen thrown up by Satan, led by a very prominent man. Eventually John was able to see coming from the smoke a swarm of locusts overspreading the countryside (verse three). Then John tells us they were able to hurt men like scorpions (verse three). Which means that, for the most part, they will not kill, but will only oppress. Then we found that they would have a great respect for vegetation, which would indicate that they originated in an area with scant vegetation (verse four). We also saw that they were to practice some degree of religious toleration, so God's people would not be harmed (verse four). The period when they would inflict pain on the Roman Empire would be 150 years (verse five). Then John begins to give a clearer description and we found that the locusts were actually warriors on horseback (verse seven). The riders were wearing something on their heads which looked like gold crowns, which we identified as being turbans (verse seven). The tail of their headdresses flowing behind them made them appear as though they had long hair like women, and they had teeth like those of lions which showed their ferocity (verse eight). They were wearing armor, and also had chariots (verse nine). Finally they had a king, who we identified as Satan.

Who would fit such a description? World history tells us that a great force matching this description did indeed make great advances against the remains of the Roman Empire in the seventh and eighth centuries. By this time the Empire no longer went by the name Roman, but was called the Byzantine Empire.

"At the beginning of the seventh century A.D., the Western world was divided between two power blocs, the Byzantine Empire consisted of the eastern and southern portions of what had once been the Roman Empire, for Italy, France, Spain and Britain had been overrun by barbarians and lost. Persia was considerably larger than it is today. It included Iraq, Afghanistan, and a part of what is now West Pakistan. Apart from faraway China, there were no other Great Powers at the beginning of the seventh century which were at all comparable to Byzantium and Persia.

These two great states were bitter rivals and were constantly either at war or engaged in a commercial or diplomatic struggle for supremacy. The state religion of Byzantium was Christianity, that of Persia Zoroastrianism. The frontier between the two great powers ran from the Upper Euphrates to the Caucasus. South of that, they were separated by the natural barrier of the Arabian deserts.

¹³⁵ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #3."

¹³⁶ Thayer, 1989, s.v. "Ἀβδδών."

¹³⁷ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #623."

The only Arabs in existence in those days inhabited the Arabian Peninsula. The majority of them were tribesmen, looked down upon as uncivilized by the sophisticated Persians and Byzantines. In Iraq and Syria, however, there were small civilized Arab states, which were satellites of Persia and Byzantium respectively. Then, as now, the trade routes between the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean crossed Arabia, and the Arab merchants who handled this trade were wealthy men of the world.

From 602 to 628, Byzantium and Persia were engaged in a long and bitter war. In 628, the King of Persia was assassinated and the country collapsed into revolution. As a result, peace was concluded, Byzantium also being bankrupt.

* * *

The Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 in Mecca, a town which depended for its livelihood on the Oriental trade. In 613, he began to preach. He alleged that the Patriarch Abraham had taught the true faith, which had since been corrupted alike by Jews and Christians. He claimed that his religion, Islam, was a return to the true faith propagated by Abraham. Persecuted by the Meccans, he fled in 622 to Medina, whence he and his fellow converts made war on their fellow-Meccans who had driven them from their homes. Eight years later, in January 630, Muhammad and his Muslims captured Mecca by force of arms. In the course of the ensuing two years, the Prophet became virtually the ruler of the whole of Arabia. All of the Arabs of the Peninsula professed Islam. In June 632, However, Muhammad died and Abu Bekr, his principal lieutenant, took over his position with the title of Khalif or successor.

Before the preaching of Muhammad, the majority of the Arabs had been idol-worshippers, though Judaism and Christianity were spreading among them. Muhammad learned from both religions, more especially perhaps from Judaism. So great, however, was the enthusiasm produced by the Prophet, who had himself stated that to fight against unbelievers was a duty, that the Arabs set out, a year after his death, to wage war simultaneously against Byzantium and Persia.

Both of these ancient military empires had long and warlike traditions and well-equipped professional armies, which had received thorough tactical training and were fully armed and equipped. But Muhammad had promised that any Muslim who fell in battle against infidels would be instantly translated to the everlasting gardens of Paradise. So impatient were the first Muslims to reach the Heaven of their dreams that many deliberately courted death. Readiness to die is the soldier's most invincible weapon, a fact we need to remember today when we tend to rely on scientific devices rather than on men.

Neither the weapons, the training nor the discipline of the Byzantine and Persian armies were adequate to resist the wild and suicidal attacks of the first Muslims. The Byzantines were ignominiously driven across the Taurus into Asia Minor and in the same year the Persian army was finally destroyed at Nehawand. By the year 652, the invincible Arabs had occupied the whole of Persia as far as the borders of Turkestan and India. In the west they had attacked Tripoli in Africa. More surprising still, emerging from the waterless deserts of Arabia, they had taken to the sea and their fleet had captured Cyprus and raided Sicily.

...the Arab conquests continued. On the east they crossed the Oxus into what is now Russian Turkestan, and farther south they invaded the province of Sind on the Indus. In Africa they advanced as far as what we now call Algeria, founding an advanced military base at Qairawan. But their most ambitious expedition, an attempt to capture Constantinople, the Byzantine capital, was a failure. Meanwhile their fleet had established naval command on the Mediterranean.”¹³⁸

The Arab's period of conquest was interrupted temporarily by a civil war. At the end of this war there emerged two distinct factions of the Arabs which remain to this day. They are the Sunnis and Shiites. Muhammad himself, was of the group which became known as the Shiites. However, after this struggle, a Sunni leader emerged victorious.

¹³⁸ John B. Glubb, *Course of Empire: the Arabs and Their Successors*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Publishing), pp. 21-2, 26.

“As soon as the civil wars were ended, the Arabs resumed their career of world conquest. When Abdul Malik died in 705, the whole of North Africa had been conquered, up to the Atlantic Ocean. In the east, the Arabs were again advancing into India and Turkestan. Seventy-three years after the death of the Prophet, the Arab Empire was the greatest Power in the world. Waleed, the son of Abdul Malik, ruled for ten years, during which the Arabs reached the highest pinnacle of their military glory. In the West, they conquered Spain up to the Pyrenees. In the East, they completed the conquest of Turkestan and invaded China. On the Indian front, they occupied most of what is now West Pakistan. Their most ambitious operation was a second attempt to capture Constantinople itself. The attack failed, and, in 717 the siege of that city was abandoned. The Arabs, however, remained the strongest military power in the world. In 724, the Khalif Hisham came to the throne and ruled for nineteen years. During his reign the Arabs invaded France, reaching Tours on the Loire, where, in 732, they were repulsed by the Franks under Charles Martel. Had they been victorious at Tours, they might have gone on to conquer France and Italy.”¹³⁹

In 747 the Arab world was once again racked with internal struggles. By 750 the ruling dynasty had been deposed, and another took its place. Not long after that the Arab Empire began to slowly disintegrate. By 755 Spain had revolted and was lost to the Empire. In 762 the western portion of their African holdings were lost to another insurrection. Finally, in 782 a treaty was signed at Constantinople between the Byzantines and the Arabs. Although this treaty did not permanently end the hostilities between the two sides, it did mark the turning point in their relationship. After this the Byzantine Empire was gradually able to recover some of the territory it had lost to the Arabs. The following passage shows the resurgence of the Byzantine Empire after the treaty was signed in 782.

“During the 800^s, the empire began to expand again. Byzantine armies drove the Arabs back on several fronts. From 867 to 1025, under the Emperor Basil I and his descendants, the empire achieved another major period of success.”¹⁴⁰

Although the Arabs were driven back from Europe itself, they nonetheless had a devastating effect on the entire continent.

“The extent of the Arab dominions from Spain to Turkestan cut off Europe from trade with Asia. Charlemagne, the contemporary of Haroon, was reduced to a silver currency because in the West gold was unobtainable. Arab fleets enjoyed naval command of the Mediterranean and Western Europe was reduced to a purely agricultural economy without foreign trade. The Dark Ages of Europe had come.”¹⁴¹

Now we must sift through the history and compare it with the predictions to insure a perfect match. In their early days the Arabs did indeed overspread the land as locusts, at one point controlling most of the southern and eastern portions of the old Roman Empire. They were led initially by someone who can very appropriately be called a star that fell from Heaven and to whom was give the key to the bottomless pit. It’s as if Satan gave Mohammed the key to his abode, the bottomless pit, as said “make yourself at home.” Only someone with their head buried in the sand would not recognize the tremendous impact Mohammed’s religion, Islam, has had and continues to have on the world.

The army was supposed to hurt men like scorpions, which means to do them harm without killing them. We must be realistic here; the lands the Arabs conquered did not surrender. They fought bravely and tens of thousands of men died defending their lands. This is to be expected with any invasion. This was not the item John meant to focus our attention upon. The question is, “What did they do once they had won the battle?”

During the fifth century, the conquests which toppled the western third of the Roman Empire, were marked by the

¹³⁹ Ibid., pp. 26, 28.

¹⁴⁰ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Byzantine Empire.”

¹⁴¹ Glubb, p. 29.

invaders following a policy of death and wanton destruction. Often whole cities were leveled, and the entire populations annihilated. This was an age of truly barbaric conquests. It was a time of little mercy and compassion. A good part of the reason for these conquests was the sheer pleasure the warriors derived from such wanton destruction. The question now is, did the Arabs follow the same pattern?

“The caliphs did not conquer new lands solely to gain new converts, but many conquered peoples embraced Islam. Unlike the Byzantine Christians, the Muslim conquerors granted a large measure of religious tolerance. All non-Muslims had to pay a special tax in return for not serving in the Muslim army. But many worked as officers and tax collectors in the civil administration and as doctors and tutors in the court. At first, only a few were converted to Islam. Gradually the Muslims produced their own administrative and professional classes. Beginning about 750, conversion to Islam increased until Islam became the predominant religion in most of the conquered lands.”¹⁴²

To the Arabs, the fight was more than a struggle for wealth, land, and power; it was also a religious matter. They were engaged in, what is even still called today, a jihad, or holy war. They believe in using brute force to subjugate others and then influence them to adopt the Islamic religion. One of the main purposes they had in enlarging their territory was to spread their religion. When they captured an area, they did not attempt annihilation but rather conversion. While this might not have been the worst fate for the individuals involved, the conquests themselves were certainly very troubling to the Empire. No one enjoys having their land invaded and conquered by someone else, especially when that someone else is a serious threat to topple your entire empire. Thus we can understand the distressed condition of the people mentioned in verse six. The Arabs brought great hurt to the Byzantine Empire, almost toppling it completely, but they did not come killing like armies of the past. Therefore the analogy of the scorpion’s sting was quite accurate. John also said they were not supposed to harm those who were sealed of God. As we just saw in the above reference, they practiced religious toleration, so Christians had little problem with their conquerors. Many people converted to Islam but this was mainly a matter of convenience. It would be much easier to be a Muslim if you lived in a Muslim country. Those who chose to thus compromise their principles and beliefs were never dedicated to God in the first place. Those who were true servants of God would not have been swayed by Satan’s lies.

The statement that they would not harm any vegetation (verse 4), is certainly consistent with the respect that those from such a desolate place as the Arabian Peninsula would have for plant life. The great Arab Khalif Abu Bekr, principal lieutenant of the Prophet Mohammed, said as he sent his troops into battle in Syria:

“But let not your victory be stained with the blood of women or children. Destroy no palm-trees, nor burn any fields of corn. Cut down no fruit trees, nor do any mischief to cattle, only such as you kill to eat.”¹⁴³

Although renowned for their ferocity in battle, the Arabs were otherwise unusually civilized as conquerors go.

There was one thing, however, that greatly enraged the Muslims and drove them to more destructive behavior. This was idolatry. Idolatry was one of the major reasons the Muslims so despised the Byzantine Empire. Like the Romans, the Byzantines worshipped idols. Images and paintings of Jesus, the Apostles, and other saints adorned all the cathedrals and churches, and part of their religion was to worship these images. During the height of the Arab threat to Byzantium, some of the emperors tried to ease the tensions by banning the worship of images.

“In the 700^{’s} and early 800^{’s} Byzantine emperors tried to end the worship of images of Jesus Christ and the saints. Churches in the western part of the empire opposed this action. The dispute nearly split the empire.”¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Muslims.”

¹⁴³ Gibbon, vol. I, 1963, p. 145.

¹⁴⁴ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Byzantine Empire.”

The worship of idols continued to be a center of controversy in the Churches of the East. It is very interesting to note that the worship of images was legalized again in 787. This was only five years after a treaty was signed with the Arabs. There can be no doubt but that the entire reason the images were banned in the first place, was to try to appease the Arabs.

“In the days of the early Christian Church, people who opposed the worship of images were called iconoclasts. A long dispute had divided the church, especially in the East, about images of Jesus Christ and the saints in churches. Emperor Leo in 726 issued an order that all images and paintings in churches should be covered or destroyed. People destroyed many images, and the emperor’s order divided the church into opposite groups. The iconoclasts favored removing the images, but many of the monks and people strongly opposed them.

After the second Nicene Council met in 787, the Empress Irene of the Byzantine Empire permitted images to be worshipped, as long as the worship had a different quality from that owed to God. Finally in 843 the Eastern Church reached a settlement which permitted pictures but not complete statues or images. In the Roman Catholic Church, images are venerated as symbols.”¹⁴⁵

“Theodemir and his subjects were treated with uncommon lenity; but the rate of tribute appears to have fluctuated from a tenth to a fifth, according to the submission or obstinacy of the Christians. In this revolution, many partial calamities were inflicted by the carnal or religious passions of the enthusiasts: some churches were profaned by the new worship: some relics or images were confounded with idols: the rebels were put to the sword; and one town (an obscure place between Cordova and Seville) was razed to its foundations. Yet if we compare the invasion of Spain by the Goths, or its recovery by the kings of Castile and Arragon, we must applaud the moderation and discipline of the Arabian conquerors.”¹⁴⁶

If the Arabs fit the prophesy then we must find that they enjoyed power for a period of 150 years. After Muhammad died in 632, the first caliph led the Arabs to conquests outside the Arabian Peninsula. This marked the beginning of their period of conquests against the Byzantine Empire. They continued to make inroads into Byzantium for decades, but finally a treaty signed in 782 at Constantinople was the turning point.

“By the time the Abbasids came to power the vigor of the Arab conquest had spent itself and the Arab warriors had either gone back to the desert or had been assimilated. The Abbasids added very little to the territory they had inherited. Except for the bodyguard which remained in Baghdad, they did not even maintain a standing army. Consequently, most of their foreign relations depended upon the sending of emissaries and in giving and receiving gifts.

An exception to this general situation, however, was their relation with Byzantium. The riches of Constantinople were still inviting and the conquest of Asia Minor had become a challenge. Emperor Constantine V (741-775), taking advantage of the civil war between the Abbasids and the Umayyads, had pushed back the Arab invaders all along the southern borders of Asia Minor. In 782, Mahdi sent an expedition under the command of his son, Harun, which advanced to the Bosphorus. Queen Irene sued for and concluded peace with the payment of tribute. The Byzantine Empire was weak enough to excite the expansionist tendencies of the Arabs, both Umayyad and Abbasid, but strong enough to withstand their attacks. Consequently, the Arabs were happy to receive money and make peace which in turn gave the Byzantines a breathing spell.”¹⁴⁷

This treaty did not permanently end the hostilities between the two sides, but it did mark the time when the respective fortunes of each side changed. The Arabs began to lose territory and power back to the Byzantines after

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., s.v. “iconoclasts.”

¹⁴⁶ Gibbon, vol. III, 1963, p. 200.

¹⁴⁷ Yahya Armajani, *Middle East—Past and Present*, (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, Prentice Hall Inc., 1970), p. 86.

this time. As we would hope, it was exactly 150 years from the beginning of their conquests of Byzantine lands, until this peace treaty was signed.

The remainder of the description is somewhat more general in nature, and just gives us a description of a great army wearing armor, riding horses, wearing turbans on their heads, and using chariots. This certainly applied to the Muslim armies which subdued most of the Byzantine Empire.

The statement in verse eight about their teeth being as the teeth of lions has much more significance now. It was mentioned that this symbolized bravery and ferocity in battle. One of the references above spoke of “the wild and suicidal attacks of the first Muslims.” The way in which the Muslims fought, and were so willing to die for their cause, was unknown before this point in history. They were truly like savage lions on the hunt.

Was the king of the Arabs Satan, as the prophesy stated? The Islamic religion not only denied Christ as the Messiah, but even denied Israel as having been God’s chosen people. They totally corrupted the worship of God and then attempted to spread this doctrine throughout the entire world. Who else would be behind such a campaign, but Satan? A work this evil could have no other overseer. When Satan saw that the two great powers in that part of the world, Persia and Byzantium, had so weakened each other through constant warfare and economic struggles, he seized the opportunity to send forth his evil hordes from the bottomless pit and turn them loose upon the world. According to most historians he almost succeeded. Had the Arabs been victorious at Tours in 732, it is believed that Islam might well dominate Europe today, instead of Christianity.

The sum of all these events is that the southern third of the original Roman Empire has now fallen. The areas involved were Northern Africa and Palestine. Islam is still the dominant religion in these areas to this day. All that is now left of the Roman Empire is the eastern third. It is still referred to as the Byzantine Empire, and is primarily the Aegean and Turkish Peninsulas and surrounding areas.”

9:12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.

The first woe trumpet, also the fifth trumpet overall, has sounded. It has revealed the end of the southern third of the Roman Empire. There are two more woe trumpets that remain to be blown. We should suspect that we will now see the fall of the last third of the Roman Empire.

9:13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

When the sixth trumpet is blown John does not see any event on the earth which might affect Rome, but rather John hears a voice in Heaven. The voice is coming from the vicinity of the altar which is in front of God’s throne. This voice is not the angel which has just sounded the trumpet, but someone else speaking to that angel, as will be seen in the next verse.

We have seen the altar previously in chapters six and eight. Assuming this altar was of the same pattern as the one used by the Jews in the Temple, the horns were located at the corners, and were used to bind the victim to, before it was sacrificed.

9:14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

The angel which had just blown the sixth trumpet, is now told to “Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.” We need to interpret this is the light of what we have already learned, and where we know we are at in history. The four angels symbolize a force which will come against Byzantium and overcome it. Just because this force is represented by angels does not mean that it is good, because all angels are not good. “For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (II Peter 2:4). We will find that this force will be just as evil as all the others we have seen.

Satan continues to be behind these events. He is trying to overrun the Christian world with godless hordes he has duped into following him.

The Muslims had tried twice to take Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, but were unsuccessful on both occasions. Whoever is spoken of here will not fail. They will conquer Constantinople and the entire Byzantine Empire. “*Bound in the great river Euphrates*, simply tells us the part of the world the people will come from who are to drive the final nail in the coffin of the Roman Empire.

If we examine history we find that Constantinople stood until 1453 when it was finally captured by the Turks. They had previously taken the rest of the Byzantine Empire, and this was the final blow. Now we need to examine the following verses and see if it fits with the history of the Turks.

9:15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

The four angels which represent, in some way, the forces that will destroy Byzantium were prepared for “*An hour, and a day, and a month, and a year.*” It would be very easy to start figuring out how long this time period would be and begin looking for a corresponding time period in history. This is the approach usually taken by many commentators. However, if we take a closer look, something soon becomes apparent about this passage. In verse five of this chapter a time period was mentioned and it represented a period in history. The same will be true about Revelation 11:2 & 3; 12:6 & 14, and 13:5, all five of which refer to the same time period. In Table V below, the pertinent part of each verse is shown.

Time Periods in Revelation	
9:5	<i>they should be tormented five months</i>
11:2	<i>the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months</i>
11:3	<i>they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days</i>
12:6	<i>they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days</i>
12:14	<i>she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time</i>
13:5	<i>power was given unto him to continue forty and two months</i>

Table V

Notice that each one follows the exact same pattern: subject, then verb, then the time period. The verses are broken down in table VI below to illustrate this point.

Break-Down of Time Periods in Revelation			
	Subject	Verb	Time Period
9:5	they	tormented	five months
11:2	they	tread	forty and two months
11:3	they	prophesy	a thousand two hundred and threescore days
12:6	they	feed	a thousand two hundred and threescore days
12:14	she	nourished	a time, and times, and half a time
13:5	him	continue	forty and two months

Table VI

Now compare this with the current verse which says: *which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.* The different order of the elements of the sentence is the first clue that something different may be going on here. Then as we look closer something else becomes apparent: these verses have very different forms in the Greek. In Table VII I have put the English equivalents in the order that the Greek words appear in the original.

Greek Construction of Time Periods in Revelation	
	Time Period
9:5	months five

11:2	months forty two
11:3	days a thousand two hundred sixty
12:6	days a thousand two hundred sixty
13:5	days a thousand two hundred sixty
9:15	the hour and day and month and year

Table VII

Notice how in our current verse the construction is completely different. Of great importance is the presence of the article “the” which is in the Greek. If this does not represent a time period during which the Turks are to do something, then what could it mean. This is another case where the King James Translation is not wrong but is perhaps not the best where this particular vers in concerned. Below are five other translations of verse 15. Notice how they are subtly different from the King James.

And the four angels who had been kept ready for this very hour and day and month and year were released to kill the third of mankind. (New International Version)

And loosed were the four messengers, who have been made ready for the hour, and day, and month, and year, that they may kill the third of men; (Young’s Literal Translation)

And the four angels were loosed, which had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, that they should kill the third part of men. (Revised Version)

So the four angels who were ready for that hour, day, month, and year were released to kill one-third of humanity. (International Standard Version)

The four angels were released; for this very hour of this very day of this very month and year they had been kept ready to kill a third of all the human race. (Good News Bible)

Whereas the King James say *prepared for an hour...*, these translations say things *such as kept ready for this hour, made ready for the hour, prepared for the hour, were ready for that hour, and for this day...had been kept ready*. All of these show that we are looking for a specific day in which the Turks were to accomplish a great task for which God had prepared them. What was this task? The last phrase of the verse tells us.

“*To slay the third part of men,*” is again a reference to the three parts of the Roman Empire. Two have already fallen, and the last third is now under consideration. “*Slay*” does not have reference to the killing of men, but means that the third part of Rome, Constantinople, which is under consideration here, will be slain. Finally, after all of these many centuries, God will finally put an end to the last vestige of the most impressive of secular empires the world has ever seen.

The army under consideration is represented by four angels, this figure would indeed fit the Turks.

“In the western and northwestern parts of their empire the Ghaznevites were supplanted soon after the death of Mahmud by the family of another Turkish chieftain, named Seldjuk, fresh from the wild life of the steppes, whom Mahmud, unwisely, had invited to settle in a portion of his domain. Very soon the Seldjuks were lords where they came as guests, and, at the end of the year 1050, Togrul Beg, grandson of their first leader, was in Baghdad, master of the caliphate itself. Two successors of Togrul Beg, his nephew, Alp Arslan, and Malek Shah, Alp Arslan’s son, wrested from the Byzantine empire the greater part of Asia Minor, which appears to have been at that time the most highly civilized part of the world. From the ruin they spread over that country it has never risen since. At Alp Arslan’s death, in 1092, his dominion embraced nearly all that now belongs to Asiatic Turkey, together with the whole of Persia and Bokhara; but civil war followed which broke it into four parts, and, in the next century, the Seldjuk dynasty was overthrown.”¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁸ J. N. Larned, *Larned’s History of the World*, (New York, World Syndicate Inc., 1915), p. 438.

Less than a half century after first engaging the Byzantine Empire, the Seljuk Turk Empire split into four parts. It was one of those parts, the Ottoman Turks, who became to instrument of God's vengeance on Constantinople.

9:16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

Now, instead of referring to the four angels, John tells us that we are actually considering an enormous army; an army of two-hundred-million horsemen. John did not count all of these men himself, but someone, most likely an angel, told him that there were two-hundred-million men. This is another instance where a large number is used to impress upon us the great size of something, and so the number should not be taken literally. The world has never seen an army of that size, and likely never will. The only country in the world right now that would have the manpower to field such an army would be China. But they certainly wouldn't have the resources to equip an army that large. Besides, they do not come from the area of the Euphrates River. This number is obviously meant to be taken figuratively and not literally. Certainly, we are looking for an extremely large army, but it will be no where near two-hundred-million men. This situation is very similar to the 144,000 in chapter seven.

9:17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone.

John has already told us of the great army under consideration here, now he gives us a more specific description of the soldiers on the horses. The breastplate was armor used for the purpose of protecting the soldier's body in battle. "Jacinth" means deep blue, and is synonymous with smoke in the last part of the verse. "Brimstone" is from the Greek "theiodes," and is defined by Strong's as "sulphur-like, i.e. sulphurous:-brimstone."¹⁴⁹

There can be little doubt about the origin of the term brimstone. One of the main components of gases expelled into the atmosphere by volcanoes is sulfur. Often the rocks and soil near the mouth of a volcanic crater or vent are colored a brilliant shade of yellow. As the gases escape some of the hot sulfur is deposited on the cooler rocks near the opening. Thus sulfur has long been referred to as brimstone, since it is most often encountered near the brim of volcanic openings.

In two places in this verse we have a picture of fire, smoke, and sulphur. In the second place it is said to come out of the mouths of the horses. Clearly we are not talking about real horses here, but are symbolically referring to something quite different. In the battles of that day, two of the soldiers greatest assets were his horse and his armor. Without these he would soon perish. This is the idea that John is trying to relate to us here. Whatever he is describing was absolutely necessary to the success of the enemy against Byzantium.

What John was actually seeing, although it wouldn't be invented for over 1,200 years after his death, was a cannon. After their last unsuccessful attempt it is said that "Several generations elapsed before the Muslims appeared again before the walls of Constantinople, which always proved too thick and too strong for the Arabs to penetrate without the aid of gunpowder."¹⁵⁰ When the cannon fired John saw the fire and smoke coming from its "mouth." John had no idea what he was seeing, no one of his day would have. It was very strange and peculiar to him, but he tried his best to relate to us what he saw.

When a cannon was fired in the fifteenth century, it would generate a sight quite unlike what we would probably imagine today. We are all familiar with the detonation of "smokeless" powder, which is used today. It was invented

¹⁴⁹ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #2603."

¹⁵⁰ Sydney N. Fisher, *The Middle East: A History*, (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf Inc., 1959), p. 71.

in 1884, and had replaced gunpowder in most uses by the early 1900^s.¹⁵¹ When the cannons which John saw were fired, there would be a tremendous amount of smoke and fire to be seen; much more so than we would imagine today. This is why John is so vehement in his description of the “*fire and smoke and brimstone.*”

“The earliest artillery was used chiefly against the walls and gates of besieged towns, forts, and castles. The Hundred Years’ War (1337-1453), in which the English kings tried to add France to their kingdom, made the battlefields the proving ground for the new science of artillery. The first great land battle of that war, at Crecy in 1346, is most remembered because it proved English archers superior to heavily armored knights on horseback, yet it was also at Crecy that King Edward III of England introduced cannon-short-barreled bombards. Cannon proved their value in the ensuing siege of Calais, which Edward conquered after 11 months. In 1436, King Charles VII of France organized the first permanent artillery department, for purposes of siege and defense, and headed it with a ‘master of artillery.’

At the other end of Europe the Turks under Mohammed II used much Artillery, some of great size, in their siege of Constantinople in 1453. Their conquest brought about the final downfall of the Eastern Roman Empire and the establishment of Constantinople as the new capital of the (Turkish) Ottoman Empire.”¹⁵²

As John’s illustration had supposed, the artillery used by the Turks proved to be as valuable to them as a soldier’s breastplate and horse in battle.

Constantinople wears the dubious title of the world’s most often besieged city. It had been besieged numerous times before the Turks finally were victorious. It had stood since it was made the capital of the Roman Empire by Constantine in A.D. 330. The cannon of the Turks proved to be its undoing. Constantinople was an extremely well fortified city, possibly the greatest of all time. This is how it had been able to withstand so many other attacks for over a millennium, when all other cities had fallen much more quickly. Ultimately, the immense fortifications were no match for the power of cannon fire.

There is an excellent description of the final day of battle, when the Turks finally captured Constantinople, in Edwin Pears “The destruction of the Greek Empire.” It is far too long to include here, but it tells how the Turks were finally able to enter the city through an area which had been bombarded by cannons for many days. “The general assault commenced between one and two hours after midnight on the morning of Tuesday May 29.”¹⁵³ The battle continued through the night with not much success. But the Turks, having superior numbers, continued to throw fresh troops at the defenders who had now been harassed for weeks. Mohamet had even begun the initial attack that night with his worst, and therefore most expendable, troops. When they were driven back he sent a fresh wave toward the wall. Finally, sensing a moment of weakness in the opposition, Mohamet ordered his best troops, the Janissaries, which he had kept in reserve, to join the attack. The weakness which Mohamet had spotted was due to the wounding of General Justiniani. He was forced to retire from the battle, which caused many of his troops to lose morale. Many fled their post, and those who did remain seemed to have lost most of their will to fight. Mohamet had seen this, and seized the opportunity.

“As the sun rose Mohamet saw that his great effort had succeeded. Where Arabs, with even greater numbers than he commanded, in the first flush of the victorious career of Islam, with the presence of the great Eyoub, the companion of the Prophet, to encourage them and to speak of the wondrous rewards which paradise had in store for the believers who should enter New Rome or die in the attempt; where Murad thirty years before; and where twenty other besieging armies had been unable to capture the world’s capital, he had succeeded. Seated on horseback beneath his great standard and insignia, he watched with the legitimate pride of a conqueror the entry of his hordes into the city. The morning sun shed its rays upon him

¹⁵¹ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “gunpowder.”

¹⁵² *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “artillery.”

¹⁵³ Edwin Pears, *The Destruction of the Greek Empire*, (New York, NY: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903), p. 334.

and his standard as his soldiers thronged through the gate of the Assault or hastened towards that of Andronople. The entry was not long after sunrise and probably between five and six o'clock."¹⁵⁴

It is very interesting to note that in the above passage Constantinople is referred to as "New Rome" and as the "world's capital." Although Rome itself had long been conquered the world realized that the Empire was still alive and well, until Constantinople fell. After all, Rome had long ceased being the capital of the Empire before its fall in 476, Constantine had moved the capital to Constantinople in 330. Thus the true heart of the old Empire did remain alive until 1453.

9:18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

The "third part of men" refers once again to a third part of Rome. Constantinople representing the eastern third, was the only part left now, and so when it fell, not only did the last third officially fall, but the entire Empire had finally come to an end. Almost two-thousand years from the time the Romans began to exert great influence in the area of the Mediterranean, the Empire which they spawned finally had breathed its last breath. Thus ended what was truly the greatest world power man has ever seen.

The reference to the third part of men being killed, does not actually have reference to men dying, although certainly many did perish in battle, but refers to the death of the eastern third of the Empire just described. The Empire was "killed" by "smoke and brimstone." The reference quoted in the previous verse spoke of Mohamet being victorious where "Twenty other besieging armies had been unable to capture the world's capital." If he had used the methods which those other twenty armies had employed, Mohamet also would have failed. He, however, had a tool which none of his predecessors had been blessed with. The walls of Constantinople were impossible to negotiate intact. But having successfully battered them with cannon fire for days, Mohamet was able to get his men over the piles of rubble, which was, in many places, all that remained of the walls. There is no doubt that he could not have taken the city without the aid of "fire and smoke and brimstone" (verse seventeen).

9:19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

This verse is just a more thorough description of the cannons which the Turks used to conquer Constantinople. John would certainly say "Their power is in their mouth," because he saw the smoke and fire coming from the "mouth" of the cannon. The "tail" that John saw was the fuse of the cannon. This was not modern artillery he was seeing, but very crude cannons which had a fuse that had to be lit each time it was fired. To John the fuse curling out of the end of the cannon had the appearance of a serpent's tail.

It was logical for John to say that their power was also in their tails, because he would see the fire in their tails after the fuse had been lit. Then John tells us that it was the cannons which were used to "hurt" Constantinople. We have already seen from history, that without these cannons, Mahomet, and his army, would have failed in their siege of the great city.

9:20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk:

The fall of Constantinople marked the final chapter in the long and illustrious history of the mighty Roman Empire. Although the Empire was gone, most of the inhabitants, or their descendants, were still around. John now turns from the Empire itself, to examine the people, and how they have responded to the destruction of their Empire. John sees that they have not forsaken their evil ways and turned back to God. He tells us they are still worshipping devils and

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 351.

idols. Earlier in this chapter it was noted that the Churches in the East and the West were heavily involved with the worship of idols and images. This is a practice which still continues to this day. God condemned Israel for idolatry hundreds of times, and here He continues His stern rebuke of those who are wearing the name Christian, but just like Israel, are given wholly to idol worship. It does not matter that the idols and images are depictions of Jesus (supposedly, since no one really knows what He looked like), and dead Christians, God does not condone ANY type of idol or image worship.

In condemning Israel for their idolatrous practices, God was not only condemning them because they were worshipping other Gods, but also because they were performing worship which He had not commanded them to do. *“And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them...which I have not commanded”* (Deuteronomy 17:3). *“For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them”* (Deuteronomy 29:26). God has never condoned the worship of ANY type of object which man is able to make with his hands. *“Their land also is full of idols; they worship the work of their own hands, that which their own fingers have made”* (Isaiah 2:8). *“Thy graven images also will I cut off, and thy standing images out of the midst of thee; and thou shalt no more worship the work of thine hands”* (Micah 5:13).

The Roman Church also prays to and worships certain saints. Most everyone has heard of “Hail Marys,” which are prayers to Mary, the mother of Jesus. No where in the Bible do we find that she was worshipped, nor are Christians commanded to worship her. When the wise men came they worshipped the young child Jesus, but nothing is said of their worshipping His mother. *“And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him”* (Matthew 2:11).

The Apostle Peter is also worshipped. There is a picture of what is supposed to be Peter hanging in St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome which has been kissed so many times by passers-by, that the paint is almost entirely gone in the area of the feet of the figure in the painting. Should Peter be worshipped? He did not think so. *“And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, Stand up; I myself also am a man”* (Acts 10:25-26). According to Peter, since he was only a man, he was not worthy of worship.

The Bible tells us that even angels are not to be worshipped. *“Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels”* (Colossians 2:18). John tried to worship an angel but was rebuked by the angel. *“And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, ‘See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God’”* (Revelation 22:8-9). When John tried to worship this angel he was informed that angels are the fellowservants of men, and ought not to be worshipped. If neither men nor angels can be worshipped, this leaves only God, which is exactly what the angel instructed John to do; *“worship God.”*

Gibbon describes eloquently the origins of idolatry in the Catholic Church.

“The primitive Christians were possessed with an unconquerable repugnance to the use and abuse of images; and this aversion may be ascribed to their descent from the Jews, and their enmity to the Greeks. The Mosaic law had severely proscribed all representations of the Deity; and that precept was firmly established in the principles and practice of the chosen people. The wit of the Christian apologists was pointed against the foolish idolaters, who bowed before the workmanship of their own hands; the images of brass and marble, which, had they been endowed with sense and motion, should have started rather from the pedestal to adore the creative powers of the artist. Perhaps some recent and imperfect converts of the Gnostic tribe might crown the statues of Christ and St. Paul with the profane honors which they paid to those of Aristotle and Pythagoras; but the public religion of the Catholics was uniformly simple and spiritual; and the first notice of the use of pictures is in the censure of the council of Illiberis, three hundred years after the Christian aera. Under the successors of Constantine, in the peace and luxury of the triumphant church, the more prudent bishops condescended to indulge a visible superstition, for the benefit of the multitude; and, after the ruin of Paganism, they were no longer restrained by the apprehension of an odious parallel. The first introduction of a symbolic worship was in the veneration of the cross, and of relics. The saints and martyrs, whose intercession was implored, were seated on the right hand if God; but the gracious and often supernatural favors, which, in the popular belief, were showered round their tomb,

conveyed an unquestionable sanction of the devout pilgrims, who visited, and touched, and kissed these lifeless remains, the memorials of their merits and sufferings. But a memorial, more interesting than the skull or the sandals of a departed worthy, is the faithful copy of his person and features, delineated by the arts of painting or sculpture. In every age, such copies, so congenial to human feelings, have been cherished by the zeal of private friendship, or public esteem: the images of the Roman emperors were adored with civil, and almost religious, honors; a reverence less ostentatious, but more sincere, was applied to the statues of sages and patriots; and these profane virtues, these splendid sins, disappeared in the presence of the holy men, who had died for their celestial and everlasting country. At first, the experiment was made with caution and scruple; and the venerable pictures were discreetly allowed to instruct the ignorant, to awaken the cold, and to gratify the prejudices of the heathen proselytes. By a slow though inevitable progression, the honors of the original were transferred to the copy: the devout Christian prayed before the image of a saint; and the Pagan rites of genuflection, luminaries, and incense, again stole into the Catholic church. The scruples of reason, or piety, were silenced by the strong evidence of visions and miracles; and the pictures which speak, and move, and bleed, must be endowed with a divine energy, and may be considered as the proper objects of religious adoration. The most audacious pencil might tremble in the rash attempt of defining, by forms and colors, the infinite Spirit, the eternal Father, who pervades and sustains the universe. But the superstitious mind was more easily reconciled to paint and to worship the angels, and, above all, the Son of God, under the human shape, which, on earth, they have condescended to assume. The second person of the Trinity had been clothed with a real and mortal body; but that body had ascended into heaven: and, had not some similitude been presented to the eyes of his disciples, the spiritual worship of Christ might have been obliterated by the visible relics and representations of the saints. A similar indulgence was requisite and propitious for the Virgin Mary: the place of her burial was unknown; and the assumption of her soul and body into heaven was adopted by the credulity of the Greeks and Latins. The use, and even the worship, of images was firmly established before the end of the sixth century: they were fondly cherished by the warm imagination of the Greeks and Asiatics: the Pantheon and Vatican were adorned with the emblems of a new superstition; but this semblance of idolatry was more coldly entertained by the rude Barbarians and the Arian clergy of the West. The bolder forms of sculpture, in brass or marble, which peopled the temples of antiquity, were offensive to the fancy or conscience of the Christian Greeks: and a smooth surface of colors has ever been esteemed a more decent and harmless mode of imitation.”¹⁵⁵

“The worship of images had stolen into the church by insensible degrees, and each petty step was pleasing to the superstitious mind, as productive of comfort, and innocent of sin. But in the beginning of the eighth century, in the full magnitude of the abuse, the more timorous Greeks were awakened by an apprehension, that under the mask of Christianity, they had restored the religion of their fathers: they heard, with grief and impatience, the name of idolaters; the incessant charge of the Jews and Mahometans, who derived from the Law and the Koran an immortal hatred to graven images and all relative worship. The servitude of the Jews might curb their zeal, and depreciate their authority; but the triumphant Mussulmans, who reigned at Damascus, and threatened Constantinople, cast into the scale of reproach the accumulated weight of truth and victory. The cities of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt had been fortified with the images of Christ, his mother, and his saints; and each city presumed on the hope or promise of miraculous defence. In a rapid conquest of ten years, the Arabs subdued those cities and these images; and, in their opinion, the Lord of Hosts pronounced a decisive judgment between the adoration and contempt of these mute and inanimate idols.”¹⁵⁶

“Of such adventurers, the most fortunate was the emperor Leo the Third, who, from the mountains of Isauria, ascended the throne of the East. He was ignorant of sacred and profane letters; but his education, his reason, perhaps his intercourse with the Jews and Arabs, had inspired the martial peasant with a hatred of images; and it was held to be the duty of a prince to impose on his subjects the dictates of his own conscience. But in the outset of an unsettled reign, during ten years of toil and danger, Leo submitted to the meanness of hypocrisy, bowed before the idols which he despised, and satisfied the Roman pontiff with the annual professions of his orthodoxy and zeal. In the reformation of religion, his first steps were moderate

¹⁵⁵ Gibbon, vol. III, 1963, pp. 1-3.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., vol. III, pp. 5-6.

and cautious: he assembled a great council of senators and bishops, and enacted, with their consent, that all the images should be removed from the sanctuary and altar to a proper height in the churches where they might be visible to the eyes, and inaccessible to the superstition, of the people. But it was impossible on either side to check the rapid through adverse impulse of veneration and abhorrence: in their lofty position, the sacred images still edified their votaries, and reproached the tyrant. He was himself provoked by resistance and invective; and his own party accused him of an imperfect discharge of his duty, and urged for his imitation the example of the Jewish king, who had broken without scruple the brazen serpent of the temple. By a second edict, he proscribed the existence as well as the use of religious pictures; the churches of Constantinople and the provinces were cleansed from idolatry; the images of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints, were demolished, or a smooth surface of plaster was spread over the walls of the edifice. The sect of the Iconoclasts was supported by the zeal and despotism of six emperors, and the East and West were involved in a noisy conflict of one hundred and twenty years. It was the design of Leo the Isaurian to pronounce the condemnation of images as an article of faith, and by the authority of a general council: but the convocation of such an assembly was reserved for his son Constantine; and though it is stigmatized by triumphant bigotry as a meeting of fools and atheists, their own partial and mutilated acts betray many symptoms of reason and piety. The debates and decrees of many provincial synods introduced the summons of the general council which met in the suburbs of Constantinople, and was composed of the respectable number of three hundred and thirty-eight bishops of Europe and Anatolia; for the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria were the slaves of the caliph, and the Roman pontiff had withdrawn the churches of Italy and the West from the communion of the Greeks. This Byzantine synod assumed the rank and powers of the seventh general council; yet even this title was a recognition of the six preceding assemblies, which had laboriously built the structure of the Catholic faith. After a serious deliberation of six months, the three hundred and thirty-eight bishops pronounced and subscribed a unanimous decree, that all visible symbols of Christ, except in the Eucharist, were either blasphemous or heretical; that image-worship was a corruption of Christianity and a renewal of Paganism; that all such monuments of idolatry should be broken or erased; and that those who should refuse to deliver the objects of their private superstition, were guilty of disobedience to the authority of the church and of the emperor. In their loud and loyal acclamations, they celebrated the merits of their temporal redeemer; and to his zeal and justice they intrusted the execution of their spiritual censures. At Constantinople, as in the former councils, the will of the prince was the rule of episcopal faith; but on this occasion, I am inclined to suspect that a large majority of the prelates sacrificed their secret conscience to the temptations of hope and fear. In the long night of superstition, the Christians had wandered far away from the simplicity of the gospel: nor was it easy for them to discern the clew, and tread back the mazes, of the labyrinth. The worship of images was inseparably blended, at least to a pious fancy, with the Cross, the Virgin, the Saints and their relics; the holy ground was involved in a cloud of miracles and visions; and the nerves of the mind, curiosity and scepticism, were benumbed by the habits of obedience and belief. Constantine himself is accused of indulging a royal license to doubt, or deny, or deride the mysteries of the Catholics, but they were deeply inscribed in the public and private creed of his bishops; and the boldest Iconoclast might assault with a secret horror the monuments of popular devotion, which were consecrated to the honor of his celestial patrons. In the reformation of the sixteenth century, freedom and knowledge had expanded all the faculties of man: the thirst of innovation superseded the reverence of antiquity; and the vigor of Europe could disdain those phantoms which terrified the sickly and servile weakness of the Greeks.”¹⁵⁷

The bottom line is that only God can be worshipped. And God cannot be worshipped through images and idols. “*But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:23-24). Spiritual worship cannot be conducted through physical means. God has never commanded Christians to build large and expensive church buildings. He has never commanded Christians to decorate their buildings elaborately. All of these things are physical, and have absolutely nothing to do with the worship of God. Idolaters try to worship God with idols, images, and expensive surroundings. Christians worship God from a sincere heart and a humble spirit.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., vol. III, 1963, pp. 7-9.

Even after the destruction of Constantinople, the apostate Roman Church refused to repent of its idolatrous practices and turn to God. They kept on worshipping the works of their own hands.

9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Here more crimes of the apostate Roman Church are listed. “Murders” has reference to the many Christians who were slain for their opposition to the Catholic Church. The period from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, was a period of great persecution by the Catholics. It was during this time that the Reformation took place, and the Roman Church did not hesitate to kill in order to try to stop it.

“Their (bishops) efforts were reinforced in the thirteenth century by special courts of inquiry set up by the papacy. These courts, known as the Inquisition, were eventually introduced to most areas of Europe, but the earliest was the one established in the south of France after heresy and revolt had gripped that region. The main disturbance there was called the ‘Albigensian heresy,’ after the cathedral town of Albi, where it started. At the request of Pope Innocent III, French nobles from the north cruelly suppressed the rebellion by 1226. But heresy smoldered even after this ‘crusade’ against the Albigensians was over. To snuff out the remaining embers, Innocent’s successor, Pope Gregory IX, established the Inquisition as a permanent court for finding and trying heretics.

The pope’s grand Inquisitor was placed at Carcassonne, in the south of France. He sent deputies, drawn chiefly from the new Dominican order, to the towns and cities of the area. In the public square of each place the deputies would announce their mission, then call for people to testify regarding suspected heretics. In pursuing their inquiries, the deputies resorted to torture to wring confessions from uncooperative suspects, and they denied accused persons legal counsel and the right to call or confront witnesses. Proceedings were usually conducted in secret. Lucky prisoners would confess early, repent, and forfeit only their property. Those who proved stubborn, or who lapsed again into heresy after repenting, were excommunicated and turned over to the civil authorities for more severe punishment.

Canon law (Church law) forbade the clergy to take life, but the civil authorities felt no such inhibition. And, because heresy was often associated with popular discontent or rebellion, the civil authorities regarded it as equivalent to treason and therefore set the penalty of death for convicted heretics. If a responsible official failed to apply that penalty, he himself was liable to excommunication and punishment. The most common means of execution was burning at the stake—a means that gave heretics a chance to make a final repentance as the flames reached higher and higher. They might then have time to beg for God’s forgiveness and the salvation of their souls. But in no case would the fire be quenched; the body of a ‘confirmed’ heretic was already forfeit.

The procedures and penalties of the Inquisition appear cruel and inhuman to modern minds. In the view of medieval churchmen, however, the end (rooting out heresy) justified the means. Even the ‘Angelic Doctor’ of the Church, Thomas Aquinas, held that extreme punishments were necessary to protect souls from the contamination of false beliefs. His was no doubt an honest argument. But the inquisition was also open to the foulest abuses. To level the accusation of heresy became a convenient way of injuring or getting rid of personal enemies, and the accusers were never identified by the court.”¹⁵⁸

Although the Catholics did not practice execution themselves, they had thousands killed by the civil authorities. How could anyone condone the burning of another human being in the name of Christianity? During this period of time anyone who dared voice even the smallest criticism against the Catholics was putting their life in grave danger. Many notable men were killed for this very thing early on in the Reformation. Around 1400 both John Wiclif and John Hus were killed because they took stands in direct opposition to Rome.

¹⁵⁸ Greer, 1987, pp. 208-9.

They were also accused of “*sorceries*,” which means magic or witchcraft. There are many items of the Catholic religion which will fit this definition. When otherwise ordinary water is blessed it becomes “holy water” and is ascribed nearly magical properties. Emblems of the cross are also supposed to possess extraordinary powers. During the Eucharist, also known as the Mass or Communion, a magical event supposedly occurs. As a person partakes of the bread and wine, there comes a point where these symbols literally transform into the body and blood of Jesus.

“*Fornication*” is meant in a spiritual sense, and has reference to their practice of idol and image worship. God has often spoken of idolatry as fornication or adultery. “*Moreover he (Jehoram, king of Judah) made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah thereto*” (II Chronicles 21:11). High places were areas normally used for the worship of idols and false Gods. By building these high places Jehoram, leading by his example, caused the people to worship idols, which is here called fornication. The Catholics were doing exactly the same thing. They were teaching and advocating the worship of many idols and images. This is the spiritual fornication of which they were guilty.

“*Thefts*” could refer to several things. One very prominent example was their seizure, or theft, of the property of heretics. Anyone who disagreed with the official Church doctrine, as issued from Rome, was likely to lose, at the least, their property, but often they lost their life also. Church officials amassed a great amount of wealth during this time period.

“The extraordinary power of the medieval Church rested solidly on the trust of the people. The rich left the Church generous gifts, and bishops and abbots thereby acquired vast properties in land, serfs, animals, and buildings.”¹⁵⁹

These “gifts” were being used for personal gratification, and not for God’s service. Consequently, we can say that the clergy were “stealing” items given to the Church.

Despite God’s warning, Rome continued to be stubborn and rebellious and refused to repent of these evil deeds. Because of their unwillingness to repent, God has systematically destroyed Rome piece by piece as He saw fit. But quite obviously the story is not over. We are not even half way through Revelation as yet, so something else must now be considered. Although the last of the Roman Empire has been defeated, Rome still lives. While our study was concentrating on the other two-thirds of the Roman Empire, something of great importance has been occurring in the Western third. From Rome itself has arisen a power which dominated the political affairs of Western Europe for over a thousand years. The Roman Empire was shattered, but from its ashes arose the papacy, the most powerful force on the European continent during the Dark Ages. It is toward the city of Rome that our story once again turns.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 200.

Chapter Ten

The Little Book

In chapter ten we continue to progress through history, but we will now see a different approach. Beginning in chapter six we have progressed from the origins of the Church in the first century A.D. to 1453, when Imperial Rome fell at the hands of the Turks at Constantinople. Now that Rome has been removed from the political scene we will see our story line turn in a slightly different direction. This should not come as any great surprise. Since the last remaining section of the Roman Empire has fallen, our story must move elsewhere.

In chapter nine we found a statement which told us that the first woe was past and that two more were still to come. At the end of chapter nine we seem to have completed the second woe, but we do not find a statement anywhere near the end of the chapter to tell us that. In fact we will not see that statement until chapter eleven. Actually the second woe was over at the end of chapter nine, but we were not told this. There are several important things that God tells us between the second and third woes which really are not part of either woe. Since the statement mentions both the end of the second woe and the beginning of the third, regardless of where it was placed we would still have material behind or in front of it that did not belong to either woe. If this statement had been located in the beginning of chapter ten we would have thought all of the material immediately following it was part of the third woe, when in fact, it was not. It would have been harder to make a distinction that way, than the way it actually appears. As we progress it will become quite evident from the context that the second woe was over at the end of chapter nine. The reason it is written this way is that since we are shifting story lines, God must pause to fill us in on the background of what we are about to discuss. In other words, this material is not part of either woe, but it is very necessary for us to know these things in order to understand the third woe.

10:1 And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire:

The description of the angel in this passage is one denoting beauty and majesty. It lets us know that we are seeing an angel of God. We see that this angel was clothed with a cloud. In the Bible clouds have often been used to denote the presence of God. God led the Children of Israel in the wilderness by appearing as a “pillar of a cloud” (Exodus 13:21). At the transfiguration of Christ, God spoke from a cloud (Matthew 17:5). When Christ ascended back up into Heaven “he was taken up; and a CLOUD received him out of their sight” (Acts 1:9). Someday man will “See the Son of man coming in the CLOUDS of heaven” (Matthew 24:30). In the resurrection “We which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the CLOUDS, to meet the Lord in the air” (I Thessalonians 4:17). The fact that this angel was wearing a cloud shows that he had come from the presence of God, and was doing God’s will.

The rainbow was used in chapter four in the description of God. However, just because the same symbol is used to represent both God and this angel, we should not make the assumption that the angel's appearance is as beautiful and glorious as God's. In Genesis 1:27 we find that man is created in God's image; which of course refers to our spirit. Man is created in His image, but is not exactly like Him. If someone wished to describe God and man (the spirit) some parts of the description would certainly be the same. This would not mean that God and man were the same, but would reflect the fact that man was created in God's image. We have no statement in the Bible which says the angels were created in God's image, but it is very likely they were. As a result, descriptions of both would yield some similar characteristics, even though they are not exactly the same. When the rainbow is used here to describe the angel it simply means that the angel possesses a quality of beauty similar to that of God, but certainly less in quantity.

The brightness of his face, which was like the sun, denotes his glory and power, just as the sun appears this way to the inhabitants of the earth. His glory was further illustrated by his feet which appeared like pillars of fire. This angel's pathway would always be well lit by his own glory as he traveled.

10:2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth,

From the description of the angel in the last verse we can see that he possesses great power and authority from God. He now comes to the earth and places one foot on the land and the other on the sea. This tells us that whatever he is about to do will have a widespread effect. Were he to stand only on some portion of land, we might deduce that this land was to be the focus of his mission. However, since he stands on the land and the sea we must conclude that his impact is to be felt, not only within the land upon which one of his feet rests, but also upon all land which is readily accessible from the sea that his other foot rests upon. Taking this one step further, since we already know the area of the world we are dealing with, I believe we can conclude that one of his feet rests on the European continent, and the other upon the Mediterranean Sea.

This angel had in his hand a little book. This little book is the Bible. Christ had warned the apostate Church in His letter to Pergamos (A.D. 313-533) that if they did not repent He would come and fight against them with the sword of his mouth (Revelation 2:16). This is exactly what is about to happen. They did not heed His call to repent, but rather continued to drift further into apostasy. The sword of Christ, which is the word of God, will prove to be the downfall of spiritual Rome.

The popes have led Rome farther and farther from the truth, so that anyone who respects the authority of the Bible must, of necessity, take a stand against Rome. Of course there had always been those who opposed Rome, but violent oppression had kept most of them from going public with their beliefs. However, around 1400, history tells us that men like John Wiclif and John Hus began to make serious waves which were never calmed. Although both of these men were killed because of their opposition to Rome, the ideas that they espoused, namely that the Bible is the sole authority on all spiritual matters, did not die with them. Other men continued to arise like John Calvin and Martin Luther who also openly opposed the Catholic doctrine. The waves continued to swell until finally, in 1792, the Catholic ship was sunk for good. Yes, the pope is still around, but he no longer possesses the great political clout he once had. This idea will become much clearer in subsequent chapters.

What we are shown in this verse is that the Bible is about to be returned to the people. For centuries the only copies of the Bible which existed were in the hands of the Catholic clergy. For one thing, before the printing press, each copy had to be made by hand. This greatly limited the number of copies that were available. In addition, the Catholics also conspired to keep the Bible out of the hands of the laity. Since their doctrines and practices were so different from what the Bible taught, they had a great need to keep the people in ignorance. Their strategic advantage, however, was about to come to an end. As soon as ordinary people did begin to have access to the Bible, the Reformation began.

There is one event, although not directly mentioned here in Revelation, that must be mentioned at this point. There has been no war, revolution, natural disaster or other calamity that has had such a tremendous impact on the European continent. This event served to destabilize every European country economically, politically, socially and

religiously. For every four people in Europe one died. Its per capita death toll makes it the worst disaster in recorded history. It occurred just fifty years before the Reformation began, its destabilizing effects paving the way for monumental changes to begin sweeping Europe.

“The plagues and famines that struck European society in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries profoundly affected economic life. Initially, they disrupted the established patterns of producing and exchanging goods and led directly to what some scholars now call ‘the economic depression of the Renaissance!’ But the effects of this disruption were not entirely negative; in reorganizing the economy under greatly changed demographic conditions, Europeans were able to make certain significant advances in the efficiency of economic production. To understand this paradox we must first examine how these disasters affected the population of Europe.

Demographic Catastrophe

Scholars have uncovered some censuses and other statistical records that for the first time give an insight into the size and structure of the European population. Nearly all of these records were drawn up for purposes of taxation and they therefore usually survey only limited geographical areas—a city or a province—and are rarely complete. But although they give us no reliable figures for total population, they still enable us to discern with considerable confidence how it was changing.

Almost every region of Europe from which we possess such records shows an appalling decline of population between approximately 1300 and 1450. For example, the population of Provence in southern France seems to have been between 350,000 and 400,000 at about 1310; a century later it had shrunk to something between one-third and one-half its earlier size, and only after 1470 did it again begin to increase. The population of the city and country-side of Pistoia, near Florence, fell from about 43,000 in the middle of the thirteenth century to 14,000 by the early fifteenth. The neighboring city and countryside of San Gimignano had approximately 13,000 residents in 1332 and only 3,100 in 1428; the region still has not regained its maximum medieval size.

For the larger kingdoms of Europe the figures are less reliable, but they cannot be too far from the mark. England had a population of about 3.7 million in 1347 and 2.2 million by 1377. By 1550 it was no larger a nation than it had been in the thirteenth century. France by 1328 may have reached 15 million; it too was not again to attain its peak medieval size for several hundred years. In Germany, of some 170,000 inhabited localities named in sources antedating 1300, about 40,000 disappeared during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Since many of the surviving towns were simultaneously shrinking in size, the population loss could only have been greater.

Certain favored regions of Europe, however—the fertile lands surrounding Paris or the Po valley—continually attracted settlers and maintained fairly stable populations, but they owed their good fortune more to immigration than to high birth rates or immunity from disease. It can safely be estimated that all of Europe in 1450 had no more than one-half, and probably only one-third, of the population it had had in the thirteenth century.

Pestilence

The great plague of the fourteenth century provides the most evident, although perhaps not the most satisfactory, explanation for these huge human losses. In 1347 a merchant ship sailing from Tana in the Crimea to Messina in Sicily seems to have carried infected rats. A plague broke out at Messina and from there it spread throughout Europe.

This Black Death was not so much an epidemic as a pandemic, striking an entire continent. It was not the first pandemic in European history. One had raged across Europe in 542, during the reign of Justinian. But it was the first in perhaps eight hundred years, and it struck repeatedly during the century. A city was lucky if more than ten years went by without an onslaught; in some part of Europe, in almost every year, the plague was raging. Barcelona and its province of Catalonia, for example, lived through this record of

misery in the fourteenth century: famine, 1333; plague, 1347 and 1351; famine, 1358 and 1359; plague, 1362, 1363, 1371, and 1397.

Some of the horror of the plague can be glimpsed in this account by an anonymous cleric who visited the French city of Avignon in 1348:

To put the matter shortly, one-half, or more than a half, of the people at Avignon are already dead. Within the walls of the city there are now more than 7,000 houses shut up; in these no one is living, and all who have inhabited them are departed; the suburbs hardly contain any people at all. ...

The like account I can give of all the cities and towns of Provence. Already the sickness has crossed the Rhone, and ravaged many cities and villages as far as Toulouse, and it ever increases in violence as it proceeds. On account of this great mortality there is such a fear of death that people do not dare even to speak with anyone whose relative has died, because it is frequently remarked that in a family where one dies nearly all the relations follow him, and this is commonly believed among the people.

Most historians identify the Black Death as the bubonic plague, but they find it difficult to explain how this disease could have spread so rapidly and killed so many, since bubonic plague is more truly a disease of rats and small mammals than of human beings. If bubonic plague is to spread to a human, a flea must bite an infected rat, pick up the infection, and carry it to a human host through a bite. The infection causes the lymphatic glands to swell, but recovery is not uncommon. Only if the infection travels through the bloodstream to the lungs, causing pneumonia, can the disease be spread directly from person to person. The real killer in the fourteenth century seems to have been a pneumonic plague, which infects the lungs directly; it probably was spread through coughing and was almost always fatal.

In spite of the virulence of pneumonic plague it is hard to believe that medical factors alone can explain the awesome mortalities. After all, Europeans had maintained close contact with the East, where the plague had been endemic, since the eleventh century, but not until 1347 and 1348 did it make serious inroads in Europe. In addition, pneumonic plague itself is a disease of the winter months, but the plagues of the fourteenth century characteristically raged during the summer and dissipated with the cooler weather of autumn. Some scholars consider that the weather of the age—it seems to have been unusually cool and humid—somehow favored the disease. Others argue that acute, widespread malnutrition had severely debilitated the population and lowered resistance to all kinds of infections.

Hunger

A second cause of the dramatic fall of population was hunger. Famines frequently scourged the land; and even if they were less lethal than the plague in their initial onslaught, they were likely to persist for several years. In 1315, 1316, and 1317 a severe famine raged in the north of Europe; in 1339 and 1340 another struck the south. The starving people ate not only their reserves of grain but most of the seed set aside for planting. Only a remarkably good harvest could compensate for the loss of grain by providing both immediate sustenance and seed for future planting in satisfactory quantities.

Why was hunger so rampant in the early fourteenth century? Some historians now locate the root of trouble in the sheer number of people the lands had to support by 1300. The medieval population, they say, had been growing rapidly since about 1000, and by 1300 Europe was becoming the victim of its own success. Parts of the Continent were crowded, even glutted, with people. The county of Beaumont-le-Roger in Normandy, for example, had a population in the early fourteenth century not much below the number it was supporting in the early twentieth century. Thousands, millions even, had to be fed without the aid of chemical fertilizers, power tools, and fast transport. Masses of people had come to depend for their livelihood upon unrewarding soils. Even in good years they were surviving on the slim and uncertain margins of existence; a slightly reduced harvest during any one year took on the dimensions of a major

famine. Through hunger, malnutrition, and plague the hand of death was correcting the ledgers of life, balancing the numbers of people and the resources that supported them.”¹⁶⁰

In some areas three-fourths or more of the population died, other areas were more fortunate. No area of Europe, however, was spared the ravages of this plague. One thing that is not mentioned in the above reference is how the whole event was viewed religiously. As people died by the millions where was God? More importantly, where was the one who supposedly represented God here on earth? If the pope was so powerful why couldn't he do something to stop this? The prayers of millions who were dying and their family members seemingly went unanswered. The Black Death, more than anything else could have, shook the foundation of Catholic faith in Europe. It also devastated the ranks of the priesthood. Many people, the rest of their family already dead, found their way to monasteries and churches seeking to be cared for. Others wound up there because they were ostracized by their families at the first sign of illness. In most cases of death the priest would be called to come and administer the last rites, thereby being exposed to the disease.

With the faith of so many already weakened, Europe was ripe for revolution; a spiritual revolution. It was in the aftermath of this that the seeds of the Reformation took root and grew. It seems very obvious that the Plague was used by God to prepare the battlefield for the struggle to come.

10:3 And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.

The angel, once he had positioned himself upon the land and the sea, spoke something with a loud voice, similar to a lion when he roars. Lions are famous for their ferocious roars. Many brave men have had chills run down their spine upon hearing a nearby lion roar unexpectedly. The comparison with a lion shows the power and majesty of the voice, qualities usually attributed to a lion.

We are not told what the angel said nor to whom he was speaking. However, the context of this situation should give us a good idea. He is coming to give the Bible back to the common people, and his message was likely a statement of his intentions. He probably said something like, “The Bible is now open for all to read and understand. Let all who will, come, and partake freely of the words of life.”

As soon as this angel had spoken, John also heard another very loud and powerful voice. As with the angel, we are not told what this voice said nor to whom it was addressed. This time we do not even know its source. Once again, however, by seeing what is going on here, we can deduce who was the source of the thunders and what they said. This will be addressed more closely in the next verse where we are given a little more information.

10:4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

After the tremendous voice, which was likened to seven thunders, had spoken, John was about to write the message down. After all, John had been instructed to “*write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter*” (Revelation 1:19). He was only following the directions he had been given. Before John was able to do this, however, he was interrupted by another voice which told him not to write these particular words. The obvious question is why? John was in Heaven for the purpose of seeing and hearing things, and then writing them down, so why would he be forbidden to record this?

John heard something that was not meant to be part of the record of the events he was witnessing, that much is clear. There are two possible ways this could have happened. Either one of God's servants accidentally said something that John was not supposed to hear, or someone who did not speak with the authority of God was the source of this message.

Examining the former possibility, are we to believe that one of the angels, or another of God's servants, made a

¹⁶⁰ Chambers, et. al., 1983, pp. 351-6.

mistake here? Does not all that we have seen to this point show that they knew exactly what they were doing? Everything has been in such perfect harmony thus far, but did someone slip up here? No, I do not believe this was an accident.

Then we are left with the other alternative of someone who was not intended to speak at all, interjecting his comments into the proceedings. But who would do such a thing? The angel which spoke first was described in a way which lets us know he was righteous and holy, but no such description was given of the one who spoke like seven thunders. It could have been anyone, and we have no clue as to their character or their motive.

Who would have the strongest reason to speak up when the angel proclaimed that the Bible should now be opened to all people? Certainly Satan, and all those who side with him, would like nothing better than to see every last copy of the Bible destroyed. They certainly do not want it to become widely distributed; this applies particularly to the Catholics. They had fought the Lord's Church for centuries trying to keep the people ignorant to the contents of the Bible.

The illustration of thunder has been used before in Revelation to show power and might. The voice of God was described as sounding like thunder in chapter four. A similar description is made of the voice of one of the four creatures in chapter six. In chapter eight, thunders are heard from the earth when the angel threw his censer full of fire from the altar into the earth. Clearly, thunder does not denote anything good or bad in and of itself; it simply denotes power. Whether or not that power is righteous or evil must be determined by other means.

Here I feel that the term "*thunders*" is used in order to bring to our minds the picture of a very powerful and destructive force. It is also important to note that the number of thunders was seven. We have mentioned several times that this number symbolizes completeness. Consequently, if thunder represents something evil here, and since there were seven thunders, we have a picture of everything that is evil and ungodly. Certainly, everything evil would cry out with pain and displeasure when the source of all goodness, the Bible, was made more readily available to man.

Therefore we can see that the seven thunders were the voices of Satan and all his evil minions, especially the Catholics, who vehemently opposed the opening of the Bible to the general public. Satan and his followers stand against all things that are pure and good and righteous and holy, which is exactly what the Bible is. With the Bible more available, Satan's power and influence will be reduced. His ability to deceive men through the agency of the Catholic Church will be drastically curtailed.

Before John was able to record the comments of the evil forces reacting to the opening of the Bible, someone told him that these words should not be included in his book. Of course John would have otherwise had no idea as to the validity of what he had heard. Beyond not writing down what the seven thunders had said, John was told to seal the message up. In other words, he was never to reveal what he had just heard to anyone.

This whole situation shows us one of the major points of contention between God and the Catholic Church. Here God has sent His angel to proclaim that the Bible should be open and available for all to read and understand. But just as soon as God says this the Catholic Church says, "No it should not! Leave it closed! The people will not be able to understand it. Let the priests interpret it for them. Let the pope settle any disputes which arise over its interpretation." The magnitude of this blasphemous effrontery is amazing. The pope stares straight into the face of God and says, "You are wrong!" Fortunately, the papacy's centuries of domination were quickly coming to a close. The Bible was being opened and no one would ever be able to close it again.

*10:5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,
10:6 And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are,
and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there
should be time no longer:*

After the matter of the seven thunders was cleared up, the angel who was standing upon the earth and the sea began to speak once more. He lifted up his hand toward Heaven, which shows that he is speaking to or about someone in Heaven. The angel is going to, in effect, use God as his reference here. He is affirming that what he is about to say is

true because he is speaking on behalf of the mighty God of Heaven. It is similar to saying, “As God is my witness, this or that is true.”

He describes God by referring to his eternal nature, and the fact that He is the creator of everything which exists in the entire universe. The statement which he makes, and affirms by God, is that “*there should be time no longer.*” This statement sounds very ominous. Is he speaking of the end of the world? By reading further in Revelation we can clearly see that many things happened after this, so he must not be speaking of THE end of time. Then what is he talking about?

We need to pause and recall what this angel’s purpose is. He was sent to bring the Bible back to the common people. He is carrying out the Lord’s promise to fight against the apostate Roman Church with the sword of His mouth. He did not come to signal the end of creation, but the end of the power and authority of Rome. The message of the angel simply means that Rome’s time is up. It is Rome who has time no longer, not the entire world. They would not repent, despite the long suffering of God, therefore He is about to bring judgment against them.

10:7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

We have finally come to the seventh trumpet. It is also the third of the three woe trumpets. In chapter eight we saw that the seventh seal revealed, not another world event as the first six had, but the seven trumpets. We will find a very similar occurrence here. The seventh trumpet will not reveal any important event, but will simply reveal seven vials. This explains the wording here in this verse “*when he shall begin to sound.*” The effect of the seventh trumpet was not a single event that can be pinpointed in time. Much to the contrary, it revealed events that stretched over many centuries of time.

When the seventh trumpet sounds “*The mystery of God should be finished.*” But what is the “*mystery of God?*” The word “mystery” here is from the Greek “mysterion,” which Thayer defines as “mysteries, religious secrets, confided only to the initiated and not to be communicated by them to ordinary mortals.”¹⁶¹ The papacy was forced to be secretive because her doctrines were so foreign to the Bible. They were forced to try to keep ordinary men in ignorance, so that they would accept the domination of the pope.

This same word is also used in chapter seventeen as part of the name of the Roman Church. “*And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH*” (Revelation 17:5). The “*mystery of God*” is the Roman Church, which certainly is not the Lord’s Church, but is more like a mystery where its origins and authority are concerned. Saying that the “*mystery of God should be finished,*” simply means that the Roman Church is about to be “finished.” Finished is from the Greek “teleo,” which Strong’s defines as “to end, i.e. complete, execute, conclude, discharge (a debt):-accomplish, make an end, expire, fill up, finish, go over, pay, perform.”¹⁶² We can see from this definition that “finish” does not necessarily mean complete destruction. It can also refer to a completion or conclusion. The time of power and influence of the Catholic powers is about to be completed by the unfolding of certain world events. In essence the first vial will be the beginning of the end for Papal Rome.

“*As he hath declared to his servants the prophets.*” At least two men prophesied of the downfall of the Pope. Daniel was given insight to this, as well as Paul. “*I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end*” (Daniel 7:11, 26). “*Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or*

¹⁶¹ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “Μυστήριον.”

¹⁶² Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #5055.”

that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (II Thessalonians 2:3). John is now given a much more detailed view of the papacy and her fall than were either of the other two.

10:8 And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.

The voice that spoke to John in verse four now speaks to him again. In both cases it is simply referred to as a “voice.” Since John makes no attempt to tell us who the speaker is, I must assume that he does not know himself. Regardless of the source of the voice, we know that it is speaking for God since John is allowed to write down what it says.

The voice tells John to go and take the little book, which we have already identified as the Bible, from the angel’s hand. It is interesting to notice that the book is open. For centuries the Bible had been virtually closed to all except the Catholic clergy. Now it is being opened so that all men who desire it can have access to it, and the wonderful truths it offers to man.

10:9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey.

10:10 And I took the little book out of the angel’s hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Following the instructions of the voice from Heaven, John goes toward the angel which is standing upon the earth and the sea, and asks him for the little book. The angel complies with John’s request and gives him the book. He also gives John some instructions; he tells John to eat this little book. John does not hesitate to obey, and eats the little book as instructed. John eats the little book even though he was warned that it will make his belly bitter.

Most people have some food or foods which tend to disagree with them. It may upset their stomach, or it may give them indigestion or heartburn, or cause some other malady. Quite often, the foods which cause a person trouble are some of their favorites. As a result, the person is tempted to eat the food which he so enjoys, even though he knows what the consequences will be. Here John is placed into a very similar situation. The angel had told John beforehand that the book would be sweet as honey in his mouth, but would make his belly bitter.

How would eating the Bible cause such diverse reactions in the mouth and the stomach? We will liken the former to getting a taste of the Bible, and the latter to thoroughly digesting it. Anyone who gets a small taste of the Bible finds it very sweet indeed. It speaks of God’s blessings upon those who are faithful to Him. It speaks of God’s mercy and grace, His love for mankind, and His willingness to sacrifice His own Son for man. It promises eternal life in a place grander than any man can imagine. What could be sweeter than this? As David said, *“How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!”* (Psalm 119:103).

What happens, however, when people begin to digest the Bible? When they begin to see beyond the basics? They soon see that a Christian is expected to sacrifice many things if he is to serve God. He is expected to bear a cross daily (Luke 9:23). To place God above all earthly relations (Matthew 10:37). To suffer any and all persecutions that arise because of his faith (Philippians 1:29). He might even be asked to give his life in the Lord’s service (Revelation 2:10). History is filled with instances of great persecution against the Church, and the accounts of thousands who have been slain in defense of the truth. As the apostle Paul said, *“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”* (II Timothy 3:12). All of these things were especially true of the Church shortly before and during the Reformation. The papacy reacted violently to the increasing pressures of dissension which quickly infected all of Europe.

These are things which most people do not think about at first. These things often come later as harsh lessons in reality. I have always heard the saying “It can’t be good for you if it tastes good.” For the most part I have found this to be true. It is also said that medicine can not be any good for you if it does not taste bad. Well the Bible tastes very good at first, but it upsets your stomach and can make you feel very bad. In the end, one has to “take his medicine”

if he ever wants to get well. In other words, a person has to bear the sometimes unpleasant “medicine” of Christ in order to be healed from his sins.

10:11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

After he had eaten the little book, the angel told John that he would prophesy again before the entire world, before very diverse audiences; people from many nations and of varying social and economic status. John was already a very old man when this statement was made. It is believed that Revelation was written sometime in the A.D. 90's. John was a grown man when he was with Christ during his ministry here on the earth. We know that Christ died in A.D. 30, and that John had been with him for about three years. Using the very conservative assumption that John was only twenty when he met Christ, he would have been at least in his mid-eighties when he received the Revelation; most likely he was even a little older than this.

The reason I have went to the trouble of establishing John's old age is to show there was no way for him to physically go and prophesy “*before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*” Even beyond his old age, John had been banished to the Island of Patmos, where he received and recorded the Revelation. Even if he were physically capable, John would not have been allowed to travel around prophesying. The prophesying that the angel speaks of here was to be done through the book that John was instructed by Christ to write (Revelation 1:11). Though long dead, John prophesies today every time the words of Revelation are read and studied.

Chapter Eleven

The Two witnesses

11:1 And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein.

A “reed is a common name for many kinds of tall, slender grass plants. The word also commonly refers to the stems of these plants, which are often jointed in many places. The stems may be as slender and fragile as straw, or they may be as thick and sturdy as bamboo.”¹⁶³ Because of the reed’s properties of usually being straight, slender, and lightweight, it was used extensively in the past as a measuring stick. There are even references to this in the Old Testament. “*In the man’s hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed*” (Ezekiel 40:5).

The reed that John was given was like a rod, which shows it was strong and sturdy. With this reed John was told to measure the temple, the altar, and the people who worship at the altar. The temple and altar were essential to worship under the Old Law, but what do they have to do with the Christian era? We have just seen in the previous chapter that the Bible has been returned to the common people, and the Bible is still the main character of our story here. This reed which John was given is the Bible. It is the standard and authority for all spiritual matters. It is the “measuring rod” which is used to determine if man’s actions measure up to God’s standards. Now that it has been given back to all men they once again have the opportunity to use it to “measure” all churches to see which one actually belongs to the Lord.

The temple, the altar, and the people which worship at the altar, are all symbols of items involved in New Testament worship. John has been instructed to measure them with the Bible to see if they are as they should be. The temple is the Church, the altar is the method of worship of the Church, and the people who worship are Christians. The Church as a whole, the method of worship, and the personal lives of Christians all fall under the authority and direction of the Bible. If these things do not “measure up” when compared to the divine measuring reed, the Bible, they will be rejected by God.

This is just like when you catch certain species of fish. You are required to measure them and if they are not of a certain size you must throw them back. You measure that fish with a recognized standard, a ruler. It will measure the fish in inches, and then you compare that measurement with the official regulations and determine whether or not you can keep the fish. The Church, and all aspects of Christian’s lives, must come up to the standards set forth in

¹⁶³ *World book*, 1985, s.v. “reed.”

God's word. Christ said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). We will also see this same principle taught later in Revelation. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12).

11:2 But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months.

John was to measure the Church, its method of worship, and the lives of Christians with God's word. Certainly there would be many people who do not claim to be Christians. These people would be clearly outside the temple, or the Church, which Christ had established. Thus they were likened to Gentiles who, in the time of the Law of Moses, were refused access to the Temple. However, there were many who appeared as if they might belong to the Lord's Church but a close examination would reveal otherwise. These are the one's John will be required to measure; those in counterfeit churches.

The Apostle Paul spoke of Christians spiritually being Jews. "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Romans 2:28-29). The Church is now spiritual Israel, the worship of the Church the spiritual altar, and Christians spiritual Jews.

Solomon's Temple

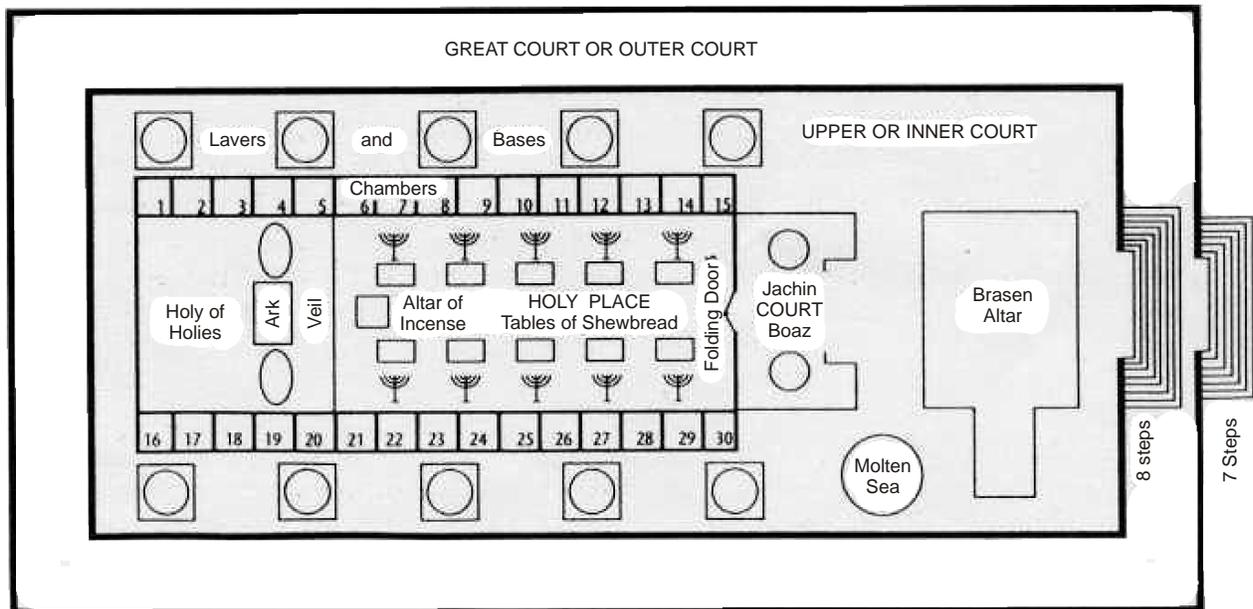


Figure 7

All those outside the temple, or Church, make no claim to be Christians and therefore do not need to be measured. Under the Old Law Gentiles were allowed in the court but not in the Temple itself. Similarly, those outside the temple here are spiritual Gentiles, that is, non-Christians. Just as entry into the Temple didn't mean a Jew was righteous, neither does being part of 'any' church make someone a Christian. Many belong to churches that are in error, but all still claim to be in the Lord's Church. These will have to be measured to show that they do not fit the pattern. However, those who are irreligious, or who follow a completely false religion are the Gentiles who do not require a measurement to show they fail to meet God's standards. If you need a 10 foot length of 2 x 4 when you are building something, you wouldn't even bother to measure a piece which was only as long as your foot. You would automatically realize that it was insufficient to meet your needs and you would look elsewhere. Similarly, there was

no need for John to waste his time measuring those who were outside so-called “Christendom” when they obviously will fail to measure up.

When you are searching for your piece of 2×4 , you will measure anything that appears to the eye to be near ten feet. It might turn out to be nine or eleven when it is measured with the ruler, but you did not know until you checked it against the standard. This same principle must be applied to all of the “Christian” denominations. If there is but one pattern for all to follow, the Bible, then there can logically be but one right way, that is, the Bible way. Any other way must of necessity be the work of man and therefore cannot possibly be right. The wise man Solomon said, *“There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 14:12). Furthermore, Christ said, *“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:9).

The “*holy city*” is the Lord’s Church. The “*they*” referred to in this verse are the gentiles or, more specifically, the Catholic Church, which will “*tread under foot*” the Lord’s Church for forty-two months. We have seen previously that in prophesy a day is equivalent to an actual year. We also saw that a prophetic month contains exactly thirty days. Therefore, forty-two months in prophesy would be 1,260 actual years. The Lord’s Church was to be oppressed and persecuted by the Roman Church for a period of 1,260 years. This period corresponds roughly to what is known as the Dark Ages. This is definitely not the only place we will see this period of time mentioned, it also shows up later in this chapter and in both of the next two chapters and even in the book of Daniel. That is a total of six times. Apparently God has an important message for us and wants to be sure we do not miss it. The particulars of this period will be discussed at the appropriate time as the story continues to unfold.

11:3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.

This is the second occurrence of the 1,260 year period. Here it is said that God’s “*two witnesses*” shall prophesy in sackcloth during this period. Sackcloth was “a course cloth, of a dark color, usually made of goat’s hair. It was worn customarily by mourners, often, if not habitually, by prophets, and by captives.”¹⁶⁴ Since these two witnesses prophesied for over a thousand years, we certainly are not considering actual men. During this 1,260 year period the only thing that stood totally in defiance of Rome, and testified of God’s will, was the Bible itself. Here spoken of as two witnesses, making reference to the Old and New Testaments.

Christ said that the “*gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations*” (Matthew 24:14). Here He establishes the New Testament as a witness. He also said, “*Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me*” (John 5:39). Here He speaks of the Old Testament as testifying of Him, or in other words, it was a witness for Him. The Lord shows that both Testaments are witnesses of God, and we can easily understand the meaning of this statement. Both Testaments testify of the nature of God, and of His dealings with man. During this 1,260 year period, the Bible was “*clothed in sackcloth*,” which means it was a prisoner of Rome. It continued to be a witness of God to those who were fortunate to have access to it, but for the most part it was kept hidden away.

11:4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.

Now the two witnesses are referred to as olive trees and candlesticks standing, or testifying, for God to the whole earth. This is very similar to a prophesy of Zechariah. “*Then answered I, and said unto him, ‘What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?’ And I answered again, and said unto him, ‘What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?’ And he answered me and said, ‘Knowest thou not what these be?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’ Then said he, ‘These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth’” (Zechariah 4:11-14). Here we see two “*anointed ones*” who stand by the Lord. They are faithful to God and testify of His will.*

¹⁶⁴ Davis, 1983, s.v. “sackcloth.”

There is also a significance to referring to the witnesses as olive trees. Olive trees are some of the longest living trees in the world. In fact “there are olive trees in Palestine which probably date back to the beginning of the Christian era.”¹⁶⁵ Olive oil was used in the lamps of the temple. “*Command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually*” (Leviticus 24:2). The idea is that olives represent strength and endurance. These are qualities to be found in these two witnesses. The Bible was suppressed, but could not be destroyed.

11:5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.

We have already said the witnesses are the Old and New Testaments which testify of God and Christ, but how can any man do these witnesses harm? Anyone who claims that the Bible teaches something which it does not, has the effect of harming these witnesses. Certainly you would not appreciate it if people went around telling others that you had said a certain thing, when in truth, you had not. Despite the lack of factual basis, the “stories” told about you could greatly damage your reputation and harm your influence.

The same is true of the Bible. It is damaged when men go around perverting and corrupting what it teaches. Here it says that fire will consume these false teachers. Notice the similarity of this verse to a passage the Apostle Peter wrote. “*But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not*” (II Peter 2:1-3).

“*And if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed.*” does not refer to the way an enemy of the Bible will die physically, it refers to the fires of Hell, which will be part of the second, or spiritual, death. The Apostle Paul mentioned the use of fire in the destruction of the enemies of God. “*When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (II Thessalonians 1:7-8). All who live in opposition to the Bible will be destroyed by fire in Hell for ever.

We see that the “*fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies.*” This is simply a reference to the fact that the Bible proclaims the eternal fate of all its enemies, the enemies of God, to be death by fire. Fire does not literally proceed from the Bible, or from anyone else’s mouth for that matter, but the proclamation of their doom does proceed from the “mouth” of God, the Bible.

11:6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

These witnesses, the Old and New Testaments, are said here to have miraculous powers. Power to do such things as cause a drought, power to turn water into blood, and the power to bring about many other plagues. We can read accounts of all these very things in the Bible. “*And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, ‘As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word’*” (I Kings 17:1). “*And the Lord spake unto Moses, ‘Say unto Aaron, ‘Take thy rod, and stretch out thine hand upon the waters of Egypt, upon their streams, upon their rivers, and upon their ponds, and upon all their pools of water, that they may become blood; and that there may be blood throughout all the land of Egypt, both in vessels of wood, and in vessels of stone’*” (Exodus 7:19).

Incidents such as these are exactly what is being referred to here. In the Bible are records of many prophesies and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., s.v. “olive.”

their fulfillments. When a man of God said a certain thing was going to happen it always happened. It did not happen because of the man, but because of God who was the power behind the man. These men were speaking for God, and thus any prophesy they made was bound to come true. The Bible is just a written record of these proceedings. The Bible, however, also contains prophesies which have yet to be fulfilled. These carry the same guarantee as all of those that have already occurred. Therefore, when we read these predictions in Revelation, we can be absolutely positive they will happen exactly as described. These two witnesses cannot be wrong. There are no unfulfilled prophesies which speak of drought or the turning of water into blood. These two things are merely given as examples because they actually happened. The idea is that just as certainly as those things did happen, the prophesies of the Bible that do remain unfulfilled will likewise happen.

11:7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.

In chapter ten we saw the angel come down from Heaven and deliver the Bible to the common people. The Bible, here spoken of as the two witnesses, then testified of God's will, which brought about the Reformation. Of course Satan, who is the beast from the bottomless pit, will not take all of this lightly. He will fight the opening of the Bible tooth and nail. Here we are told that he was successful because he "*shall overcome them, and kill them.*" This does not mean the Bible will be totally destroyed, but that it will lose its power. This statement will be put in better focus as our story continues.

We are told here when Satan will win this victory over the Bible. This passage will turn out to be key in confirming some other dates later on. All of this is to occur "*when they shall have finished their testimony.*" The testimony he refers to here is the same as that mentioned in verse three where it was referred to as prophesy. These two witnesses are to prophesy for 1,260 years and then will be killed at the end of that time.

11:8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.

We now see that the two witnesses will be killed and their bodies left to rot in the streets. This shows a great disrespect and even hatred for the Bible. The horrible event is to happen in a "great" city. The city is compared to Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem, being the city where Christ was crucified. The city under consideration is not one of these places, they are just used to denote the character of this great city. This is why it is referred to as a city "*which spiritually is called...*" Its literal name will be different from these three.

Sodom was one of the most evil and wicked cities that has ever existed. It was so evil in fact, that God destroyed it and its neighbor Gomorrah with fire and brimstone from heaven. "*And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven*" (Genesis 18:20, 19:24).

Egypt represents oppression of God's people. For over 200 years the Children of Israel served as slaves in the land of Egypt, before God finally delivered them by the hand of Moses. "*And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows*" (Exodus 3:7).

Jerusalem represents rejection of God and Christ. God continually sent prophets to the Children of Israel only to have them slain in Jerusalem. Finally He also sent His Son, who also was slain in Jerusalem. "*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!*" (Matthew 23:37).

Before we set out to find this great city, we should give a little thought to the word "city" first. It appears many times in Revelation and is used in a variety of ways. It is used to represent the Lord's Church, Heaven, and even the Roman Catholic Church. Nowhere can we find a reference where the word city definitely refers to a literal city. I

believe that as with everything else in Revelation, this term too is symbolic. We will just have to wait and see from history what actually fits with all the details and is therefore our “city.”

The “city” which is under consideration here, is characterized by wickedness, oppression of God’s people, and rejection of God. We now need to look for a place and time in history when this occurred. We can narrow our search somewhat by realizing where we are in history at this point in our narrative. In the previous chapter we saw an angel bring the Bible to the earth for the benefit of the common man. We gave an approximate date of 1400 for this occurrence. This allows us to restrict our search to events that took place after this time which makes our task much easier.

In looking at the history of Europe in the centuries following 1400, there is one event which stands out above the rest. It occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Most of the civilized world was in chaos at this time, revolution was sweeping the European continent, and had even spread to Asia and America. But the most powerful country in the world at that time had yet to succumb to the pressures of change. Finally, in 1789, France followed the rest of Europe into revolution. The French Revolution is the most studied political upheaval in history.

“The French Revolution was of major importance for the world. That was partly because it had repercussions throughout most of Christendom, both in Europe and America. Paris, where the Revolution centered, was the most populous city of Western Europe and for a century or more France had been the most powerful realm in that region. So sweeping a series of changes could not fail to have effects of primary importance in the rest of Western civilization.”¹⁶⁶

“The French Revolution had violently ruptured the organic unity of the Roman Catholic Church and the most powerful state in the Roman Catholic orbit.”¹⁶⁷

“The purpose of our story does not require even an outline of the course of the French Revolution. We need only point out the immediate effects upon Christianity. These effects were especially serious for the Roman Catholic Church. They dealt it severe blows.”¹⁶⁸

Here we can see the significance of the French Revolution and its impact on Catholicism. It will become quite apparent through the history which will be quoted hereafter, that the French Revolution brought the Roman Catholic Church to its knees. It dealt Catholicism a blow from which it has never recovered. We will also be able to see that France is indeed the place where the Bible lay dead in the streets.

11:9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves.

The two witnesses were killed, their bodies left in the streets for three and one-half days, and everyone who passed by did not care enough to give them a descent burial. This shows a total lack of respect for these two witnesses on the part of the residents of this great city where they were slain.

We have already been told that this city is very wicked and that it will reject God and oppress His people, therefore it is only natural that they would also be against His two witnesses, the Bible. After all, the Bible is God’s expression of Himself to man. Anyone who had no respect for God would certainly have no respect for His Word.

The Bible will be disgraced and ridiculed, just as a person would be disgraced by having their dead body left

¹⁶⁶ Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, (New York, NY: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1953), p. 1008.

¹⁶⁷ James H. Nichols, *History of Christianity 1650-1950: Secularization of the West*, (New York, NY: The Ronald Press Company, 1956), p. 123.

¹⁶⁸ Latourette, 1953, p. 1009.

unburied. Even in ancient times it was considered to be a great insult to someone not to give them a descent burial. This is evidenced by the following passage: “*And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armor, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people. And they put his armor in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon. And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul, they arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days*” (I Chronicles 10:9-12). These men risked their lives to give Saul and his sons a descent burial, this shows how important it was to them.

The fact that the bodies of the two witnesses were allowed to lay in the streets of the city for three and one-half days shows that they were to be held in contempt and disgraced. The three and one-half days is prophetic, and translates into three and one-half literal years. This shows that we are not dealing with real men, since their bodies would not last that long when left exposed to the elements. What we are really seeing is that the Bible will be “dead” in the streets of France for a period of three and one-half years. We will find historical evidence that this very thing did occur.

11:10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.

Many people were happy to see the Bible dead. This was a reason to celebrate for them, and they rejoiced to see the Bible disgraced. It was said that these two prophets tormented “*them that dwelt upon the earth.*” Many groups and individuals disliked the Bible and considered it to be utter foolishness; just a bunch of superstitions and myths. They considered men who followed such fallacies as ignorant and unlearned. They also felt that the presence of Christianity, or more properly, Catholicism, which was an apostate form of Christianity, as their national religion was a disgrace and even a threat to their country. The Bible actually “tormented” the intellectuals and men of learning because they could not stand to see the power this collection of “myths” had over the general population. As a result, when Christianity was banned, they were overjoyed and literally began to celebrate.

11:11 And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them.

After a three and one-half year period the two witnesses came back to life. In other words, the Bible will regain its influence, and Christianity will bounce back. This will cause consternation and dismay among those who sought to destroy it. Many will also fear for the future of their country since Christianity had become closely identified with their enemies.

Now, through presenting numerous citations of history, I will attempt to convey the mood of the French Revolution, and to explain the role of Christianity in this series of events which shook the world. In its infancy the French Revolution did not involve religion, its nature was purely political and economic, but this quickly changed.

“The French Revolution began as a reasonable protest against a state of affairs in which all the social machinery was operated for the advantage of the privileged classes. It was not at first antireligious. The States-General, which met on May 4, 1789, opened with a mass and a sermon by a bishop, who spoke of the miseries of the poor and urged a reduction in taxation—but not too much reduction.”¹⁶⁹

Thus, for a short period after the inception of the Revolution, things were more or less normal from a religious perspective. It appears that the turn against Christianity was not planned, but merely a consequence of a series of very powerful events. It all began innocently enough on August 4, 1789, when the French Assembly issued the “Declaration of the Rights of Man.” This document was in some ways similar to the United States “Bill of Rights.”

¹⁶⁹ Archibald G. Baker, *A Short History of Christianity*, (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1940), pp. 185-6.

This document broke the Catholic strangle hold on religious matters. Although they retained their dominant position, they lost their monopoly. Of course this was a move which Rome would not view passively.

“The religious provisions of the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man’ occasioned more debate than any other articles. No one dreamed of a separation of church and state; even the philosophes took a Roman Catholic establishment for granted. The Assembly acknowledged only one national religion, the Roman Catholic. There could be no full religious liberty, consequently, among human rights in France, although liberty of conscience was probably the basic liberty in the Anglo-American countries. Protestants were, however, granted the right of public worship for the first time.

For reasons of his own Pius VI delayed for months any indication as to his attitude to the loss of his annates, or to the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man.’ He foresaw that popular sovereignty, if it won its way, would deprive him of his feudal holdings in French lands, Avignon and Venaissin. On March 29, 1790, however, he delivered himself at some length in a secret consistory on the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man.’ This pronouncement is interesting as the first in the long list of papal condemnations of liberalism and democracy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Pope rejected several of the Rights in particular, for example, that the law represented the general will; that all citizens should be represented in the formation of legislation; that religious opinion should have any rights; and that non-Roman Catholics should have equal right to municipal, civil, and military offices. The ideas of popular sovereignty and government responsible to the people were condemned along with toleration of non-Roman Catholics. The papal court aligned Roman Catholicism with the traditions of absolutism and inherited rights of rule, as well as with the traditional social classes.”¹⁷⁰

The stand taken by the pope put him squarely against the Revolution and its goals. As we can now see in hindsight, it put Rome in opposition to what became one of the most powerful movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, democracy. This stance put the pontiff at odds, not only with the French government, but also caused the alienation of many of the citizens of France, who had heretofore been loyal Roman Catholics. The people were put in a position to choose between the Church and their beloved Fatherland. Considering the strength of the nationalistic spirit in France at that time, it is no wonder that the pope found himself being cast aside by most Frenchmen.

All of this caused the beginning of an anti-Christian sentiment in France, that would eventually lead to great persecution of the Catholic clergy, seizure of Church property, and the establishment of a new state religion, the worship of Reason. For a short period of time France was filled with wickedness, God was rejected, and Christians were oppressed. This time and place definitely fits the prophesy of Revelation.

“In 1793 Christian worship was abolished, the existence of God was formally denied, and the worship of the Religion of Reason was set up. The Christian Lord’s Day was replaced by the setting apart of every tenth day for rest and sport.”¹⁷¹

Clearly, revolutionary France possessed the characteristics of Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem as our prophesy spoke of. Now all that remains is to see if the remainder of the details coincide with the annals of history.

Before the repudiation of Christianity, and the establishment of a new state religion, came a period of legislative action against Catholicism. The desire among most people still was not to destroy Christianity, but to reshape it into a religion more suitable for the new France.

“In February 1790, the Assembly declared monastic vows taken after October 28, 1789 suspended, and refused to allow any more to be taken. In May of 1790 came the report of the *comite ecclesiastique*

¹⁷⁰ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 112-3.

¹⁷¹ Robert H. Nichols, *The Growth of the Christian Church*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1941), pp. 252-3.

appointed in August 1789 by the Assembly to arrange church affairs in accordance with the new constitution of the state.”¹⁷²

Based on this report, the state took over much of the Church in France by passing the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy.” Included in this was the method of selection of the bishops and cures, and the number and area of diocese. At this point the French government sought to control, not to eradicate, the Catholic Church. This whole situation, however, was destined to quickly digress to a battle of wills, neither side willing to cede much to the other; ominous clouds hung on the horizon for Christianity.

On October 30, 1790, a manifesto was issued by a cardinal and twenty-nine bishops, which essentially refuted the right of the civil government to legislate church affairs. The Assembly then sought to force the issue by requiring an oath on the part of the French clergy ‘to the law and constitution,’ in January, 1791.

“The pope was slow to express himself, as he had been on the ‘Declaration of the Rights of Man.’ In the spring of 1791 he complained of the Civil Constitution, and implored the bishops not to take the oath. In April the pope annulled all elections to clerical office, called the Constitution ‘heretical and schismatical’ and ordered signers to retract within forty days. Many who had taken the oath now felt constrained to retract it, and the church was sharply divided into ‘jurors’ and ‘nonjurors’—a schism which was to last, in fact, for a decade. Diplomatic relations between France and the Vatican were broken off and the pope’s effigy was burnt at the Palais Royal. The oath to the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy” was proving to be the major occasion of civil war.”¹⁷³

The pope found the attitude and actions of the French leadership untenable. He continued to fight against them, but this simply resulted in a further widening of the political and religious chasm separating the two sides.

The Assembly was eventually replaced by the Committee as the ruling body of France. The Committee first met on September 22, 1792, the first day of the French Republic. Hereafter, the deterioration of the relations between Rome and France seemed to accelerate. Then a series of unexpected events struck the final blows and sealed the fate of the now much maligned Christian religion.

“At the same time the Convention was enforcing and even increasing in severity the laws against refractory, or non-juring priests—that is the papalists. Their papalism seemed really intolerable now that the Pope was siding with the enemies of France. A serious incident occurred. Basseville, a French diplomat, secretary of legation at Naples, had been sent to Rome to protect the interests of French merchants there. He hoisted the tricolor flag over his house. His servants wore the tricolor cockade. The Roman mob killed him (13th January 1793). The murders went unpunished, and this led to the belief that the Papal Government was concerned in the murder. An explosion of wrath took place at Paris against the Pope, who was regarded as the soul of the coalition against France. The non-juring clergy, who had been so devoted to the hostile Pope, were still further discredited, and a part of this discredit perhaps fell upon the Constitutional Church, which, though it had separated itself from the Pope on certain points of discipline, venerated him as ‘the visible head of the Universal Church,’ and loudly disavowed any idea of schism. In France the murder of Basseville was an injury to the Catholic religion itself. It was one of those events which rendered possible an attempt to destroy Christianity.

But what most harmed religion at that moment was the part manifestly taken by non-juring priests in the insurrection at La Vendee. No doubt the raising of 300,000 men was the immediate occasion of the insurrection, on account of the reluctance which the Vendean felt to engaging in military service far from home. But these armed rebels called themselves ‘Royal and Catholic armies.’ The priests fanned the flame, while the royalists turned the insurrection to their own profit. The civil war in La Vendee, by which Republican France was stabbed in the back at the very moment when she was struggling with foreign foes,

¹⁷² J. Nichols, 1956, p. 114.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 116.

was the danger point of the Revolution—a danger which might have been fatal—and of this the people, in Paris and the towns especially, were well aware. It was a crime against the fatherland, the young fatherland so religiously adored—a crime which seemed horrible and inexpiable. The priests were thought to be the accomplices or even the instigators of the crime. The non-juring clergy were the enemy, and if the religion which had such ministers was not yet identified with the foe, it nevertheless incurred suspicion through the attitude of these unpatriotic priests.

Of all the events that wrought the frame of mind which resulted in the attempt to dethrone Christianity, the insurrection at La Vendee, by its clerical form, was the chief, the most influential. I might almost say that without La Vendee there would have been no Worship of Reason. The immediate result of the insurrection was an increased severity in the laws against non-juring priests.”¹⁷⁴

By this time the hatred of Christianity was rampant in France. The seeds of the move to destroy Christianity had not only been planted, but were by now, growing wildly. It was not only the Catholics who suffered this affront. As usually happens in tumultuous and violent times like this, witch hunts are far too common. Even the Protestants were included in the wave of anti-Christian sentiment.

“They extended their suspicions, though less noisily, to the protestant clergy...Marron, the pastor of a Calvinistic Church in Paris, was arrested as a moderate on 21st September 1793 and kept in prison for several days.”¹⁷⁵

“Till now the people had distinguished between good priests and bad. Now they began to think that there were no more good priests. The Catholic religion was discredited in the eyes of many militant patriots. They said that if religion was a hindrance to national defence, an obstacle in the way of Revolution, then religion must be abolished. The idea was spread by the anxiety of exasperated patriotism. The unbelief of certain followers of the philosophers, certain journalists, clubmen and municipal officers in Paris, blew these first sparks of destructive free-thought into a conflagration.”¹⁷⁶

As time went on Christianity was seen to be a serious threat to the very survival of the fatherland by many French citizens. The philosophers and intellectuals turned this to their advantage and incited the complete overthrow of Christianity. We will find a three and one-half year period during which Christianity was greatly persecuted, and forms of idolatry were practiced throughout France. This coincides with the “three and one-half days” predicted for the “death” of the Bible. We will not find that the persecution suddenly sprang from no where one day, and then completely vanished exactly three and one-half years later. Reality does not work this way. Instead we will see the rise of an anti-Christian sentiment, which eventually led to the complete overthrow of Christianity. We will be able to pinpoint an incident which marked the “death” of the Bible on August 10, 1793. Then approximately three and one-half years later (actually three years six months and nine days later) on February 19, 1797 we will see another event which marked a drastic change in the attitude of the French government toward Christianity. This is when the Bible “stood upon its feet again.”

“It was in the late Summer and Autumn, however, that the great persecution of the church came. This persecution made manifest for the first time in the modern world the revival of pagan tribalism which is today, perhaps, the real religion of the majority of men in all Western culture. If Continental liberalism is the enduring heritage of the first phase of the Revolution, that of the second is nationalism.”¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴ A. Aulart, *Christianity and the French Revolution*, (New York, NY: Howard Fertig Inc., 1927) pp. 96-8.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 100-1.

¹⁷⁷ J. Nichols, 1956, p. 118.

The “Summer and Autumn” were those of 1793. It was then that the persecutions of Christianity, and the moves to secularize the state took off like a rocket. There was one particular event that occurred during this time which marked the beginning of the reign of the “worship of Reason.” It was the festival of August 10, 1793. Prior to this point every festival had always contained elements of Christianity. But here, for the first time, we find Christianity to have been totally replaced by paganism and idolatry. For all practical purposes, the Bible lay dead in the streets of Paris that day as the Parisians celebrated the goddess of Nature.

“The Convention itself had for some time past assumed a ‘philosophic’ attitude which furnished the occasion or the incentive to audacious acts. The festival of 10th August 1793 was the first of the national fetes which had a purely civic or, as we should say, secular character. Hérault de Séchelles, a member of the Convention, who presided, seemed to deify Nature, whose statue was honored by libations.”¹⁷⁸

“Conscious substitution of the new faith for the old began in the provinces in the summer of 1793. The first purely civic festival came in August of that year, when libations were poured out to a statue of ‘nature.’ In the Ice de France Brutus replaced St. Blaise. Similarly, busts of Marat and Le Peletier replaced those of saints in homes. Various district representatives now began to parade to the bar of the Convention to announce their apostasy for Christianity. Bishop Gobel and eleven priests took off cross and ring and put on red cap in the Convention. Most ecclesiastical members of the Convention, including the Protestant pastors, did the same. Pastor Marron brought in four silver communion chalices, condemned theology, and paid tribute to the ‘eternal and immortal principles of fact and morality.’ Numerous resignations of vicars and cures occurred all over France. The Convention printed Chenier’s speech which recommended ‘one universal religion...the altar of our country, our mother and our deity.’

The report of the Committee on the Republican calendar revision in October 1793 was partly anti-Christian. They recommended the elimination of saints days and Sundays as symbols of the Christian philosophy of history, and the substitution of holidays for purely naturalistic objects of ‘true national wealth.’ Foreigners were horrified.”¹⁷⁹

“In November violent deChristianization provoked an unexpected disturbance and inaugurated the final crisis. During the course of the crisis, which lasted all winter, the attitude of the Committee changed several times.

The causes of the movement were deep-seated. Except for a certain number of ‘red cures,’ the constitutional priests had been alarmed by the religious consequences of August 10. Approving neither the death of the king nor the fall of the Girondins, they became suspect; and on October 25, 1793, the Convention, in codifying the penalties against refractory clergy, also ordered the deportation of constitutional clergy who were denounced by six citizens.”¹⁸⁰

“Since there were doubts that the state could dispense with the church, and since the majority of sans-culottes themselves might be lacking in respect for religious ceremonies, this revolutionary cult, which had evolved since 1789 and heretofore had been associated with that year, was gradually set up in opposition to the traditional form of worship.

For the first time the festival of August 10th, 1793, was purely secular. The new religion endowed itself with symbols and a form of liturgy, honored the ‘holy Mountain,’ and venerated its martyrs, Lepeletier, Marat, and Chalier. On 3 Brumaire, Year II (October 24, 1793), on recommendations by Romme and Fabre d’Eglantine, the Convention adopted the revolutionary calendar. It attempted to deChristianize daily life by

¹⁷⁸ Aulart, 1927, pp. 102-3.

¹⁷⁹ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 118-9.

¹⁸⁰ Georges Lefebvre, *The French Revolution from 1793 to 1799*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 76-7.

substituting the date of September 22, 1792, the first day of the Republic, for the Christian era; by replacing references to religious ceremonies and the saints with names borrowed from tools and products familiar to the French; and above all, by eliminating Sunday in favor of the Tenth Day (*decadi*). On 15 Brumaire, Year II (November 5, 1793) a report by Marie-Joseph Chenier on civic festivals constituted the prelude to the official organization of the national religion.”¹⁸¹

The movement, now firmly established, quickly enveloped the entire country. Soon Christianity was considered an evil mistake of the past which had now finally been righted. Steps were taken to insure that this dreaded menace was put to rest for good. Even Catholics were forced to worship in secret if they were able to worship at all. They were now getting a taste of the treatment they had given to the Lord’s Church for over a thousand years.

“The establishment of the republican era—that is, the substitution of the republican calendar for the Gregorian (decrees of 5th October) —was a political move, but it was also antireligious, as appears from the reports of Fabre d’Eglantine and of Romme, which are full of philosophic attacks upon dogma. To substitute other dates and other festivals for the usual ones, to abolish Sunday and substitute the tenth day, to replace the names of the saints by those ‘of objects which constitute true national wealth,’ was to tear from Catholicism a part of its adornments and prestige, nay, to drive it violently out of the ordinary life of the nation. This decree horrified foreigners: they thought that France had already destroyed Christianity within its borders.

The Committee of Public Instruction of the Convention had become a home of propaganda against Catholicism. Gregoire states that Fourcroy said to him, repeating the phrase of Voltaire: ‘This infamous religion must be crushed.’ On 26th June 1793 Lakanal had proposed, in the name of Committee, a series of national festivals, which in due course took the place of religious festivals.”¹⁸²

“...the convention applauded, and had printed, a speech in which Marie-Joseph Chenier, in the name of the Committee, proposed to substitute the religion of the fatherland for Catholicism: ‘Wrench,’ he said, ‘the sons of the Republic from the yoke of theocracy which now weighs upon them...then, freed from prejudice and worthy to represent the French nation, you will be able, on the ruins of fallen superstitions, to found the one universal religion, which has neither secrets nor mysteries, whose one dogma is equality, whose orators are the laws, whose pontiffs are the magistrates, which asks no incense from the great human family to burn save before the altar of our country, our mother, and our deity.’”¹⁸³

“The center of anti-Roman Catholic propaganda was now the Convention of Public Instruction, which was organizing a national system of education which recommended that no more clergy or nuns were to be appointed as teachers. With this organization of a national school system began what has become the hottest single issue of church and state controversy in nearly every Western country.

The culmination of this movement came with the conversion of the churches into ‘temples of reason’ which could with equal accuracy be called ‘temples of nationalism.’ The movement took its cue from the famous ceremony at Notre Dame in Paris. The statue of the virgin was replaced by an actress in blue and to her Chenier’s hymn was addressed:

Come holy liberty, inhabit this temple
Become the goddess of the French people.

When the Paris commune asked to have Notre Dame permanently converted to a ‘Temple of Reason,’ the Convention gave its permission. The whole ceremony was repeated for the Convention, whose president

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 77.

¹⁸² Aulart, 1927, pp. 103-4.

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 104.

and secretary embraced the 'Goddess of Liberty.' Some two-thousand towns similarly turned their parish churches into 'temples of reason' and even the rural communes followed suit. In Paris the ceremony had been rather playful, but in the provinces it was a sincere affirmation of deism and patriotism, and the Goddesses of Reason were the flower of the bourgeoisie. The Convention followed rather than led the movement.

Roman Catholic worship continued over the winter in private chapels, and when these were closed in the spring of 1794, it was largely secret. Sometimes country people met with the schoolmaster to sing hymns. In March 1794 mass was still said openly in 150 parishes. But the greater part of the French nation had broken the habit of Christian religious observance and seemed indifferent to its loss.

In June of 1794 occurred another pageant of religion, Robespierre's *Fete de l'etre supreme*. The closing of Christian churches increased after this festival.

Late in 1794 the direct attack on Christianity by doctrinaire deistic nationalism passed into a new phase which shortly came to resemble the American system of separation of church and state with religious liberty. As was to be the case with the U.S.S.R. in the twentieth century, the Convention found it advantageous in its foreign negotiations not to seem too irreligious. A new policy of killing Christianity off by cultural strangulation was devised. Clerical salaries, which had been paid during the Terror, were cut off in September 1794. The crucial pressure now was to be in the field of education, in which the new free and compulsory elementary schools were purged of religious teaching. Instead was substituted the study of the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man,' the Constitution, and 'Republican morals.' Normal schools and a polytechnical school had been organized to complete the system. Thus it was hoped that by a monopoly on indoctrination of the new generation, something like Rousseau's 'civic religion' could replace Christianity."¹⁸⁴

This attitude of toleration for Christianity was not by far the end of the persecution. The Convention had simply changed its methods of attempted eradication. Their determination was still as strong as ever.

"After the Terror came a conservative reaction and in 1795 a new constitution placed the state under the government of a Directory. Religious freedom was proclaimed, but the Directory and its regime were anti-Christian."¹⁸⁵

"The Committee replied...: 'Let religious ideas alone and they will fall by themselves. It is persecution which gives rise to those horrible wars called sacred.' In a circular letter...the Committee said to its representatives: 'No doubt the triumph of truth over falsehood is sure; let us hasten it, but do not let us be too precipitate, however grievous it may be to have to contend with opinions which good sense ought to have swept away with the dust of wrecked monarchy....Those whom ancient prejudice still blinds must be enlightened.' A blow must be struck at 'those scoundrels who preach of heaven the better to devour the earth.'"¹⁸⁶

Although Christianity was still the target of persecution, it was Catholicism which was the real target, Protestants were rarely molested. But even before this religious toleration began in 1795, the Protestants had found themselves suddenly freed from the persecutions of Rome which had shackled them for many centuries. They were much better off facing the persecutions of the French government than they had been facing that of the papacy.

"Little was heard of the other Christians, the two Protestant sects—Calvinists and Lutherans—under Separation. The same may be said of the Jews. Both Protestants and Jews submitted to the laws and silently

¹⁸⁴ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 125-6.

¹⁸⁵ Latourette, 1953, p. 1010.

¹⁸⁶ Aulart, 1927, p. 115.

enjoyed the liberty accorded them after centuries of persecution. The government seems to have had no need to trouble about any of them.”¹⁸⁷

“The philosophers and rationalists proceeded with the movement for the abolition of Christianity, in which they had the support of the Government.

The idea of the Directory, at any rate sometimes, was that its part was more than that of umpire in the rivalry of churches. It had a philosophical and political bias against the Roman Catholic Church. The clearest expression of its purpose is found in its letter to General Bonaparte, Commander of the Army in Italy, dated 13 Pluiose of the year V, and signed by La Revelliere-Lepeaux, Barras and Reubell. They told him that ‘the Roman religion would always be the irreconcilable enemy of the Republic.’ It must be struck in France; it must be struck in Rome. ‘There are, no doubt,’ they said, ‘means which can be employed at home to diminish its influence insensibly, either by legislation or by institutions which will efface old impressions by substituting new ones more agreeable to the actual order of things, more conformable to reason and a sound morality. But there is one thing even more essential to the attainment of the end desired, and that is to destroy, if possible, the center of unity of the Roman Church; and it is for you, who unite in your person the most distinguished qualities of the general and of the enlightened politician, to realize this aim if you consider it practicable.”¹⁸⁸

The great French general Napoleon, was thus empowered to make all possible attempts to crush Catholicism at its base. Napoleon soon led his army deep into Italy, eventually taking most of the Papal States away from the pope, much to the chagrin of Pius VI.

“The General of the Army in Italy was Bonaparte. When he won his notable successes against Sardinia and Austria in 1796, the Directory instructed him to take the city of Rome and despoil the Pope. The papal court called for terms. The Directory required, however, not merely an indemnity, but an explicit retraction of all the violent expressions in bulls and briefs about the Revolution. This Pius VI could not agree to, and he broke the truce by appealing to Austria to attack the French. Napoleon at once moved further into the papal states and set even more stringent terms. By these France took the better half of the papal states and a large indemnity. This seizure of the papal lands was the beginning of the end of the Temporal Power, an ending which was to be the focus of Roman Catholic interest throughout the nineteenth century.”¹⁸⁹

Napoleon had been directed by the Directory to destroy the papacy if possible. But by this time, although still just an army officer, his success had made him probably the most powerful man in France. He knew that he could bypass the orders of the Convention if he so chose. Looking ahead to his own political future, instead of trying to destroy the Pope, realizing his political clout all over Europe, Napoleon chose to make him an ally.

“The general of the Camaldulenses arrived at the Vatican at the moment when the Pope was about to enter his carriage and to leave Rome. The prince, cheered by the message brought by that ecclesiastic, relinquished his intention of quitting the capital, dismissed Busca, the secretary of state, and despatched Cardinal Mattei, the prelate Galeppi, Marquis Massimi, and his nephew, the Duke of Braschi, to Tolentino, to treat with the French general. They had full powers to treat, provided the general required no sacrifice connected with the faith. The treaty was thereby rendered perfectly easy, for on the articles of faith the French general laid no stress whatever. The treaty was concluded in a few days, and signed at Tolentino on the 1st of Ventose (February 19). Its principal conditions were these. The Pope revoked all treaties of alliance against France, acknowledged the Republic, and declared himself in peace and good understanding with her. He was to disavow the murder of Basseville, and to pay three hundred thousand francs for the benefit of his heirs and of others who had suffered by the same event.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 150.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., pp. 150-1.

¹⁸⁹ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 125-6.

While this treaty was negotiating, Bonaparte had contrived to awe the court of Naples, and to rid himself of it. Before he left Tolentino he performed a remarkable act, and one which demonstrated his personal policy thus early in his career. Italy, and the Papal states in particular, were full of exiled French priests. These unfortunate men, retired in convents, were not always received there with much charity. The ordinances of the Directory forbade their stay in countries occupied by our armies; and the Italian monks were not sorry to be delivered from them by the approach of our troops. These unfortunate men were reduced to despair. Long separated from their country, exposed to the disdain of foreigners, they wept at the sight of our soldiers. They even recognized some of them, whose ministers they had been in the villages of France. Bonaparte was easily moved; besides, he was anxious to appear exempt from every kind of revolutionary and religious practice; he issued an order commanding all the convents of the Holy See to receive the French priests, to subsist them, and to give them pay. Thus, instead of putting them to flight, he improved their condition. He wrote to the Directory, explaining the motives which had induced him to commit this violation of its ordinances. ‘By continually hunting down these unfortunate men,’ said he, ‘you force them to return home. It is better that they should be in Italy than in France; they will be useful to us there. They are less fanatical than the Italian priests; they will enlighten the people, who are excited by all means against us. Besides,’ added he, ‘they weep on seeing us; how is it possible not to pity their misfortunes!’ The Directory approved of his conduct. This act and this letter were published, and produced a very strong sensation.”¹⁹⁰

This incident changed, almost overnight, the way in which Christianity was viewed within the Republic. Although it was still some two and one-half years before Napoleon would assume the reigns of power in a coup d’etat, he already possessed the power and influence to cause the Directory to change its harsh policy towards Christianity. In many ways Napoleon was already the leader of France. Thus three years, six months, and nine days, after the infamous festival of August 10, 1793, the Bible suddenly came back to life with the treaty Napoleon signed with the pope on February 19, 1797. The Directory dared not cross Napoleon who had only to march his troops to Paris and depose them. Which, incidentally, he eventually did. History clearly shows us that after this time the worship of Catholics and Protestants alike returned to normal. At least as normal as it could be after such a series of dramatic events.

“The Protestants also resumed public worship. By 1797 most of the old parishes were restored.”¹⁹¹

The events which occurred in revolutionary France during this time are unparalleled in modern history. Never have such abrupt changes in attitude occurred over religious or any other matters of such significance. Christianity, which had been the national religion for centuries, was discarded, and then embraced again in less than four years. No other event in history would even come close to matching so perfectly the French Revolution’s agreement with the prophecies of Revelation.

11:12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them.

After the two witnesses lay dead in the streets of France for three and one-half years they were called up into Heaven by a voice. Their enemies beheld them as they triumphantly ascended into Heaven in a cloud. The enemies of the Bible see it brought back to life and now it is placed out of their reach in Heaven. Now they will no longer have access to it so that they might do it harm.

This story is remarkably similar to Christ’s ascension into Heaven after His resurrection. “*And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight*” (Acts 1:9). Christ

¹⁹⁰ M. A. Thiers, *The History of the French Revolution*, (New York, NY: D. Appleton and Company, 1980), pp. 108-9.

¹⁹¹ J. Nichols, 1956, p. 122.

ascended into Heaven, triumphant over sin and death, after Satan's best attempts to defeat Him. Likewise here, the Bible has won out over Satan's wicked attempts to destroy it, it has been resurrected from the dead, and ascends victoriously into Heaven. This does not mean that the Bible was actually removed from the earth. This picture of the Bible ascending into Heaven is merely symbolic of its victory over evil. In ascending into Heaven the Bible has been placed out of Satan's reach.

11:13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

"And the same hour," means that at the same time that the Bible lay dead in the streets of Paris, a great earthquake occurred. As we have already seen in Revelation an earthquake is symbolic of some great upheaval or conflict. This upheaval, whatever it is, will result in the death of seven-thousand men, and will frighten those who remain. We are told that seven-thousand men will be killed, but from what we have seen thus far we should not be looking for that exact number. This number will very likely just turn out to be symbolic and represents the idea that a great multitude will be slain.

Quite often in the Bible you will find that a large number is used figuratively, and is not at all meant literally. For example, Psalm 50:10 says, "*For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.*" We know that every creature upon the face of the earth belongs to God. If we took the number in this verse literally, the cattle upon hill number 1,001, and those upon hill number 1,002, etc., would not belong to God. Therefore, we see that the number one-thousand is symbolic and is really used to represent every hill.

Another example is Psalm 105:8. "*He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.*" How long is a generation? Smith's Bible Dictionary says it is about thirty or forty years.¹⁹² If we were very conservative and took a generation as twenty years, one-thousand generations would still be twenty-thousand years! Clearly, this is not the case. Once again we see that one-thousand is used, not in a specific way, but in a symbolic way. Therefore, we do not have to find exactly seven-thousand people slain in this period we are looking for. All we need is a "large" number of men slain.

When we examine history we indeed find a time of great unrest and violence during the French Revolution. It is known as the "Reign of Terror." This period was also filled with severe religious persecutions. The following passage gives a brief explanation of the Reign of Terror.

"On April 6 the Convention established the Committee of Public Safety as the executive organ of the Republic and reorganized the Committee of General Security and the Revolutionary Tribunal. Agents were sent to the departments to supervise local execution of the laws and to requisition men and munitions. During this period rivalry between the Girondists and the Montagnards became increasingly bitter. A new Parisian outburst, organized by the radical journalist Jacques Rene Hebert (1755-94) and his extremist colleagues, forced the convention to order the arrest of twenty-nine Girondist delegates and the Girondist ministers Pierre Henri Helene Marie Lebrun-Tondu (1763?-93) and Etienne Claviere (1735-93) on June 2. Thereafter the radical faction in control of the government of Paris played a decisive role in the conduct of the Revolution. On June 24 the convention promulgated a new constitution, the terms of which greatly extended the democratic features of the republic. The document was never actually put into effect, however. Leadership on the Committee of Public Safety passed, on July 10, to the Jacobins, who completely reorganized it. Three days later the radical politician Jean Paul Marat, long identified with the Jacobins, was assassinated by the aristocrat Charlotte Corday, a Girondist sympathizer. Public indignation over this crime considerably broadened the Jacobin sphere of influence. On July 27 the Jacobin leader Maximilien Robespierre was added to the Committee of Public Safety, and soon became its dominant member. Robespierre, aided by Louis Saint-Just, Lazare Carnot, Georges Couthon (1755-94), and other prominent Jacobins, instituted extreme policies to crush any possibility of counterrevolution. The powers of

¹⁹² Smith, 1986, s.v. "generation."

the Committee were renewed monthly by the National Convention from April, 1793, to July, 1794, a period known in history as the Reign of Terror.

From a military standpoint, the position of the republic was extremely perilous. The enemy powers had resumed the offensive on all fronts. Mainz had been recaptured by the Prussians, Conde-Sur-L'Escaunt and Valenciennes had fallen, and Toulon was under siege by the British. Royalist and Roman Catholic insurgents controlled much of the Vendee and Brittany. Caen, Lyons, Marseille, Bordeaux, and other important localities were in the hands of the Girondists. By a new conscription decree, issued on Aug. 23, the entire able-bodied male population of France was made liable to conscription. Fourteen new armies, comprising about 750,000, were speedily organized, equipped, and rushed to all fronts. Along with these moves the committee struck violently at internal opposition. On Oct. 16 Marie Antoinette was executed, and twenty-one Girondists were beheaded on Oct. 31. Beginning with these reprisals, thousands of royalists, nonjuring priests, Girondists, and other elements charged with counterrevolutionary activities or sympathies were brought before revolutionary tribunals, convicted, and sent to the guillotine. Executions in Paris totaled 2639; more than half (1515) of the victims perished during June and July, 1794. In many of the outlying departments, particularly the main centers of royalist insurrection, even harsher treatment was meted out to traitors, real and suspect. The Nantes tribunal, headed by Jean Baptiste Carrier (1756-94), which dealt most severely with those who aided the rebels in Vendee, sent more than 8000 persons to the guillotine within three months. In the whole of France, revolutionary tribunals and commissions were responsible for the execution of almost 17,000 individuals. Including those who died in overcrowded disease-ridden prisons and insurgents shot summarily on the field of battle, the victims of the reign of terror totaled approximately 40,000. All elements of the opposition suffered from the terror. Of those condemned by the Revolutionary tribunals, approximately 8 percent were nobles, 6 percent were members of the clergy, 14 percent belonged to the middle class, and seventy percent were workers or peasants charged with draft dodging, desertion, hoarding, rebellion, and various other crimes. Of these social groupings, the clergy of the Roman Catholic Church suffered proportionately the greatest loss. Anticlerical hatred found further expression in the abolition, in October, 1793, of the Julian calendar, which was replaced by a republican calendar. As part of its revolutionary program, the Committee of Public Safety, under the leadership of Robespierre, attempted to remake France in accordance with its conceptions of humanitarianism, social idealism, and patriotism. Striving to establish a "Republic of Virtue", the committee stressed devotion to the republic and to victory and instituted measures against corruption and hoarding. In addition, on Nov. 23, 1793, the Commune of Paris, in a measure soon copied by authorities elsewhere in France, closed all churches in the city and began actively to sponsor the revolutionary religion known as the Cult of Reason. Initiated at the insistence of the radical leader Pierre Gaspard Chaumette (1763-94) and his extremist colleagues (among them Hebert), this actually accentuated growing differences between the centrist Jacobins, led by Robespierre, and the fanatical Hebertists, a powerful force in the convention and in the Parisian government."¹⁹³

It is quite easy to see how this matches the description found in our verse. The earthquake described the Reign of Terror itself. Both of the phrases "*the tenth part of the city fell,*" and "*were slain of men seven thousand,*" symbolically denote the grave consequences the Reign of Terror had on France. The name "Reign of Terror" itself should give us a very good indication of the atmosphere in France during this period of time. There should be little doubt that the "*remnant were affrighted.*" Anyone was subject to be grabbed, tried, and executed by reason of the slightest suspicion. If you notice in the above reference for those whom the dates of their birth and death are listed, they all died during this period of time. Not even the politically powerful were immune to the madness and insanity which had gripped France during this time.

"*Gave glory to God,*" does not mean that all of France suddenly became Christians. All it signifies is that when people saw that Christianity was not even phased by all of the things it had been put through, and that it had easily won out over the Cult of Reason, the goddess of Nature, and even the entire Age of Enlightenment, they were, to say the least, impressed. Many had thought that the end of Christianity was near. They assumed that reason and understanding would triumph over the silly myths and superstitions, which to them was all that Christianity was.

¹⁹³ Funk & Wagnall's, 1973, s.v. "French Revolution."

When they saw that, instead of falling, Christianity had bounced back with remarkable quickness, many would be inclined to believe that God had a hand in the turn of events. Certainly those who already believed in God would give Him the glory for the “resurrection” of Christianity in France.

11:14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

Here we are finally told that the second woe is past. In reality it was finished at the end of chapter nine, but all the material from the beginning of chapter ten until now was not technically part of the third woe. All of these events took place prior to the third woe, and actually “set the stage” for it to occur. It was needful for God to show us these things before He began the third woe, so that the events would make more sense to us.

Since God wanted to present some intermediate material to us which was part of neither woe, He had the choice of putting this verse before or after that material. If this statement had been located in the beginning of chapter ten we would have assumed that all of the material immediately following it was part of the third woe, when in fact, it was not. It would have been harder to make a distinction that way, than the ways it actually appears. The context clearly shows that the second woe was over at the end of chapter nine.

11:15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

We have previously mentioned that the seventh trumpet would not reveal to us some great world event, but instead would reveal seven vials, just like the seventh seal revealed the seven trumpets. These seven vials will be used to destroy the secular power of the apostate Roman Church. With the power of Rome broken, Satan’s hold on the governments of the world will be greatly reduced. For many centuries the nations of Europe had been in allegiance with Rome. They had not only consented to the abominations of Rome, but in many instances had actually joined in. They had often acted as Rome’s executioners. The Catholic clergy would not kill anyone themselves, actually Church law forbade them to shed blood, but would turn over convicted heretics to civil governments for execution, usually by burning at the stake.

The statement that “*The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord,*” does not mean that everyone became members of the Lord’s Church. It does, however, symbolize the turn away from the apostate religion of Rome, towards Christianity. Governments that had for centuries joined with Rome in the persecution of true Christians, now worked to protect their rights. These nations became places where Christianity could grow and flourish. This idea will be greatly elaborated on in chapter twenty.

“*There were great voices in heaven.*” We are not told whose voices these were. It could have been the angels, the four creatures, or someone else. Regardless of their identity, they were faithful to God. They were glad to see the “beginning of the end” of spiritual Rome. “*He shall reign for ever and ever,*” denotes the everlasting nature of the Kingdom of God. “*He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end*” (Luke 1:32-33). The end of this world does not even signal the end of the Kingdom of Christ. Rather than ending, the Kingdom, or the Church, will then be turned over to God, and will ascend into Heaven. “*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power*” (I Corinthians 15:24).

11:16 And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,

11:17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned.

The twenty-four elders, which were first introduced in chapter four are again seen here worshipping God. They have been explained previously to represent the Old and New Covenants. The fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel from the Old, and the twelve Apostles from the New. Upon seeing God preparing to take vengeance upon the Catholics,

who have oppressed Christianity for many centuries, the twenty-four elders are very thankful and begin to praise and worship God. They make reference to God's eternal nature as one who was, and is, and always will be. Unlike everything we know in the physical world around us, God has neither a beginning nor an ending, which makes Him unique among all creatures.

God always had the power to defeat Satan, and his puppet the pope, but He chose not to do so for a long time. Finally, as the twenty-four elders point out, *"thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned."* Why God chose to allow Rome to have power for so long only He knows. Certainly He had His reasons, and it is not the place of man to question them. God has always been known for His patience and longsuffering. Perhaps He was still hopeful that Rome would repent of its wickedness, but they did not. The final result of this struggle, which was never in doubt, was that righteousness overcame unrighteousness. Satan was defeated once again.

11:18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

Several things in this verse seem to indicate that we might be considering the end of the world. However, we will see many things occur after this; therefore, this cannot be the end. Then what do all of these statements have reference to? It is again speaking of God's judgment on spiritual Rome.

"The nations were angry" describes the feelings of the European nations as God's judgment on Rome begins. All of the nations had, in the past, supported Rome, and most of them were still doing so. Since shortly after the fall of Rome in A.D. 476, the popes exerted tremendous power and influence in the affairs of Europe. A relationship both economic and political had developed between Rome and the nations of Europe. This relationship was advantageous for both sides. Certainly neither side wished it to be disturbed since it would mean they would suffer loss. Therefore the nations were angry to see the turmoil coming upon the Catholic Church. They were extremely dismayed at what they saw in revolutionary France, and things will just continue to worsen for the papacy and all of her partners in crime.

"Thy wrath is come," has reference to the wrath of God. The time has now come for God to pour out His great wrath upon Rome. *"The time of the dead, that they should be judged,"* does not mean the Day of Judgment, which will occur at the end of the world. When the fifth seal was opened in chapter six, we saw the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God, under the altar. In the next verse they asked, *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?"* They asked that their blood be "judged" and avenged. These saints would be "judged" worthy and righteous, when their murderers, Rome, were made to suffer for their crimes. The thought is the same in our present verse. The dead, more exactly the righteous dead, should be "judged," and when found worthy, their murderers should be punished.

The reward to the prophets, the saints, and those who fear God's name, is the same as just mentioned in the previous paragraph. The reward is God's vengeance and punishment of those who have oppressed and murdered His people for centuries. Every righteous person would be made very happy to see spiritual Rome toppled. This would seem like a reward to them for their faithful service.

"Shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth." The two occurrences of the word "destroy," both come from the same Greek word "diaphtheiro." Diaphtheiro is defined by Strong's as, "to rot thoroughly, i.e. (by implication) to ruin (passively decay utterly, figuratively pervert):-corrupt, destroy, perish."¹⁹⁴ To fit the context, the second occurrence could be better rendered as corrupt. God was about to destroy those who "corrupt" the earth. This is exactly what the Catholics had done. They had spread their false doctrines over the entire world and had met any and all opposition with violent repression. Now God was about to bring an end to all of this. The "destroyers" were about to be destroyed.

¹⁹⁴ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #1311."

11:19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

This is just another reference to the opening of the Bible to the common people, and the corresponding effect it had on the Catholics. Under the Old Law the temple was the place of worship. Inside the temple, inside the Most Holy Place to be exact, the ark of the covenant was kept (Exodus 26:33-34). One of the items it contained was the two tables of stone upon which had been written the ten commandments (I Kings 8:9). Comparing this with the Christian age, we have the Church, which has the Law of God written in their hearts and minds. *“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them”* (Hebrews 10:16). The Church holds up the Bible to be the sole authority for all spiritual matters. Looking at the Church, one would see God’s word personified.

The giving back of the Bible to the common people led to tremendous problems for Rome, and eventually to her downfall. What we have pictured in this verse is the Bible being open to the view of anyone who desires to look at it. This leads to a revival of the Lord’s Church. It has been present since its foundation in the first century, but for 1,260 years, it had been hiding in the wilderness, in order to escape Catholic oppressions. Now, suddenly, the situation has changed to the point where the Church can come out of hiding. The world can now see the Lord’s Church again for the first time in over a thousand years. The Church was not meant to be hid, but persecution had forced it. Now the Church could exemplify the words of Jesus: *“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 5:14-16). Men could once again see the light. The “temple of God” was opened for all to see.

The *“lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail,”* show us the way the Reformation seemed to Rome. The thing which they had feared and fought against for so long had finally come. The Lord’s Church was now free to publicly teach the Bible and many people were believing it. This was Rome’s worst nightmare come true. Subsequent chapters will provide the details of Rome’s fall and all of the judgments that God brought against it.

Chapter Twelve

The Woman and the Dragon

We now leave Revolutionary France and move to an entirely different topic here in chapter twelve. First we need to state that the topic of this chapter is not the third woe. Although verse fifteen of the previous chapter told us that the seventh trumpet, also known as the third woe trumpet, was blown, we will not see its effects until chapter sixteen. Thus far God has taken us through the fall of paganism in Rome in chapter six, and the fall of the Roman Empire itself in chapters eight and nine. Before He takes us forward, He needs to stop and tell us about something that has been going on for a long time now. Although we have seen hints of it, God has not yet formally introduced us to Papal Rome, which is to be the next target of His wrath. To do this, He must go back in history over a thousand years before the French Revolution, and this is exactly what this chapter does. He will tell us some things we need to know so that we may identify the object of His wrath without a doubt. We have to know who He is going to destroy in chapter sixteen before He actually does it.

12:1 And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars:

John tells us that a great wonder now appears before him in Heaven. He sees a woman whom he depicts as being clothed with the sun, standing upon the moon, and crowned with twelve stars. In chapter one we saw the sun used in a description of Christ. In chapter ten it was used to describe a “mighty” angel. The sun is also used in Revelation to represent governments and powers, but when it is part of a description, it always refers to those who are good and righteous. This tells us then that the woman John sees is holy. The fact that she is clothed in the sun denotes her spiritual brilliance and purity. The sun here represents the Lord’s Church.

The moon is often used in Revelation, and elsewhere in the Bible, to denote a power of somewhat lesser importance than the sun. Here the moon represents the Law of Moses. While it was important, it did not measure up to the Law of Christ. The Old Law was “*A shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things*” (Hebrews 10:1). “*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ*” (Galatians 3:24). It was also referred to as “*The handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us*” (Colossians 2:14). All of these passages show that the Law of Moses was not the equal of the New Law, but was the imperfect forerunner of the “*Perfect Law of Liberty*” (James 1:25). The fact that the woman is standing upon the moon shows that it is her foundation, just as the Old Law is the foundation for the New.

Stars are used in chapter one to represent churches. They are used in various other places to represent minor governments and powers; minor at least in relation to the sun and the moon, which represent greater powers. Here the twelve stars represent both, the fathers of the twelve tribes of Israel from the Old Testament, and the twelve

apostles of the New Testament. In both cases the individuals were important, but pale in comparison to the dispensations which they represent, just as stars pale in glory when compared to the sun and moon.

The fact that these stars were placed on the head shows their prominence. The twelve patriarchs were the physical fathers of the entire nation of Israel. The twelve apostles were the fathers of spiritual Israel, the Church. When you look at a person, the first thing you usually notice is their face. These twelve stars then, which are on the top of the woman's head, would certainly demand your immediate attention. Thus they will stand out above all of her other features. This was very true of both the patriarchs and the apostles. In chapter four we were introduced to twenty-four elders whom we said represent the Old and New Testaments. These men were part of the foundations upon which both of the Testaments were built. They were the first, and because of this, enjoy a place of special prominence.

Now that we have identified the symbols surrounding this woman, all that is left is to actually identify her. What entity can be said to be founded in the Law of Moses, clothed in the glory of the Lord's Church, and have as some of its outstanding contributors the sons of Israel and the apostles of Christ? There is but one thing this could be: God's people. It is not just Israel, nor is it just the Church, it is both, and then some.

There are dozens of examples in the Old Testament where Israel was referred to as a woman, here are a few. *"For thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God"* (Isaiah 54:5). *"How weak is thine heart, saith the Lord God, seeing thou doest all these things, the work of an imperious whorish woman; in that thou buildest thine eminent place in the head of every way, and makest thine high place in every street; and hast not been as an harlot, in that thou scornest hire; but as a wife that committeth adultery, which taketh strangers instead of her husband!"* (Ezekiel 16:30-32). *"Plead with your mother, plead: for she is not my wife, neither am I her husband: let her therefore put away her whoredoms out of her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts"* (Hosea 2:2).

Likewise the Lord's Church is often referred to as a woman, the bride of Christ. *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"* (II Corinthians 11:2). *"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband"* (Revelation 21:2). The Apostle Paul compared Christ's relationship to the Church to that of a husband and wife. *"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body"* (Ephesians 5:23).

We have both Israel and the Church represented as women, but how are these women related? Are they sisters? Mother and daughter perhaps? Or could they possibly be the same woman? The Apostle Paul answered this question for us. Speaking to the Jews he made the following comments: *"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead"* (Romans 7:4). The nation of Israel was spiritually married to God under the Old Law. This fact is proven by Jeremiah 3:8, where God says, *"And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce."* Paul tells the Jews that they became dead to the Law of Moses by the body of Christ. Christ fulfilled the Law (Matthew 5:17-8) and thereby broke the tie that bound Israel to God. Spiritually, Israel's husband had died. Now that Israel was unmarried, she was free to marry again. Paul tells them the one they should remarry is Christ. It was the husband, the Old Law, which died, and the woman, Israel, was then free to remarry Christ. Throughout all of this the same woman is under consideration, she merely changes husbands. As is customary in marriage, the wife takes on the name of her husband. Therefore the nation of Israel became spiritual Israel, the Church of Christ.

This idea is further strengthened when we consider the nature of the early Church. From its beginnings on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 30, as recorded in Acts chapter two, the Lord's Church was comprised entirely of Jews for the first three and one-half years of its existence (this will be proven in the discussion of chapter 14). It was not until Peter was sent to Cornelius, as recorded in Acts chapter ten, that the first Gentiles were welcomed into the brotherhood of Christ. Therefore, the argument of Paul in Romans chapter seven is indeed valid. The woman, Israel, was not replaced by a Church dominated by Gentiles as it is today. Rather, those Jews who were willing to accept Christ, were given ample time to do so. Then the Gentiles were made an addition to, not a supplantation of, the bride

of Christ. In effect, the “wife” of God remained the same, only her relationship with God changed. She went from being married to God through the Law of Moses, to being married to God through Christ.

Christians are considered part of spiritual Israel and are even referred to as spiritual Jews by the Apostle Paul. “*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God*” (Romans 2:28-29).

We now understand the woman under consideration to be a representation of God’s people of all ages. The woman has changed a little through the years, but she is still the same woman. Under the Old Law the woman was Israel, after Christ the woman became the Church.

12:2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

The woman, who represents God’s people, is now said to be near delivery of a child. In fact, as John sees her, she is in labor. As of yet we know nothing about this child, but we will be able to identify the child as Christ when we get to verse five. I mentioned His identity now because it will be important that we know it in verse four.

12:3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads.

John now leaves the woman he has just described to us for a moment, and tells us of another wonder he beholds in Heaven. He describes for us here a terrible looking creature, a red dragon that has seven heads and ten horns. We will see this beast many more times in the ensuing chapters, especially in chapters thirteen and seventeen, where many more details about this beast are given. Let it suffice for now to say that this is a representation of Satan. There is no doubt that this dragon is Satan, for verse nine tells us that.

However, there is more to this dragon than just saying he is Satan. The head, horns, and crowns all have a special significance. The seven heads are seven world empires that Satan will use against God’s people. The ten horns are ten nations that will uphold the seventh head. Here we see that there are seven crowns, one upon each head. Although they all existed at different times, they all had great power and authority during their day. The main theme of this verse is to show the beast in its entirety as it existed over a period of nearly four-thousand years. We are not looking at any one head in particular here, but merely at the group of the seven which Satan used throughout the ages. In the next chapter we will begin to concentrate on the seventh head, and we will find that the other six are no longer crowned. This shows that their time has passed. We will find there that it is the ten horns which are crowned. This shows that the ten kingdoms, which these horns represent, will have come into power by that time. We will delay any further discussion of this beast until chapter thirteen.

12:4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born.

Satan, pictured here as a dragon, draws the third part of the stars of heaven with his tail. As we have now seen on numerous occasions, stars are used to represent lesser nations, powers and authorities. Here we see that Satan has drawn together one-third of the nations and has cast them to the earth. This is representative of the mighty Roman Empire, which was the sixth head of the beast, and was in existence at the time of the birth of Christ. Rome easily gobbled up all the lesser kingdoms about it, just as the brilliance of the sun gobbles up the stars, in that stars cannot be seen while the sun is present in the sky. Satan used the Roman Empire to control all of the Western world for many centuries. He also used it to oppress God’s people, both the Jews, and the Christians after them.

The woman is about to give birth to her child and Satan stands ready to destroy Him as soon as He is born. At this time the woman is Israel and God’s purpose for her was always to bring forth the Messiah, which she is about to do. Certainly, Satan would have a great interest in the arrival of his nemesis. He wants Christ destroyed and is standing by ready to “*devour*” Him as soon as He is born. The Bible tells us of Satan’s attempt to kill the newborn Christ

child. *“And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, ‘Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.’ When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, ‘Out of Egypt have I called my son.’ Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ‘In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not’”* (Matthew 2:13-18).

Satan used Herod to try to destroy Christ, but was unsuccessful. Satan, however, was not through with Christ when this attempt had failed. He also tried to devour Christ spiritually. *“Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil”* (Matthew 4:1). He was tempted to turn stones into bread after having not eaten for forty days (Matthew 4:2-3). He was tempted to jump off the Temple (Matthew 4:5-6). He was tempted with all of the kingdoms of the earth (Matthew 4:8-9). The Hebrew letter tells us that He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15). Satan’s attempts to devour Christ were many and varied. He never gave up because he knew it was his last chance to defeat God. As we would expect, he was no match for God and was soundly defeated. This defeat, however, has not weakened his desire to see man join him in eternal punishment. Therefore, he continues to tempt and deceive as many as will hearken to his evil allurements.

12:5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

The woman, which was said to be in labor in verse two, now gives birth to her child. This child was a male, and was destined *“to rule all nations with a rod of iron.”* This description allows us to clearly identify the child. Notice this prophesy of David. *“Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, ‘Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel’”* (Psalm 2:6-9). In a description of Christ in Revelation chapter nineteen we find *“And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron”* (Revelation 19:15).

This child, Christ, *“was caught up unto God, and to his throne.”* This offers further evidence that this child is Christ. This statement can be made of Him, but no one else. *“Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God”* (Hebrews 12:2). At present, all other men who have died reside in Hades and will remain there until the end of time. Therefore this child must be Christ.

In a sense, Satan won the battle but lost the war. He finally managed, through the wickedness of the Jews, to destroy Christ. He died, however, without sin and then was raised up by God from the dead. He then ascended back into Heaven victorious over Satan. Not only did Satan fail to get Christ, but he also lost many men at the same time. Without Christ, no man could be saved. Even those who lived before Christ depended on His sacrifice to take away their sins. *“For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins...But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Hebrews 10:1-4, 12). Before the death of Christ all men were without hope. All men were in the same shape as Satan. He intended to see that things stayed that way. Had he succeeded in killing Christ as a child, Christ would have gone back to Heaven and although Satan would have lost Christ, he would have prevented Him from performing His mission of redeeming mankind.

12:6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

Since we are now considering a time after Christ's death and resurrection, the woman represents the Lord's Church. The Church will be forced to flee into the wilderness, which means it will have to worship in secret. It is the seventh head of the beast, the papacy, which will persecute the Church and force it to go "underground" in order to survive. God had anticipated this and had prepared a place for the Church to hide from the beast. For a period of 1,260 years the Church was forced to survive in secret. This is the third of five references to this time period in Revelation.

12:7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,

Now we come to a very interesting occurrence. We find that Satan and his forces are joined in battle against God's forces who are led by the archangel Michael. The question is, when did this battle occur? Did it occur before the creation of the world? Or, are the events of this chapter in strict chronological order, which would place it around the time of the establishment of the Church?

12:8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.

"Neither was their place found any more in heaven." The battle fought in Heaven between Satan with his forces, and Michael with his forces, led to the expulsion and banishment of Satan and his angels. The question is still when did this occur? Christ said, "I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven" (Luke 10:18). Christ spoke these words before the establishment of the Church. Therefore, it appears that the fall of Satan, which resulted from this war in Heaven, took place before the establishment of the Church, and likely before the beginning of the world. However, there is more to the story.

We find recorded in the book of Job that "there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them. And the Lord said unto Satan, 'Whence comest thou?' Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, 'From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it'" (Job 1:6-7). This passage shows conclusively that Satan still had access to Heaven and to God. How could Satan have already fallen from Heaven if he still had access? One point that will hopefully make the picture a little clearer is that the fall Christ speaks of in Luke 10:18, is not the same event we see recorded here in Revelation. Let us get a little more background information of Satan before we proceed with untangling this mystery.

Ezekiel chapter twenty-eight sheds a little light on this subject for us. Here Satan is referred to as the king of Tyrus. "Moreover the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, 'Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, "Thus saith the Lord God; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created. Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee"" (Ezekiel 28:11-17).

Although the comments are addressed to the king of Tyrus, there is little doubt that Satan is the real object of discussion. He is said here to have been created, not born, and to have been in the Garden of Eden. Only Adam, Eve, and Satan fit these two criteria. All other men since Adam and Eve have been born and not created. And Satan was the only other creature present in the Garden.

This person was also an "anointed cherub" at one time, so this rules out Adam and Eve. It should now be obvious

that Satan is being discussed here. We are also told here what his downfall was. *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness”* (Ezekiel 28:17). It was pride that caused Satan to sin and fall from glory. The same sin will likewise be the downfall of multitudes of men. Pride is such an important factor in the lives of men that it is spoken of quite often in the Bible. King David made a statement which seems to fit perfectly the case of Satan. *“The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God”* (Psalm 10:4). David’s son, Solomon, likewise had some very discerning comments about pride. *“When pride cometh, then cometh shame”* (Proverbs 11:2). *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”* (Proverbs 16:18). Satan, who had occupied a very high position in Heaven, began to think too highly of himself and lost everything. Now, in his anger and jealousy, he fights to take everything away from man.

Ezekiel records that Satan was *“cast...to the ground.”* This is the fall Christ speaks of in Luke 10:18. Someone who was an anointed cherub in Heaven being cast to the earth would certainly fall like lightning. However, based on what we saw in Job Satan retained access to the heavenly realm even after this time. Do these two accounts conflict with each other? Peter said *“for if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment”* (II Peter 2:4). The word hell here is from the Greek tartarus, which is used only this once in the Bible. Thayer defines it as *“the name of a subterranean region, doleful and dark, regarded by the ancient Greeks as the abode of the wicked dead, where they suffer punishment for their evil deeds.”*¹⁹⁵ I believe Peter used a different word here for the state of the fallen angels to show that their condition was different from sinful men. Even though the angels that sinned have lost their position and authority in Heaven they still can speak to God. Like evil men, these angels will spend eternity in Hell, but for now they are still in a different state than men.

I now ask the question once again, if the two accounts of Satan’s fall can not be reconciled into one event, do they contradict each other? No. Satan was cast from Heaven in that he lost the position and authority he had as an anointed cherub. He was not cast out in the sense that he no longer had access to the Heavenly Father; Job chapter 1 shows that he could still do so. What then is the significance of the casting out we see here in Revelation? Why did it require a war this time instead of God simply *“showing him the door?”* We will address that with the next two verses.

12:9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

It has already been said that Satan and his angels were cast out of Heaven, but what has not been mentioned is where they were cast out to. This verse answers that question for us. Satan and his angels were banished to the earth. This is what is referred to above in II Peter 2:4. Life here on earth might not seem all that bad to most humans, but imagine how it must be for those angels who at one time were in Heaven enjoying the presence of God. They have now been banished to the earth, which Peter referred to as *“chains of darkness.”* If Heaven is to be such a great improvement for man over the earth, then correspondingly it must be just as great a loss for the angels who were cast out. The question could logically be asked, how can Satan, a spirit, be bound to the physical earth. In reality, he can not. He is not physically confined here, but his sphere of influence is. He no longer has any influence in Heaven, but is reduced to meddling in the affairs of mortal men.

This verse gives us four names for Satan. The great dragon, that old serpent, the Devil, and Satan. He is also called by other names in the Bible. *“Lucifer”* and *“son of the morning”* in Isaiah 14:12. The *“prince of Tyrus”* in Ezekiel 28:11-19. The *“prince of this world”* in John 12:31, 14:30, and 16:11, and the *“prince of the power of the air”* in Ephesians 2:2. Whatever his name, his ways are always just as evil.

He is said to deceive *“the whole world.”* In general this is true, the vast majority of men have been deceived by Satan and have forsaken God. There are actually very few men historically who have served God. As Christ said, *“strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it”* (Matthew 7:14).

¹⁹⁵ Thayer, 1989, s.v. *“ταρταρώ.”*

The final phrase of the verse just reiterates for us the point that Satan was defeated in the battle and cast down to the earth along with those angels who sided with him in his rebellion against God.

Having now discussed the participants in the war and its consequences, we should also discuss exactly what a “war” in heaven is. Certainly we are familiar with carnal warfare with its bloodshed, death, and great destruction. All of the participants in this battle, however, are spiritual beings which are incapable of being injured or killed like physical beings. Therefore, machine guns, tanks, bombs, and the like, the usual fare on the battle field, would have no place in a spiritual battle in heaven.

How then can a war be fought if there are no weapons with which to kill and destroy the enemy? We must examine the reasons behind warfare to understand this. The reason for every war is very simple and can be summed up in one word, power. There can be variations on this theme, but when you examine any war you will find that it is always fought by two sides each desiring to either exercise power over the other or to be freed from the other’s control. Sometimes this conflict of power may be in terms of who will control certain natural resources such as land, water, mineral deposits, oil or gas fields, etc. Other times it might simply be the desire of each side to impose their beliefs and practices (political, religious, economic, social, etc.) on the other side. Or it can simply be an exercise to demonstrate power. One group attacks and subdues another to show everyone else the level of their strength and military prowess. Whatever the rationale for any war might be, it is always ultimately rooted in the desire for and struggle over power.

The war in heaven, although spiritual and not carnal, also follows this same principle. The war was fought to see who was the most powerful in Heaven. Of course everyone knows that God is, or at least everyone should know. But, as we pointed out in the previous verse, Satan’s pride got the better of him and he lost sight of reality. He began to think that he was equal to God himself. *“Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness”* (Ezekiel 28:17). Satan’s heart was lifted up in pride and he did the very unwise thing of challenging God’s power and authority. Exactly what form did the war in heaven take? Probably nothing more than Satan standing up to God, confronting Him, and inciting the rest of the angels to join him in revolt, which many did. *“Satan...was cast out into the earth, and HIS ANGELS were cast out with him”* (Revelation 12:9).

No weapons were used, no blood was shed, and no lives were lost. It was more a war of words or a war of wills than anything else. The consequences for the losing side, however, were extremely high; far beyond life and death. Satan, and all the angels who foolishly followed him, were permanently cast out of Heaven and are destined to spend eternity in outer darkness.

Why did this war occur when it did? Prior to Christ fulfilling His mission and dying on the cross for all mankind there was a problem. As the Hebrew letter points out *“for the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins”* (Hebrews 10:1-4). Prior to the Cross, all men were living with their sins, they could not be forgiven. You can imagine Satan’s reaction to this. I’m sure he was quick to point out to God every sin that otherwise righteous men committed. Until Christ died he had a point. Man was no better than Satan, both had sinned against God. This point is made expressly clear in the next verse.

12:10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Having introduced the great adversary of God’s people, the story now shifts back to the Deliverer. Christ is given credit for bringing to man salvation, strength, His Kingdom, and His power. Through Jesus’ death salvation came to mankind. *“And being made perfect, he (Jesus) became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him”* (Hebrews 5:9). Likewise strength came to man through Christ. The Apostle Paul said *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Philippians 4:13).

The kingdom of God, which is the Church, also arrived at the same time. During the time of His ministry “*Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’*” (Matthew 4:17). This lets us know that the kingdom was to be established soon, but it does not tell us exactly when. Christ said further of this matter “*Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom*” (Matthew 16:28). His comments here allow us to know that the Kingdom was to be established soon after he had spoken these words. Certainly it had to have occurred during the first century. Finally, the Apostle Paul lets us know that the kingdom had already been established in his day. “*Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son*” (Colossians 1:13). Here Paul shows that they had already been translated into the kingdom. One cannot be translated into something that does not exist. Thus we know that the kingdom had already come by this time. It fact it came on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 30.

The “*power of his Christ*” was spoken of by Jesus Himself after His resurrection. “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth*” (Matthew 28:18). There was nothing which He did not possess the power to accomplish. Much of this power was delivered to His apostles for the benefit of their work. Today His power continues to reside with His people in the form of the Holy Spirit.

For the first time since the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden man enjoys a good relationship with God. “*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:18). This is certainly reason for man to rejoice, because he had no hope otherwise. Man is not the only one who is jubilant over this. “*Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*” (Luke 15:10). The angels were certainly glad to see the offer of salvation extended to mankind.

“*The accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.*” “*Our brethren*” is spoken by someone in Heaven, and is almost certainly an angel, and refers to those men who are faithful to God. It is not strange that angels should consider men their brethren. We will later see an angel make a similar statement to John. “*I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus*” (Revelation 19:10).

Satan is the one here called “*the accuser of our brethren.*” He, being a spirit as God is, was able to talk with God as we have already established in the book of Job. Before Christ redeemed man Satan had a legitimate complaint with God. Mankind was in the same state as Satan himself, separated from God by sin. All men were condemned by their sins and God could not defend them before Satan. The sacrifice of Christ gave men a way to be free from their sins. God offered forgiveness to all who would obey His will. I believe this even includes Satan. Had he been willing to bow down before Jesus and admit his superiority I believe that he also could have been forgiven. Now God can defend the faithful against the accusations of Satan. Since their sins have been forgiven Satan’s indictments are completely without basis.

I think we are now in a position to explain the timing and purpose of the war in Heaven. After Christ’s successful mission God could now fairly include righteous men and at the same time exclude Satan. I believe that God told Satan to leave and not come back. Satan, of course, wasn’t going to go without a fight. He no doubt presented many arguments as to why he should rule Heaven and not God. Why the other angels should follow him and no longer serve their Creator. Michael was apparently tasked to be the voice of reason and present the logical side of the argument, God’s side. Satan was apparently very convincing in his arguments, persuading many of the angels to follow him.

The question could also be asked, when did the other angels sin? Did they join Lucifer in his initial rebellion at or before the beginning of the world, or did they side with him as the war began in Heaven? Or did perhaps some join him at both occurrences? I think we can at least answer part of this. We can establish that at least some angels had rebelled with Satan initially. “*Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly*” (Job 4:18). What other folly or foolishness could be under consideration here that their rebellion against God? “*Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matthew 25:41). I believe the war in Heaven took place when Christ triumphantly returned. Satan could no longer justly accuse God’s servants before Him and it was time for him to go. If that is the case, then prior to Christ’s death, burial and resurrection we see Him make reference to “*the devil and his angels.*” Clearly some angels had already joined with Satan long before the war in Heaven.

Now to sum all of this up. At some point prior to or at the Creation, Satan rebelled against God and was removed from his position as an anointed cherub. This is the first fall of Satan referred to by Ezekiel and Jesus. Despite his defeat, Satan retained the ability to converse with God and used this opportunity to remind Him on a continuous basis that men were sinful creatures. Christ came and successfully made a sacrifice of Himself for the sins of mankind. As Christ returned triumphantly to sit at the Father's right hand Satan attempted to seize control of Heaven. Michael and the other righteous angels stood their ground and refused to join Satan and his evil followers in their rebellion. At last Satan had no choice but to leave Heaven for good. After what Christ did God could now be a little more discerning about who was allowed into Heaven. "*And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life*" (Revelation 21:27). This passage tells us quite clearly that no unrighteous person will be allowed into Heaven. This meant that Satan and the other rebels had to go. This is the second fall, the one referred to here in Revelation, that occurred as a result of the war.

The fact that Satan "*accused them before our God day and night*" shows his determination and perseverance in trying to bring man down. He knows that he has lost the war, so he is going to try to win as many small battles as possible. After all, we should not really expect Satan to be a gracious loser.

12:11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

The first thing we need to do to understand this verse is to determine who "they" refers to. Since this verse begins with the conjunction "and" we can see that it is a continuance of the previous verse. At the end of the last verse the topic of consideration was "*our brethren*." We do not know exactly who is talking, but it is a voice from Heaven, therefore it must be a heavenly being, most likely an angel. Who would be considered the brethren of the inhabitants of Heaven? Men faithful to God certainly would. Those who have overcome Satan through the blood of Christ, which we have already seen washes away the sins of man. Therefore, this verse speaks of men who have overcome Satan through the blood of Christ.

Through "*the word of their testimony*." This simply refers to the gospel, or good news, of Christ. "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth*" (Romans 1:16). It is through obedience to the gospel that men can contact the blood of Christ, and therein receive forgiveness of their sins, thereby overcoming Satan.

"*And they loved not their lives unto the death*," means that these men were more concerned about obeying God than they were about the preservation of their own lives. They were ready and willing to die for God if and when it came to that. As the apostle Peter said, "*We ought to obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29). God's will is often in conflict with man's laws and ordinances and will often cause His servants to be in opposition to secular governments. This conflict can sometimes lead to death for the faithful, if they refuse to forsake their faith. But this is exactly what God expects of His servants. "*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*" (Revelation 2:10). A death for the Lord is not by any means an empty death, but is the door way to glory.

12:12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

The casting down of Satan was cause for great celebration among the inhabitants of Heaven. Not that they enjoyed seeing anyone lost to sin, but since Satan made his own choice to become evil he did not deserve a place in Heaven any longer. Therefore it was a joyous thing for them to see him removed from Heaven. There can be little doubt that the righteous angels did not like Satan's continued presence in Heaven after he had already rebelled against God.

The result for mankind when Satan was cast down to the earth, however, was somewhat different than for the angels. This vile and evil angel, was cast down from Heaven and permanently banished. He was sent to dwell among men and can only hope to influence them to turn against God. The problem is that Satan is very angry about

being cast out of Heaven. Since he can not get back into Heaven anymore, the only way he has to vent his wrath toward God is against mankind. This is why a “woe” is pronounced for the *“inhabitants of the earth and of the sea.”* The reason that both earth and sea are mentioned is to let us know that there will be no place to hide from Satan’s wrath. Satan does not know exactly how long he has since no one except God knows when the end will come. *“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father”* (Mark 13:32). Certainly, he does have a good idea of about how much time he has; and he knows it is not long. As a result, he is bent on doing as much damage as quickly as he can. Prior to Christ’s successful mission and triumphant return to Heaven, I believe Satan thought he actually had a chance of winning. Now he realizes that he has lost and he is very angry about it. Since he can not take his vengeance out on God, man finds himself receiving the brunt of Satan’s rage and fury.

12:13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child.

Satan’s persecution of the righteous began way back in the Garden of Eden. Satan was cast down from his position as an anointed cherub into the earth. As soon as he got his first opportunity he began to try to deceive mankind, and he has continually persecuted God’s people ever since. The seven headed beast that was introduced a few verses ago, and which will occupy center stage in the next chapter, is a representation of Satan’s persecution of the woman throughout the ages. Satan has sought to derail God’s plans all along the way. In the days of Noah he had succeeded in deceiving the entire population of the earth, except Noah (and possibly his family). God cleansed the earth of Satan’s evil and started over repopulating the earth with Noah’s descendants. Then God chose for Himself the descendants of Abraham’s grandson to be His people. His purpose in selecting them was to bring the Messiah into the world to save mankind from their sins. Satan resisted at every turn and the story of the Children of Israel, God’s wife, is a very tortured journey for almost two-thousand years of good versus evil. God was trying to prepare this people to bring forth the redeemer, while Satan was trying to draw them away from God completely. Certainly the majority followed Satan’s evil ways, but as the book of acts demonstrates there were still many who were righteous and prepared to accept the Messiah when He came. In addition to trying to draw God’s people away with evil, Satan has also sought to use powerful nations and powers to destroy God’s people. The seven powers he has used to try to kill the woman are all included in the seven headed beast.

12:14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

This is now the fourth time that we see reference to the 1,260 year period. This time the length of the period is not quite as easy to understand as before. In prophesy a “time” is synonymous with a year. This can be seen by its usage in Daniel 4:16. *“Let his heart be changed from man’s, and let a beast’s heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him.”* This prophesy, concerning Nebuchadnezzar, was dealing with something which would happen to him for a period of seven years, but in the verse it is expressed as *“seven times.”* It is used the same way here in Revelation.

Therefore, we have a year, years (two), and one-half year. This is a total of three and one half years. The question could be raised as to how we know “times” means two years and not three or four years. We could technically say that any number greater than one would fit, but then it becomes a matter of rationale. What rationale could be offered for saying that it should be five instead of three? Absolutely none. The only logical choice, then, is two. Two is the logical choice because it is the first number which will fit our criterion and since we have no basis for going to any higher number, we have to stick with it.

The next question to answer is how long is three and one-half prophetic years? Since each month had thirty days a year has twelve months, a year would be 360 days. This give us 360 days, 720 days and 180 days, or a total of 1,260 days. Indeed when we use this number we find that it agrees perfectly with the other four accounts. $3\frac{1}{2}$ years is exactly 1,260 days, which is what we were expecting to find.

The two wings which the woman was given simply represents her ability to escape the persecution of Satan. A creature which possesses the ability to fly like an eagle has tremendous mobility. It can soar effortlessly to escape

danger. God will make sure that His Church is safe and that all of its needs are met. He will make sure she is able to elude Satan and will have a place to hide during the 1,260 year period that she must be in the wilderness. “*She is nourished...from the face of the serpent,*” again lets us know that God will care for His Church, and keep it safe from the wrath of Satan, even though he is looking very hard for her.

12:15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood.

We have already seen that Satan is very angry and desirous to persecute the Lord’s Church. Here we are told that he “*cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman.*” What was this flood? The key is that it came from Satan’s mouth. This gives us the indication that he is using ideas and doctrines to try to accomplish his goals. Satan became the author of many false doctrines which swept the world of Christianity. His hope was that eventually everyone would become caught up in these doctrines and the Lord’s Church would disappear in the deluge. These doctrines overspread the earth like a flood of water and caused most men to leave the Bible in favor of the doctrines of men. It is no wonder that Jesus and His inspired apostles warned so strongly against false teachers; they knew what was coming. Jesus said “*For false Christs and false prophets shall rise, and shall shew signs and wonders, to seduce, if it were possible, even the elect*” (Mark 13:22). This is exactly what Satan tried to do.

12:16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

The flood of false doctrine failed to accomplish Satan’s mission. “*The earth opened up her mouth, and swallowed up the flood.*” The idea expressed here is that the false doctrines were not able to reach all of the small rural villages and towns. By the fourth century, most towns of any size would either have a bishop in it or else one from a larger town would preside over it. There were just so many small towns isolated towns, however, that it was nearly impossible for every single one to fall under the sway of Roman Catholicism, which became the dominant false doctrine. The vast expanse of territory over which Christianity had spread before the wholesale corruption set in, insured that pockets of people would be left who still respected the Bible and followed its teachings. The first few centuries of Catholic domination were fairly kind to those who held beliefs opposed to Rome. However, as Satan realized that his plan was failing, he knew he must try a different approach, and so he turned to persecution.

12:17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

We see now that when Satan realizes that the spread of false doctrine is not going to be sufficient to destroy the Church, he makes war against it. This represents extreme persecution and oppression. It is not that these things had been absent in the past, but now this is Satan’s primary tool in trying to eradicate the Church. He makes war with the Church through the agency of the Catholics who were very brutal in their attempts to suppress belief in the teachings of the Bible. History bears out very well that the Catholics were more or less tolerant of other beliefs for several centuries. However, beginning around the twelfth century, they began a policy of violent suppression of others who held “heretical” views. This coincides with the idea that Satan first used false doctrine and then later persecution to try to destroy the Church. Thus the idea that the “*flood*” in verse fifteen has reference to false doctrines is confirmed.

“During the first millennium of the church, execution for doctrinal deviation was rare. In A.D. 385 at Trier, Germany, bishops put to death Priscillian and his followers for doubting the Trinity and the Resurrection. At Alexandria in 415, the great woman scientist Hypatia, head of the Alexandrian Library, was beaten to death by monks and other followers of St. Cyril, who viewed her science much as the church later viewed Galileo’s. At Constantinople around 550, the Byzantine Emperor Justinian killed multitudes of non-conformists to impose Christian orthodoxy. Otherwise heresy was a minor issue.

After the turn of the millennium, a few persecutions occurred. King Robert the Pious burned thirteen heretics at Orleans in 1022. At Goslar, Germany, a community of Christians—deviants whose beliefs made them unwilling to kill chickens—were convicted of heresy and hanged in 1051. In 1141, priest Peter

Abelard was sentenced to life imprisonment because he listed church contradictions in a book titled *Yes and No*. Then, in the 1200s, a storm of heretic-hunting burst upon Europe.”¹⁹⁶

“Medieval society was monolithic in religion; religious pluralism was not admitted. In the early medieval period, church and crown were generally tolerant of diversity of religious persuasion. Heresy was not approved, but neither was it persecuted. By the late 12th century, however, Christendom had become a closed, sensitive society. It became suspicious of religious thought (for example, Jewish and Albigensian) that was at variance with the common faith of Christendom. Aberrations were thus regarded as a threat to church, realm, and society itself. Hence the Inquisition was established by Emperor Frederick II and Pope Gregory IX to prosecute and persecute religious dissenters.”¹⁹⁷

To summarize, for the first several centuries after the Catholics achieved supremacy in the sixth century, persecution was not very widespread. This is the period when Satan was attempting to carry away the Church in a flood of false doctrines. For all practical purposes the entire Western world was Catholic, and it would not be hard to believe that eventually the last few pockets of resistance would die out. This, however, did not happen. There was always a small segment of people who held to the Bible’s teachings and rejected Rome’s doctrines of devils. As a result, Satan finally decided he would have to step up his campaign to eradicate the Church. This is when he began his “*war with the remnant of her seed*.” This began around the twelfth century and lasted until Rome’s political power was taken away in the French Revolution.

“*The remnant of her seed*.” The fact that he mentions the remnant shows us that the man child born in verse five is not under consideration here. That child was Jesus and He is now passed from the scene. The woman has apparently given birth to other children in the meantime, which we have thus far not been told about. Who are these children? Remember that the woman is the Lord’s Church? Who are the “children” of the Church, and the brothers and sisters of Christ?

Jesus once said “*For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother*” (Matthew 12:50). Thus Christians are the brothers and sisters of Christ, and are the remnant of the woman’s seed. A person becomes a child of the woman by being reborn spiritually. Jesus said “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*” (John 3:3). The kingdom of God is the Church, so if a man is not born again he is not a member of the Church. The apostle Paul also illustrated this point. “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (II Corinthians 5:17). When a person is reborn into Christ he becomes a Child of God, and of the woman, the Church. The way someone is born into Christ and the Church is through baptism. “*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ*” (Galatians 3:27). Thus from all of this we see that the remnant continues to change as Christians die and others are added through baptism.

This remnant against which Satan is making war, is not just anyone who claims to be a Christian, but those who “*keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ*.” The testimony of Christ is simply the gospel of Christ. We can see that Satan is only concerned with those who actually keep the commandments of God. Many people profess Christianity, but are following a false doctrine, which has its origins with Satan. He is not concerned with these people because he already has them in his corner. He is concerned with those who are on a course for Heaven. Since Satan has been cast out he does not want anyone else to be able to enjoy the pleasures of Heaven if he can not.

¹⁹⁶ James A. Haught, *Holy Horrors: An Illustrated History of Religious Murder and Madness*, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1990), pp. 53-4.

¹⁹⁷ *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “Catholic Church.”

Chapter Thirteen

The Two Beasts

In chapter thirteen we will be told many details about the “beast” which we have only seen briefly in the past. We should always keep in mind that Satan is behind this beast and all of its evil deeds. The purpose of chapter twelve was to show us the conflict between Satan and God’s people. Chapter thirteen will now tell us who Satan used in his persecution of God’s people.

13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.

John said he was standing “*upon the sand of the sea.*” We should keep in mind that John is in Heaven, and that all of the visions he is seeing are also in Heaven. John is not actually standing on the shore of a sea upon the earth, but his vision makes it seem to him like he is. While standing on the seashore, John sees a horrible and loathsome creature rise from the sea. The significance of it rising out of the sea, is that this shows it is to have an effect over a very large area of the world. It did not just impact a small land area, but since it comes from the sea, it has access to many lands and nations.

This beast had “*seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns.*” When we saw this beast in chapter twelve, we noticed that it had a crown upon each of its seven heads. There we were simply looking at the beast as a whole, and were not concentrating on any particular head. Now, however, the time of the first six heads has come and gone and we are going to concentrate on the seventh and final head. The seventh head will be our topic of discussion for the next several chapters.

The heads represent world powers that have been used by Satan against God’s people. The first six have now fallen, and the seventh is just coming into power. Its power is upheld by the ten horns, which have now received power. These ten horns are ten earthly kingdoms, and the fact that they have crowns on them shows that they have now received power.

We will mention here who the seven heads are, but will defer any further discussion of them until chapter seventeen, where more details are given. The seven heads in chronological order are: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the papacy. Again, this will be seen more clearly in chapter seventeen.

“*Upon his heads the name of blasphemy.*” All of these seven powers have shown their disdain for God. Egypt held God’s people as slaves, and for a long while refused to allow them to go free. They had no respect for the God of the Hebrews who sent two messengers, Moses and Aaron, asking for the release of His people. It was not until God had inflicted severe hardships on Egypt that Pharaoh finally relented and allowed the Children of Israel to leave.

In the eighth century B.C the Assyrians came into the Promised Land, destroyed everything in their sight, and carried away the northern ten tribes of Israel into captivity. Babylon then came in during the sixth century B.C. and took the remaining two tribes of Judah into captivity. Both Medo-Persia and Greece controlled Palestine and ruled

over God's people. Rome likewise controlled the land, even in the time of Christ, eventually destroying Jerusalem in A.D. 70. After the establishment of the Church, Rome persecuted Christianity intermittently for almost 300 years. The worst, however, was yet to come. For 1,260 years the papacy persecuted and oppressed the Church unlike anything in the past. Each of these seven heads afflicted God's people in their own way. Each showed a great lack of respect for God and in their actions they blasphemed the name of God. Thus each head had the name of blasphemy written on it.

13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.

Now John gives us a little more information about this beast which he saw rise from the sea. It bears similarities to a leopard, a bear, and a lion. The prophet Daniel described a very similar thing in his prophesy. *“And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things”* (Daniel 7:3-8).

These four beasts Daniel describes are the empires of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The reason he does not mention Egypt and Assyria is that they have already fallen by the time of this prophesy. Babylon is pictured as a lion, which shows strength and ferocity, and indeed the Babylonians were great conquerors. They overthrew the Assyrians, taking control of their empire, and even extended it in some places. Most notably they extended their dominions by their deeper penetrations into the area of Palestine, where they captured the remaining two tribes of the Children of Israel. This lion is pictured with the wings of an eagle which shows its ability to cover large areas swiftly and easily. Babylon did indeed control a very extensive empire. Next we notice that this lion was made to stand erect and a man's heart was given to it. This shows the civilized and intellectual nature of the Babylonians. They are probably best remembered for the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, which was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. But their accomplishments in other areas, most notably astronomy and mathematics, were also very impressive. They stood out among their contemporaries in the advanced nature of their civilization.

The second beast Daniel saw had the appearance of a bear; this is the Medo-Persian Empire. A bear represents great strength and raw power, and this did characterize their empire well. This empire has a hyphenated name because the Empire was actually comprised of two separate groups, the Medes and the Persians. The fact that Daniel sees the bear raise *“up itself on one side,”* denotes the dominance of one of these groups over the other. The Medes had more of an established history of strength, but it was the Persians who came to dominate the Empire.

The third beast had the appearance of a leopard; this is the kingdom of Greece. It is also sometimes referred to as Macedonia, after its first king Philip of Macedon. While a leopard is not physically as strong as a lion or a bear, it is much swifter. This was the outstanding characteristic of the forces led by the second king, Philip's son, Alexander the Great. In only twelve years he conquered all of the territory belonging to the Medo-Persian Empire and brought it under his control. This beast is also pictured with four wings and four heads which denotes the subsequent breakup of the Empire into four parts soon after Alexander's death.

The fourth beast is *“dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.”* It is so awful looking that Daniel does not even try to ascribe the characteristics of any animal to it. This is a picture of the Roman Empire; both phases of it, imperial and papal. *“It had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.”* This shows the very impressive strength of this Empire. It subdued and controlled everything around it, nothing could stand in its way. The Roman Empire is the largest, strongest, and longest-lasting empire the world has ever seen. But we also notice that *“it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it.”* This has reference to papal

Rome. It was not strictly a secular kingdom, as all the others had been, but was a religious empire as well. We also notice the ten horns, and this is how we know all ten of the horns were on the seventh head, and not distributed among all seven heads. The little horn which came up among the other ten is the papacy. This little horn will be discussed further in verse six.

After seeing these things, Daniel went to the angel who was talking with him, and asked him to explain these visions. *“I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever”* (Daniel 7:17-18).

Here the four beasts are identified as kings, a term which is quite often used to represent, not just a particular man, but an entire kingdom. However, these kingdoms will not stand, they will eventually be out done by the Kingdom of God. As the prophet Isaiah said, *“It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it”* (Isaiah 2:2). The Lord’s Kingdom is not a secular one, but nonetheless, it has become the most long-lived in history. Its influence is still felt around the world.

Daniel saw four separate beasts, whereas John sees but one which combines all the attributes of those four individuals. It is interesting to note the various parts of the beast which are related to the three animals. He was *“like unto a leopard.”* This means his overall appearance was similar to that of a leopard. A leopard’s coat is spotted to camouflage it from its intended prey. This beast is likewise camouflaged so that the world will not see it for what it really is, the tool of Satan. It can sneak up on its prey unnoticed and then pounce with great speed and overtake its unwary victims.

His feet were like those of a bear. A bear’s main weapons are his feet. He has enormous claws which can literally rip the flesh of animals from their bones. This beast possesses the destructive power of a bear. Satan’s main goal in using these kingdoms is destruction; destruction of God’s people in particular. He also has the mouth of a lion. The mouth of a lion is his most destructive feature. A lion has tremendously strong jaws and long sharp teeth. He is able to easily bite through the bones of very large animals. The lion is also known for his powerful roar. It is this roar which had earned him the title “king of the jungle.” This beast is not only out to destroy, but also to proclaim great things for itself. We saw in chapter twelve that Satan’s problem which led him to sin, was pride. That same pride is now manifested in the nations which he supports. They roar loudly proclaiming their great power and dominion. When all of these characteristics are put together we have an animal that is well camouflaged so that his true identity is difficult to discern until it is too late for the innocent victim to flee. When the animal is in position and pounces, he is equipped with the claws of a bear, and the teeth of a lion. He then roars his triumph and his superiority after making his kill.

The last thing the verse tells us is that the dragon, which is Satan, is the power behind each of these heads. He is like the puppet master pulling the strings. His goal is the annihilation of righteousness upon the earth. Satan gave his power, his seat, and his great authority to the beast with the hope that it could successfully destroy God’s plans and His people.

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

In John’s time the first five heads had already had their day and had passed from the scene. It was the sixth head, the Roman Empire, which was in power during John’s lifetime. It is this sixth head that he sees which receives what appeared to be a fatal wound, but it somehow survived. The Roman Empire “died” in A.D. 476 when Odoacer deposed Romulus Augustus I, the last official Roman emperor. The Empire continued to exist for nearly a thousand years in the East at Constantinople, but it had died in the West. It never again returned as the world empire it had once been, although it did come back with great influence and power. From the seat of the old Empire arose the Roman Catholic Church which dominated Western civilization during the Dark Ages. Thus the sixth head “came back to life” as the seventh head, spiritual Rome. Had it not been for the papacy, Rome would almost certainly have gone the way of other great cities of antiquity such as Nineveh and Babylon.

“*And all the world wondered after the beast.*” The whole world watched with wonder and amazement as the power of Rome increased, until it once again became the most important city in the world. Rome regained its place of prominence that it had enjoyed for centuries as the head of a temporal empire. The world had never seen a spiritual empire rise to such great heights, and they marveled at it.

“In A.D. 476, barbarian forces led by the Germanic general Odoacer deposed the last emperor of the West Roman Empire. Many historians use this date to mark the end of the Roman Empire in the West and the start of the Middle Ages. During the Middle Ages the influence and power of the church reached their peak.

The collapse of the West Roman Empire meant that no one power had political control in the West. Instead, all of Western Europe except Ireland, came to be ruled by barbarian kings, who were either Arians or non-Christians. Beginning with the reign of Pope Gregory the Great in 590, the church set out to create a Christian world in the West. Its chief instruments were the papacy and monasticism.

The papacy gradually replaced the empire as the center of authority in Western Europe. Ireland had been converted to Christianity in the 400^{’s}, mainly through the efforts of Saint Patrick. In 496, the king of the Franks, Clovis I, was converted. His conversion brought Gaul into the Church and checked the spread of Arian heresy there. Gaul was a huge region now occupied by Belgium, France, and part of western Germany. From the 500^{’s} to the 700^{’s}, the papacy directed the conversion of other peoples of the West. These people included the Visigoths in Spain, the Anglo-Saxons in England, and the Croats and Magyars in central Europe.

In the early 700^{’s}, Moslems, who followed the religion of Islam, conquered Spain. Also in the 700^{’s}, Viking raiders from northern Europe began to attack England and other Christian countries. The conquest of Spain and the Viking attacks greatly disrupted Western European economic, political, and social life. In the midst of these disruptions, the church stood out as the major force for unifying and civilizing the West.

Charlemagne, the greatest king of the Franks, became one of the most important persons in European as well as church history. During his reign, he laid a foundation for the organized, civilized society later built in Western Europe. This foundation resulted from the ideals that Charlemagne pursued—orderly government, religious reform, and expansion through world conquest and missionary activity.

Charlemagne involved himself deeply in church affairs and became protector of the popes. In 800, Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne emperor of the Romans, which restored the idea of the empire in the West. Charlemagne’s empire formed the basis of what became the Holy Roman Empire in 962.

Innocent III became pope in 1198. Under Innocent, papal influence over public life in Christian Europe reached its peak. He was feudal lord over much of Europe, and he was a great administrator and jurist.

Boniface VIII became pope in 1294. He tried to unify the Christian world more closely under the papacy. Boniface insisted that kings of individual nations were subject to the Holy Roman emperor and that the emperor’s power, in turn, came from the pope. In 1302, Boniface issued a bull (papal document) of immense importance. This bull, called *Unam sanctam*, stated that ‘two swords’ served the church. One sword was the spiritual power of the priests. The other was the temporal (worldly) power of rulers. The bull declared that, for salvation, every human being must be subject to the pope.”¹⁹⁸

Thus we see the resurrection of the deceased Roman Empire in the form of the papacy. In many ways the popes had more power and control over the West, than did the emperors during the height of the Empire. This resurrection of Rome was a truly remarkable event, and caught the attention of the entire world.

¹⁹⁸ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Roman Catholic Church.”

13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?

The pronoun “they” in this verse goes back to the previous verse and refers to “all the world.” The world worshipped the dragon, which is Satan, by worshipping the beast which is a work of Satan. Despite their professions of Christianity, the Roman Church was apostate, and to worship according to their doctrines was to worship Satan. “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matthew 12:30). If someone does not worship according to the biblical pattern, then their worship is not of God, but of Satan. Therefore, most worship which in name is worship of God, is actually worship of Satan.

The beast, the Roman Catholic Church, was the object of admiration and awe. People feared and respected the power and authority of the great apostate Church. Although the papacy had no army of her own, she did have the military support of the European powers. Therefore no one could make war against the papacy. No one wielded as much power during the Middle Ages as did the popes. Thus the phrases, “Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?”

13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.

The “mouth” of the Roman Catholic Church is the pope. It is not hard to show that he has spoken blasphemous things. There was the decree of Gregory I (pope from 590 to 604) which forbade the clergy to marry. This is totally without basis in the Bible, and in fact Paul predicted that such a thing would occur. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry...” (I Timothy 4:1-3a).

There is also the doctrine of papal infallibility, which teaches that in all matters of doctrine the pope cannot be wrong.

“Vatican I was called by Pope Pius IX. It opened Dec. 8, 1869, and is remembered primarily for approving the doctrine of papal infallibility. This doctrine states that the pope can commit no error when he speaks as head of the church to proclaim, in matters of faith and morals, what is to be accepted by all Roman Catholics as the teaching laid down by Jesus Christ and His apostles.”¹⁹⁹

It is certainly blasphemous to say any man is incapable of making a mistake.

Even the pope’s title is itself blasphemous.

“The pope’s full title is Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the State of Vatican City. The pope is addressed as ‘Your Holiness.’”²⁰⁰

Nothing could hardly be more blasphemous than this title. In the Bible cities did not have bishops, congregations did. The bishops in the Bible were also known as elders (Titus 1:5), overseers (Acts 20:28), and pastors (Ephesians 4:11), in addition to bishop (I Timothy 3:1). This office entitled a man to have authority in but a single congregation. In addition, one of the qualifications of a bishop was that he be “the husband of one wife” (I Timothy 3:2).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Vatican council.”

²⁰⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Pope.”

According to the Bible, the pope is not even qualified to have authority in a single congregation, let alone be the head of all churches!

“Vicar” means representative. The pope claims to hold the place of Christ here on the earth, and to have the authority to speak for Him. It is on the basis of this supposed authority that the pope claims the right to change church doctrine. But the Bible says, “*If ANY man preach ANY other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed*” (Galatians 1:9). No man has the right to change what God has ordained!

“Successor of the Prince of the Apostles.” The popes claim to be successors of Peter, who they name as the chief of the apostles and the first pope. There is not one shred of evidence to support the notion that Peter had a position of preeminence among the apostles, and there is certainly no evidence that he was the first pope! The Catholics base their claim on the following passage: “*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:18). They claim that here Christ was endowing Peter with authority as THE head of the Church.

Much of the confusion comes from the Greek words for “Peter” and “rock.” The Catholics claim that Christ said he was going to build His Church on the rock Peter. Peter comes from the Greek “petros,” which Strong’s defines as, “apparently a primary word; a (piece of) rock.”²⁰¹ The word “rock” comes from the Greek “petra,” which Strong’s defines as, “a (mass of) rock (literally or figuratively):-rock.”²⁰² The difference in the two is that petros means a small stone or a fragment of rock, while petra means a large massive rock. The rock which Christ built His Church on was much larger and stronger than Peter. This rock is easily identified from the verses preceding the one in question. As with so many misunderstandings and misinterpretations in the Bible, the primary fault lies in not examining a passage in context. “*When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, ‘Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?’ And they said, ‘Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.’ He saith unto them, ‘But whom say ye that I am?’ And Simon Peter answered and said, ‘Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*” (Matthew 16:13-18).

From the above passage we learn what gives Christ the power and authority to build a Church, namely that He is “*the Christ, the Son of the living God.*” It is this “rock” of truth that Christ will build His Church upon. It was not Peter, but what Peter said, that was the foundation for the Church. Therefore, the Catholics claim to power is invalid. This also renders invalid the title “Successor of the Prince of the Apostles.” Peter never claimed for himself any superior position among the apostles. He was at the gathering of the chief men of the Church in Acts chapter fifteen, but he definitely did not preside over the meeting. Peter also certainly was not infallible. The Apostle Paul had to confront Peter over his conduct. “*But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*” (Galatians 2:11). Would Paul have confronted “Pope Peter I” this way? Paul and Peter were equals, as were all of the apostles. Peter was not the prince of the apostles, and the popes are not his successors.

“Supreme pontiff of the Universal Church.” Pontiff means bishop or high priest. The pope has the audacity to claim to be the head of the entire Church. In the Bible no man is found who has authority in more than a single congregation. This is quite a contrast to the governmental system which Rome has devised completely without God’s authority. The Bible says that “*Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body*” (Ephesians 5:23). Yet the pope is so audacious as to claim this title for himself!

The rest of the titles denote his position of authority over the western Church, and his temporal power. He is to be “addressed as ‘your Holiness.’” Not even Christ Himself wore such a title. No man in the Bible, New Testament or Old, has ever worn such a title with God’s approval. This is indeed blasphemy. The pope seeks to exalt and almost deify himself.

²⁰¹ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #4074.”

²⁰² Ibid., s.v. “Greek #4073.”

“The word pope comes from the Latin word ‘papa’ which means father.”²⁰³ This conflicts with the Bible which says, “*call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven*” (Matthew 23:9). This verse is of course talking about calling anyone your spiritual father, not your physical father. God is the spiritual father of all Christians, and no man should be given this title. Despite the clear wording of Christ’s commandment to spiritually call no man by the title of father, all of the Catholic clergy wears this title. Such brazen effrontery and audacity is hard to believe, yet millions around the world continue to uphold this work of Satan.

“The hierarchy of Rome which has occupied so large a portion of history; which has so forced itself upon communities and nations by priestly ambition and thirst for dominion; which arrogates to itself divine supremacy, and blasphemously usurps the prerogative, titles, and sovereignty of God—to absolve from sin, to dispense pardon, and eternal blessedness or eternal damnation to the souls of men—and which had so bound the conscience and frightened it into submission to itself...”²⁰⁴

The apostle Paul prophesied of the pope and the way he would blaspheme God. “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*” (II Thessalonians 2:4). This is exactly what the pope does. He has proclaimed himself God on the earth. Can there be any doubt that the pope is the “*mouth speaking great things and blasphemies?*”

Edward Gibbon also makes an observation about the Papacy’s handling of the Holy Scriptures.

“The catholics, oppressed by royal and military force, were far superior to their adversaries in numbers and learning. With the same weapons which the Greek and Latin fathers had already provided for the Arian controversy, they repeatedly silenced or vanquished the fierce and illiterate successors of Ulphilas. The consciousness of their own superiority might have raised them above the arts and passions of religious warfare. Yet, instead of assuming such honourable pride, the orthodox theologians were tempted, by the assurance of impunity, to compose fictions which must be stigmatised with the epithets of fraud and forgery. They ascribed their own polemical works to the most venerable names of Christian antiquity; the characters of Athanasius and Augustin were awkwardly personated by Vigilius and his disciples; and the famous creed, which so clearly expounds the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is deduced, with strong probability, from this African school. Even the Scriptures themselves were profaned by their rash and sacrilegious hands. The memorable text which asserts the unity of the THREE who bear witness in heaven is condemned by the universal silence of the orthodox fathers, ancient versions, and authentic manuscripts. It was first alleged by the catholic bishops whom Hunneric summoned to the conference of Carthage. An allegorical interpretation, in the form perhaps of a marginal note, invaded the text of the Latin Bibles which were renewed and corrected in a dark period of ten centuries. After the invention of printing, the editors of the Greek Testament yielded to their own prejudices, or those of the times; and the pious fraud, which was embraced with equal zeal at Rome and at Geneva, has been infinitely multiplied in every country and every language of modern Europe.”²⁰⁵

“*Power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.*” This is the fifth and final occurrence of the 1,260 year period in Revelation. Table VIII gives a synopsis of the occurrences, which we will now discuss along with the endpoints of this period.

²⁰³ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Pope.”

²⁰⁴ *Pope or President? Facts for Americans*, (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1977), p. 9.

²⁰⁵ Gibbon, vol. II, 1963, pp. 375-7.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 1,260 YEAR PERIOD		
Event	Duration	Reference
Holy City trodden under foot	42 months	11:2
Two witnesses will prophesy	1,260 days	11:3
Woman hiding in the wilderness	1,260 days	12:6
Woman hiding in the wilderness	T, T ^s , ½ T	12:14
Beast will continue	42 months	13:5

Table VIII

The Holy City and the Woman are both representations of the Church. The Church will be forced to go into hiding because of the persecution of the beast during the time his power continues. Also during this time the two witnesses, the Old and New Testaments will prophesy in sackcloth. All of these things will be for 1,260 years. This period began in A.D. 533 when Pope John II was finally recognized as the head of the entire Christian Church by Emperor Justinian I.

“The Emperor’s letter to the Pope, *Reddentes honorem* (June 6, 533), was incorporated in the Code of Justinian together with the Pope’s reply. It contains remarkably deferential language with respect to the Apostolic See, acknowledged as ‘the head of all the Churches.’ The Emperor is anxious to inform them of ‘all that concerns the state of the Church.’ ...references to ‘the authority of your see’ that he is eager to increase and his fulsome praise of Rome as the center of unity and criterion of orthodoxy...”²⁰⁶

The letter mentioned above is included below.

“With honor to the Apostolic See, and to your Holiness, which is, and always has been remembered in Our prayers, both now and formerly, and honoring your happiness, as is proper in the case of one who is considered as a father, We hasten to bring to the knowledge of Your Holiness everything relating to the condition of the Church, as We have always had the greatest desire to preserve the unity of your Apostolic See, and the condition of the Holy Churches of God, as they exist at the present time, that they may remain without disturbance or opposition. Therefore, We have exerted Ourselves to unite all the priests of the East and subject them to the See of Your Holiness, and hence the questions which have at present arisen, although they are manifest and free from doubt, and according to the doctrines of your Apostolic See, are constantly firmly observed and preached by all priests, We have still considered it necessary that they should be brought to the attention of Your Holiness. For we do not suffer anything which has reference to the state of the Church, even though what causes difficulty may be clear and free from doubt, to be discussed without being brought to the notice of Your Holiness, because you are the head of all the Holy Churches, for We shall exert Ourselves in every way (as has already been stated), to increase the honor and authority of your See.”²⁰⁷

Another source sums up the relationship of Justinian to the Bishop of Rome this way.

“During Justinian’s reign the see of Rome enjoyed supreme Church authority. In his letters to the bishop of Rome, Justinian addressed him as ‘Pope,’ ‘Pope of Rome,’ ‘Apostolic father,’ ‘Pope and Patriarch,’ etc., and the title of pope was applied exclusively to the bishop of Rome. In one epistle the Emperor addressed the Pope as the ‘head of all holy churches’ (*caput omnium sanctarum ecclesiarum*), and in one of his Novels he definitely stated that ‘the most blessed see of the archbishop of Constantinople, the New Rome, ranks second after the most holy apostolic see of Old Rome.’”²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, s.v. “John II, Pope.”

²⁰⁷ Scott, 1932, pp. 11-2.

²⁰⁸ *History of the Byzantine Empire: 324-1453*, (Madison, WS: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), p. 149.

This proclamation is very important because for a long time Rome and Constantinople had been vying for supremacy within Christendom. Finally, the emperor gives the nod to Rome, which legitimizes the pope's claim to authority. History also points out that John was likewise considered to be the head of the Church by the leaders of the West.

“In the sixth century men looked to the popes not only for guidance in spiritual matters but for help in their bodily necessities. The famous Cassiodorus, the Roman minister of Theodoric the Ostrogoth, thus wrote to John II,... : ‘You are the chief of the Christian people; with the name of “father” you direct everything. You, to whom its guardianship has been entrusted, must look to the safety of the people. We have to regulate some things, but you everything. Your first concern indeed is to give spiritual food to your flock, but you cannot neglect their temporal needs. For as man is made up of soul and body, so it is the business of a good father to nourish them both.’”²⁰⁹

Another interesting fact about John is that he was the first man who changed his name after he was elected pope.

“When the Roman priest Mercurius was finally elected, he took the name of John II, thus becoming the first pope to change his name.”²¹⁰

Although this really proves nothing, it is interesting to note that something which is such an integral part of the papacy began with the man who was the first real pope.

The 1,260 year period ended on August 10, 1793. The French Revolution began in 1789, with many people giving July 14, the day the Bastille was stormed, as its official beginning. For over three years France was ruled by the Assembly, with Louis XVI reduced to little more than a figurehead. Finally on September 22, 1792, the Committee replaced the Assembly. This was also the first day of the French Republic.

A couple of years later the Gregorian calendar was replaced in France by the republican calendar, which started counting, not from the birth of Christ, but from the establishment of the French Republic. At that time France was the most powerful nation in Europe. For France to reject Catholicism was a tremendous blow to the power and influence of the papacy. The papacy has never been the same since the French Revolution.

Before the Republic was established in France, the anti-Catholic sentiment had been growing but was not well organized. It was less than a year after the emergence of the Republic that Christianity was replaced by the worship of Reason as the national religion of France. This began the three and one-half year period where the two witnesses lay dead in the streets. This three and one half year period is very important in that it helps us to confirm the endpoint of the 1,260 year period with certainty. The 3½ year period was easily identified, and found to last from August 10, 1793, to February 19, 1797.

Now we must look back at chapter eleven again. Verse seven says “*And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them.*” The key here is that they will be “killed” after they have finished their testimony. The testimony is that referred to in verse three of chapter eleven. “*And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*” The point is that the three and one-half year period was to follow the 1,260 year period. Therefore the end of the 1,260 year period had to come on August 10, 1793. From 533 to 1793 we have exactly 1,260 years precisely what Revelation predicted.

We can now go back to Daniel's prophecies once again, and find more details predicted about the papacy. The four creatures that Daniel saw were certainly fierce looking, but the fourth one was by far the most dreadful judging from

²⁰⁹ Horace K. Mann, Rev., *The Lives of the Popes in the Early Middle Ages: Volume I (The Popes Under the Lombard Rule: St. Gregory I (The Great) to Leo III: Part I – 590-657).*, (St. Louis, MO: B. Herder Book Company, 1925), p. 193-4.

²¹⁰ *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, 1967, s.v. “John II, Pope.”

Daniel's description. Therefore it is not surprising that he specifically asked the angel about that one. *"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet"* (Daniel 7:19). The angel then told Daniel that *"The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces"* (Daniel 7:23). This fourth kingdom, Rome, is said to be diverse, or different, from all other kingdoms. This is true in the sense that in the later years it was a spiritual kingdom. It began as the Roman Empire which was purely secular, but after the Empire fell, the papacy sprung from its ashes. The papacy was vastly different from any other kingdom which had ever existed. Between the two they definitely did *"devour the whole earth, and...tread it down, and break it in pieces."* Combined, they held sway over the Western world for over two-thousand years.

Next, Daniel asked about the horns which he saw on this dreadful beast. *"And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows"* (Daniel 7:20). In his reply the angel explained to Daniel the meaning of these ten horns. *"And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time"* (Daniel 7:24-25).

First we see the ten horns, which are said to represent kingdoms, and then we see the little horn rise up in the midst of the ten. This horn *"had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things."* This is speaking of the papacy which arose amid the political disarray of Western Europe in the sixth century. The confusion of the time gave the pope an advantage which he used to become *"more stout than his fellows."* This means that the papacy came to be the dominant power in Europe. It even says that three kingdoms fell before her. We will now attempt to discover the identity of these ten kingdoms, and the three which fell before the papacy.

The first order of business is to establish the pertinent criteria for our search. We need to define the characteristics that a kingdom must have in order to qualify as one of the ten.

1. It must be an independent or sovereign kingdom. In other words it is not simply a province or colony of some greater power.
2. It must possess at least a moderate measure of power or influence in the area throughout which Christianity has spread. The papacy's influence, to some extent, would be felt in all Christendom, therefore any kingdom which affected Christendom would also affect the papacy. This would qualify it to be considered as one of the kingdoms among which the papacy arose.
3. The first two criteria must have been met simultaneously during the time period in question.
4. All ten kingdoms must have existed at the same time.
5. All of the nations must have already been in existence when the papacy began. As Daniel 7:8 shows us *"I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn."* Obviously these ten kingdoms were firmly established when the papacy rose up among them.

Next we need to define the period of time when these kingdoms are to have existed. This can be done by understanding what is meant by the statement *"there came up among them."* It could be interpreted to mean the time when the earliest roots of the papacy began to appear. This would take us back to at least the second century, and the only real kingdom of any consequence at that time was the Roman Empire. The logical choice is 533, the date of the 'official' beginning of the papacy. It was here, with Justinian's recognition of John II, that the real influence of the papacy outside Italy began. However, it would take quite some time before the papacy would become *"more stout than his fellows"* (Daniel 7:20).

We can take, then, 533 as our target date and search for ten kingdoms that held sway over Christendom in A.D. 533 and the preceding decades. The wording in Daniel suggests that these kingdoms were in place as the papacy reached maturity in A.D. 533. We needn't really bother with naming a date to begin this period during which these kingdoms

must have existed. The Bible gives us no indication as to how long this period was to have been, and it would not be appropriate for us to simply guess. All that really matters is that they still existed in 533 A.D.

I will first admit that it may not be readily apparent how to begin searching for these kingdoms. The approach I took was to study the history of the later Roman Empire and find those groups who had moved into the outlying areas of the Empire in her latter days. Then by studying the history of these groups I discovered the names of still other groups with whom they interacted in some way. By doing this I found all of the major and most of the minor groups of people who occupied Christendom during any of the time between A.D. 400 and A.D. 600. The names that I uncovered, twenty-eight in all, are as follows: Avars, Alamanni, Alani (Alans), Angles, Bavarians, Britons, Bulgarians, Burgundians, Franks, Frisians, Heruli, Huns, Jutes, Langobardi (Lombardy), Ostrogoths (East Goths), Picts, Ravenna, Rome, Saracens (Arabs), Sarmatae, Saxons, Scots, Slavs, Suevi (Suabi or Suebi), Thuringi, Turks, Vandals, and Visigoths (West Goths).

We would hope that out of this group, when their histories are closely examined, that ten would emerge who precisely fit our criteria. You may notice that not every one of the candidates is actually a kingdom, but that some are only cities. I feel justified in doing this because they were not ordinary cities, but were centers of great political power and influence, which is, after all, exactly what we are searching for.

Now all that remains to be done is to compare the history of each group with our list of necessary characteristics and see who matches and who does not. We will proceed in the order in which they are listed, which is, of course, alphabetically.

Avars

“Avars of Europe, sometimes called ‘pseudo-Avars,’ were probably a Turkish tribe, named Uigurs, who were subjected by the true Avars—a nation akin to the Huns, perhaps identical with the Yüan-Yüan, when the latter were driven out of Central Asia about A.D. 461. The Avar confederation dominated the Volga steppes till 555, when the Avars were defeated and almost annihilated by the Turks.”²¹¹

The “Volga steppes” referred to here is a region of Europe which lies within present-day Russia. They had a strong kingdom in this area for nearly 100 years, including twenty-two years after the official beginning of the papacy, therefore they meet our criteria.

Alamanni

“Early in the 5th century the Alamanni crossed the Rhine and conquered and settled Alsace and a large part of Switzerland. In A.D. 495 they were conquered by Clovis, from which time they formed part of the Frankish dominions.”²¹²

Clearly, since they were subjugated in 495, the Alamanni do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Alani (Alans)

“First met with North of the Caspian (c. 1st century A.D.) spreading into the steppes of Russia, the Alani made incursions into both the Danubian and Caucasian provinces of the Roman empire. By the Huns they were cut into two portions, of which the western joined the Germanic nations in their invasion of southern Europe, and, following the fortunes of the Vandals, disappeared in North Africa. Those of the eastern

²¹¹ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Avars.”

²¹² *Ibid.*, s.v. “Alamanni.”

division, though dispersed about the steppes until late mediaeval times, were forced by fresh invading hordes into the Caucasus, where they remain as the Ossetes.”²¹³

The Alans never comprised a kingdom so they too fail to meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Angles

“Angles made up one of the three Germanic tribes that invaded Britain during the A.D. 400’s and 500’s. The other two tribes were the Jutes and Saxons, to whom the Angles were closely related. The invaders established small kingdoms, some of which lasted until the Norman Conquest in 1066.”²¹⁴

The Angles established several small kingdoms, but never established anything large enough for us to consider. Therefore they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Bavarians

“The earliest known inhabitants of the district afterwards called Bavaria were a people, probably Celtic, who were subdued by the Romans just before the opening of the Christian era, their land being included in the province of Raetia. The cities of Augsburg, Regensburg, and Passau were originally Roman colonies. During the 5th century it was ravaged by the troops of Odoacer and, after being almost depopulated, was occupied by tribes who, pushing along the valley of the Danube, settled there between A.D. 488 and 520. They were, like the Franks, composed of a mixture of Teutonic tribes and were known as *Bawarii* or *Baiuwarii*, words derived most probably from *Baya* and given to them because they came from *Baya-Hemum* or *Bohemia*. They are first mentioned in a Frankish document of 520. Their country was bounded by the Enns, the Danube, the Lech, and the Alps. The Bavarians soon came under the dominions of the Franks, and were ruled from 555 to 578 by dukes of the Agilolfing family, possibly of Frankish descent.”²¹⁵

The Bavarians never comprised an independent kingdom so they also fail to meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Britons

“Britons, name applied to the inhabitants of Britain before the Teutonic invasions by the Angles and Saxons in the 5th and 6th centuries A.D.”²¹⁶

The Britons were never more than a collection of independent tribes at any time, and then were subdued by the Angles and Saxons before the beginning of the papacy. Therefore, they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Bulgarians

“A people called the Thracians established the first civilization in what is now Bulgaria about 3,000 years ago. The region was part of the Roman Empire from the A.D. 40’s to 395. Slavs from what are now

²¹³ Ibid., s.v. “Alani.”

²¹⁴ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Angles.”

²¹⁵ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Bavaria.”

²¹⁶ *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Britons.”

southern Poland and the Soviet Union settled in the territory during the 500's. In the 600's, nomadic Bulgar tribes from central Asia migrated to the region. In time, the Bulgars blended with the Slavic people. The first Bulgarian Kingdom was established in 681. It gradually became the most powerful state in the Balkans."²¹⁷

The Bulgarians did eventually form a powerful kingdom after migrating westward from Asia, but it was too late for our purposes. Therefore they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Burgundians

"In consequence of wars against the Alamanni, in which the latter had the advantage, the Burgundians, after having taken part in the great invasion of Radagaisus in 407, were obliged in 411 to take refuge in Gaul, under the leadership of their chief Gundicar. As allies of the Romans, they established themselves in certain cantons of the Sequani and of upper Germany, receiving a part of the land, houses and serfs that belonged to the inhabitants. Thus was founded the first kingdom of Burgundy, the boundaries of which were widened at times by Gundicar and his son Gunderic; its chief towns being Vienne, Lyons, Besancon, Geneva, Autun, and Mâcon. Gundibald (d. 516), grandson of Gunderic, is famous for his codification of the Burgundian law known consequently as *Lex Gundobada*, in French *Loi Gombette*. His son, Sigismund, who was canonized by the Church, founded the abbey of St. Maurice at Agaunum. But, incited thereto by Clotilda, the daughter of Chilperic (a brother of Gundibald, and assassinated by him), the Merovingian kings attacked Burgundy. An attempt made in 524 by Clodomer was unsuccessful; but in 534 Clotaire (Chlothachar) and his brothers possessed themselves of the lands of Gundimar, brother and successor of Sigismund, and divided them between them. In 561 the kingdom of Burgundy was reconstructed by Guntram, son of Clotaire I., and until 613 it formed a separate State under the government of a prince of the Merovingian family."²¹⁸

Although the Burgundian kingdom was interrupted from 534 to 561, it otherwise was a powerful kingdom for nearly 200 years. This certainly meets our criteria, so Burgundy is the second kingdom we have identified.

Franks

"These Ripuarians (Franks) had settled in the 5th century on the left bank of the Rhine, but their progress was slow. It was not until the middle of the century that they occupied Cologne, which was not permanently in their possession until 463. The Ripuarians subsequently occupied all the country from Cologne to Trier. Aix-la-Chapelle, Bonn and Zülpich were their principal centres, and they even advanced southward as far as Metz, which appears to have resisted their attacks. The Roman civilization and the Latin language disappeared from the countries which they occupied; indeed it seems that the actual boundaries of the German and French languages nearly coincide with those of their dominion. In their progress southward the Ripuarians encountered the Alamanni, who, already masters of Alsace, were endeavoring to extend their conquests in all directions. The Ripuarians long remained allies of Clovis, the son of their king fighting under him at Vouillé in 507. Ultimately, however, Clovis destroyed the Ripuarian dynasty and was himself chosen king of this people. Thus the Salian Franks united under their rule all the Franks on the left bank of the Rhine. During the reigns of Clovis' sons they again turned their eyes on Germany, and imposed their suzerainty upon the Franks on the right bank. This country, north of the Main and the first residence of the Franks, then received the name of *Francia Orientalis*, and became the origin of one of the duchies into which Germany was divided in the 10th century—the duchy of Franconia (Franken)."²¹⁹

²¹⁷ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. "Bulgaria."

²¹⁸ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. "Burgundy."

The Franks established one of the strongest kingdoms to exist in Europe since the Roman Empire, and since it was extant during the time period in question they certainly meet our criteria and are the third kingdom we have identified.

Frisians

“Frisians, a people who in the first century of our era were found by the Romans in occupation of the coast lands stretching from the mouth of the Scheldt to that of the Ems. The first historical notices of the Frisians are found in the *Annals* of Tacitus.

In connection with the movements of the migration period the Frisians are hardly ever mentioned, though some of them are said to have surrendered to the Roman prince Constantius about the year 293. About the year 520 the Frisians are said to have joined the Frankish prince Theodberht in destroying a piratical expedition which had sailed up the Rhine under Chocilaicus (Hygelac), king of Gotar. Towards the end of the century they began to figure much more prominently in Frankish writings. It is probable that the Frisians were to some extent associated with the Angles and Saxons in the invasion of Britain.”²²⁰

The Frisians never comprised a kingdom, but seem to have been allied with others at various points in their history. Therefore they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Heruli

“A Teutonic tribe belonging either to the northern or the southern portions of the Jutish peninsula. In the reign of Gallienus (A.D. 260-68), they were with the Goths ravaging the coasts of the Black Sea and the Aegean. Soon afterwards, in A.D. 289, they appeared in the region about the mouth of the Rhine. During the 4th century they frequently served together with the Batavi in the Roman armies. In the 5th century the Heruli made piratical incursions in the western seas. At the same time they had a kingdom in central Europe, in or around the basin of the Elbe.

About the beginning of the 6th century they were completely overthrown in war by the Langobardi. Part of them migrated to Sweden, while others crossed the Danube and entered the Roman service, where they were frequently recorded later in connexion with the Gothic wars.”²²¹

“Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, endeavored to form a confederacy with the Thuringi, Heruli and Warni against Clovis in order to protect the Visigoths in the early years of the 6th century, but very shortly the king of the Heruli was slain by the Langobardi and their existence as an independent power came to an end.”²²²

The Heruli once had a kingdom, but it was destroyed before the beginning of the papacy, therefore they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Huns

²¹⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Franks.”

²²⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Frisians.”

²²¹ Ibid., s.v. “Heruli.”

²²² Ibid., s.v. “Germany.”

“In 445 Bleda (Attila’s brother and co-ruler) died, and two years afterward Attila, now sole ruler, undertook one of his most important expeditions against the Eastern empire; on this occasion he pushed southwards as far as Thermopylae, Gallipoli and the walls of Constantinople; peace was cheaply purchased by tripling the yearly tribute (which accordingly now stood at 2,100 pounds of gold, or £84,000 sterling) and by the payment of a heavy indemnity. In 448 again occurred various diplomatic negotiations, and especially the embassy of Maximinus, of which many curious details have been recorded by Priscus his companion. Then followed, in 451, that westward movement across the Rhine which was only arrested at last, with terrible slaughter, on the Catalaunian plains (according to common belief it is the neighborhood of the modern Châlons, but more probably at a point some 50m. to the south-east, near Mery-sur-Seine). The following year (452) that of the Italian campaign, was marked by such events as the sack of Aquileia, the destruction of the cities of Venetia, and that historical interview with Pope Leo I. which resulted in the return of Attila to Pannonia, where in 453 he died. Almost immediately after the empire he had amassed rather than consolidated fell to pieces. His too numerous sons began to quarrel about their inheritance, while Ardaric, the king of the Gepidae, was placing himself at the head of a general revolt of the dependent nations. The inevitable struggle came to a crisis near the river Netad in Pannonia, in a battle in which 30,000 Huns and their confederates, including Ellak, Attila’s eldest son, were slain. The nation, thus broken, rapidly dispersed, exactly as the White Huns did after a similar defeat about a hundred years later. One horde settled under Roman protection in Little Scythia (the Dobruja), and others in Dacia Ripensis (on the confines of Serbia and Bulgaria) or on the southern borders of Pannonia. Many, however, appear to have returned to what is now South Russia, and may perhaps have taken part in the ethnic combinations which produced the Bulgarians.”²²³

The Huns were, perhaps at one point, the strongest kingdom in Europe, even before Rome officially fell. However, this kingdom disintegrated after the death of Attila, and therefore did not survive until the time the papacy arose. Therefore, the Huns do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Jutes

“Early Germanic tribe of Denmark or northern or Rhenish Germany which, between 400 and 500 A.D., conquered southeastern Britain. Little is known of the tribe prior to their settling in Kent, parts of Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight. The people are believed to be related to the inhabitants of Jutland. Their territory bordered that of the Saxons, who with the Angles, also settled Britain and drove the Britons westward into present-day Wales.”²²⁴

Although the Jutes were independent, they never established a kingdom of any power or influence during the time period in question. Because of their isolation they had no real effect on the rest of Europe. Therefore, they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Langobardi (Lombardy)

“Shortly before this time the Langobardi appear to have taken possession of the territories formerly occupied by the Rugii whom Odoacer had overthrown in 487, a region which probably included the lower province of Lower Austria. At this time they were subject to Rodulf, king of the Heruli, who, however, took up arms against them. The result was the total defeat of the Heruli by the Langobardi under their king Tato and the death of Rodulf at some date between 493 and 508. By this time the Langobardi are said to have adopted Christianity in its Arian form. Tato was subsequently killed by his nephew Waccho. The latter reigned for 30 years though frequent attempts were made by Ildichis, a son or grandson of Tato, to recover the throne. Waccho is said to have conquered the Suabi, possibly the Bavarians, and he was also

²²³ Ibid., s.v. “Huns.”

²²⁴ *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Jutes.”

involved in strife with the Gepidae, with whom Ildichis had taken refuge. He was succeeded by his youthful son Walthari, who reigned only seven years under the guardianship of a certain Audoin. On Walthari's death (about 546?) Audoin succeeded. He also was involved in hostilities with the Gepidae whose support of Ildichis he repaid by protecting Ustrogotthus, a rival of their king Thorisind. In these quarrels both nations aimed at obtaining the support of the emperor Justinian, who, in pursuance of his policy of playing off one against the other, invited the Langobardi into Noricum and Pannonia, where they now settled."²²⁵

Clearly the Langobardi comprised a powerful kingdom as the papacy arose, and are therefore the fourth kingdom we have identified.

Ostrogoths (East Goths)

The history of the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths is intertwined so it is given together here all at once.

"The West Gothic Kingdom (Visigoths) of Toulouse grew within Gaul at the expense of the Empire, and in Spain at the expense of the Suevi. Under Euric (466-485) the West Gothic power again became largely a Spanish power. The kingdom of Toulouse took in nearly all Gaul south of the Loire and West of the Rhone, with all Spain, except the north-west corner, which was still held by the Suevi. Provence alone remained to the Empire. The West Gothic kings largely adopted Roman manners and culture; but, as they still kept their original Arian creed, their rule never became thoroughly acceptable to their Catholic subjects. They stood, therefore, at a great disadvantage when a new and aggressive Catholic power appeared in Gaul through the conversion of the Frank Clovis. In 507 the West Gothic king Alaric II. fell before the Frankish arms at Campus Vogladensis, near Poitiers, and his kingdom, as a great power north of the Alps, fell with him. That Spain and a fragment of Gaul still remained to form a West Gothic kingdom was owing to the intervention of the East Goths (Ostrogoths) under the rule of the greatest man in Gothic history.

When the Hunnish power broke in pieces on the death of Attila, the East Goths recovered their full independence. Even before this time, in 406, a large body of Goths, apparently belonging to the eastern branch of their race, had invaded Italy under their king Radagais. Later in the century, the East Goths entered into relations with the Empire and obtained a settlement in Pannonia. Subsequently, they play in south-eastern Europe nearly the same part which the West Goths played the century before. Towards the close of the 5th century their royal house produced a great figure, famous alike in history and romance, in the person of Theodoric, the son of Theodemir. Theodoric the Great is sometimes the friend, sometimes the enemy, of the Empire, but in all cases alike he remains the national East Gothic king. It was both as Gothic leader and as ally of the Empire that he set out in 488, by commission of the emperor Zeno, to recover Italy from Odoacer. By 493 the East Gothic power was fully established over Italy, Sicily, Dalmatia and the lands to the north of Italy. Under Theodoric the history of the East and West Goths converges again, through the marriage of the daughter of Theodoric to the Visigothic king Alaric II. After Alaric's fall in 507 his heir was protected by Theodoric, in whose later years the kingdoms of the East and West Goths were in effect united.

The East Gothic dominion was now again as great in extent and far more splendid than it could have been in the dominion of Hermanaric. But it was of a wholly different character. The dominion of Theodoric was not a barbarian but a civilized power. His twofold position ran through everything. He was at once national king of the Goths and successor, though without any imperial titles, of the Roman emperors of the West.

Such a system as that Theodoric established needed a Theodoric to carry it on. On his death (526) the East and West Goths were again separated. Amalaric, son of Alaric II., succeeded to the West Gothic kingdom in Spain and Septimania. Provence was added to the dominion of the new East Gothic king Athalaric, the

²²⁵ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. "Lombards."

grandson of Theodoric through his daughter Amalasintha. But the essential weakness of the East Gothic position in Italy now showed itself. The long wars of Justinian's reign (535-555) recovered Italy for the Empire, and the Gothic name died out. The West Gothic kingdom lasted much longer, and came much nearer establishing itself as a national power in the lands which it took in."²²⁶

This shows that both the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths were powerful kingdoms when the papacy arose. Therefore, they are the fifth and sixth kingdoms we have identified.

Picts

"Picts, the name given to the ancient Celtic race of the Stone Age inhabiting Britain and later the Highlands. In a battle of 640 they defeated the Britons, and for many years the inhabitants of the Roman provinces were exposed to devastating raids by the Picts and Scots. They were finally conquered in 846 by Kenneth McAlpine."²²⁷

The Picts were independent, but they were not a powerful kingdom at any time. Therefore, they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Ravenna

"Italy was broken up into three separate areas—the new Lombard Kingdom; Ravenna, the garrison city of the Byzantine emperor; and Rome, the rallying point of the old nation, under the successor of St. Peter."²²⁸

This passage shows that Ravenna was considered to be on a par with Rome and the Lombard kingdom in Italy. Even though it was only a city it still exerted considerable influence and ruled a sizable territory.

"Theodoric's siege of Ravenna lasted for three years (489-492); ten days after his entry into the city he slew his rival at a banquet in the palace of the Laurel Grove (March 15, 493). Ravenna was also Theodoric's chief residence (493-526).

In 535 Justinian sent an army to destroy the Gothic monarchy and restore Italy to the empire. The Goths at length, weary of the feeble Vitiges, offered to transfer their allegiance to Belisarius on condition of his assuming the diadem of the Western Empire. Belisarius dallied with the proposal until he had obtained an entrance within the walls of the capital, and proclaimed his inviolable fidelity to Justinian (539). Under the rule of Narses and his successors the exarchs, Ravenna was the seat of Byzantine dominion in Italy. In 728 the Lombard king Luitprand took and destroyed the suburb Classis; about 752 the city itself fell into the hands of his successor Aistulf, from whom a few years after it was wrested by Pippin, king of the Franks."²²⁹

From these two passages I believe we can conclude that Ravenna was powerful and influential during the time the papacy arose, however, it was under the control of the Ostrogoths, who have already been identified as one of our horns. Therefore it does meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Rome

²²⁶ Ibid., s.v. "Goths."

²²⁷ Ibid., s.v. "Picts."

²²⁸ Ibid., s.v. "Italy."

²²⁹ Ibid., s.v. "Ravenna."

After the capital of the Empire was moved to Constantinople in 330 by Constantine, Rome certainly lost much of its power and influence. It, however, did remain as the leading city in the West. The legacy of Rome was strong and would not soon be forgotten. After all, Rome gave rise to the greatest power the world had ever seen. Rome seemed to almost have an aura of mystique which surrounded her, and caused people to continue to respect her long after she had fallen from the pinnacle of power. As Catholicism expanded in Europe the popes exploited this mystique to increase their power and influence. Soon, though not the political force she had once been, Rome was unchallenged as the spiritual capital of the West. The Empire was gone, but Rome retained much of her influence, and as a consequence meets our criteria to become the seventh 'kingdom' we have identified.

Saracens (Arabs)

“Saracens were Muslims who invaded and occupied parts of the Christian world in Asia, Africa, and Europe during the 600’s and 700’s. The Saracens included the people of Palestine and Syria, the Arab Moors who set up the Spanish kingdom in the 700’s, and the Seljuks who fought the Crusaders. The Greeks and Romans first used the term *Saraceni* to describe the wandering Arab tribes of the Syro-Arabian Desert.”²³⁰

During the seventh and eighth centuries the Saracens built a massive and extremely powerful empire stretching from Arabia through Africa into Spain. The problem though, is that it occurred much too late to meet our criteria, therefore we must reject them as a candidate.

Sarmatae

“By the 3rd century B.C. the Sarmatae appear to have supplanted the Scythes proper in the plains of south Russia, where they remained dominant until the Gothic and Hunnic invasions. Their chief divisions were the Rhoxolani, the Iazyges, with whom the Romans had to deal on the Danube and Theiss, and the Alani.”²³¹

The Sarmatae were subdued by the Goths and Huns well before the beginning of the papacy, therefore they do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Saxons

“We next hear of them in connection with piratical expeditions in the North Sea about the year 286. These raids became more frequent during the 4th century, and at the beginning of the 5th century the northern coast of Gaul and the south-east coast of Britain were known as *litora saxonica*. During the same period the Saxons appear to have conquered a considerable portion of north-west Germany. According to their own traditions they landed in Hadeln in the neighborhood of Cuxhaven and seized the surrounding districts from the Thuringians. By the middle of the 4th century they had advanced westwards into the basin of the Ysel, and in the following century we find them in possession of the whole of the valley of the Ems, except the coastal district, while that of the Weser and its tributaries belonged to them as far south as the Diemel, where they bordered on the Hessian Franks, the ancient Chatti. The conquest of the Boructauri who dwelt between the Lippe and the Ruhr marks the extent of their progress towards the south-west. This took place shortly before the end of the 7th century. They frequently came into conflict with the Franks and on several occasions had to submit to their supremacy. No thorough conquest, however, was carried out until the time

²³⁰ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Saracens.”

²³¹ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Sarmatae.”

of Charlemagne, who, between the years 772 and 785, annexed the whole region as far as the Elbe, destroying in 772 the Irminsul, their great sanctuary, near Marsberg on the Diemel.”²³²

The Saxons did have a powerful kingdom when the papacy arose, therefore they do meet our criteria. The Saxons are the eighth kingdom we have identified.

Scots

“The adjacent region to the north, comprising what is now Argyll County, was occupied toward the beginning of the 6th century by the Scots, Celtic invaders from northern Ireland, who established the kingdom known in history as Dalriada. About the middle of the 6th century the Angles, Teutonic colleagues of the Saxons, overran most of Calcedonia south of the Firth of Forth and east of Strathclyde. Together with the extensive Angle holdings in the north of what is now England, this region became the kingdom of Northumbria.”²³³

During the time when the papacy arose all of the groups occupying Britain (Angles, Britons, Picts, Saxons, and Scots) were disorganized and formed no important or powerful kingdom. It was not until well after the time period we are concerned with was past that a powerful kingdom emerged in Britain. Therefore, the Scots do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Slavs

“The first Slavs lived more than 5000 years ago. They occupied a region that now forms part of the northwestern Ukraine and southeastern Poland. From A.D. 200 to 500, they migrated to other parts of Europe. Some settled in what are now parts of western Russia and eastern and central Europe. Others migrated to the region of southeastern Europe known as the Balkans.

During the 800’s, the Slavs established the Great Moravian Empire, which united the peoples of central Europe for the first time. In 906 the Empire was conquered by the Magyars, the ancestors of the Hungarians.”²³⁴

As pointed out, the people of central Europe were never unified into a kingdom until the ninth century, which is much too late for our purposes. Therefore, the Slavs do not meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Suevi (Suabi or Suebi)

“A collective term applied to a number of peoples in central Germany, the chief of whom were the Marcomanni, Quadi, Hermunduri, Semnones, and Langobardi; these tribes inhabited the basin of the Elbe.

From the 2nd to the 4th century A.D. the name Suebi is seldom used except with reference to events in the neighborhood of the Pannonian frontier, and here probably means the Quadi. From the middle of the 4th century it appears in the regions south of the Main, and the names Alamanni and Suebi are used synonymously. The Alamanni seem to have been joined by one or more other Suebic peoples, some of whom accompanied the Vandals in their invasion of Gaul and founded a kingdom in north-west Spain. Besides the Alamannic Suebi we hear of a people called Suebi, who shortly after the middle of the 6th

²³² Ibid., s.v. “Saxons.”

²³³ *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Scotland.”

²³⁴ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Slavs.”

century settled north of the Unstrut. There is evidence for a people called Suebi in the district above the mouth of the Scheldt. It is likely that both these settlements were colonies from the Suebi of whom we hear in the Anglo-Saxon poem *Widsith* as neighbors of the Angli. The question has been raised whether these Suebi should be identified with the people whom the Romans called Heruli. After the 7th century the name Suebi is practically only applied to the Alamannic Suebi (Schwabens), with whom it remains as a territorial designation in Württemberg and Bavaria.”²³⁵

The Suebi as a whole were never a powerful kingdom, although the Langobardi, whom we have dealt with separately, were indeed a powerful kingdom which we identified as our fourth kingdom. The Suebi, as a whole, therefore, fail to meet our criteria and must be rejected.

Thuringi

“In the 5th century the Thuringians lived between the Harz mountains and the Thuringian Forest. They were tributary to Attila the Hun, under whom they served at the battle of Châlons in 451. In the 6th century they were conquered by the Franks and remained under the direct rule of the Frankish kings until 634, when King Dabobert I. appointed Radulf duke of the Thuringians, under whom they became virtually independent. They were again brought under Frankish rule by Charles Martel, who abolished the office of duke and divided the country among Frankish courts.”²³⁶

“In 531 the Thuringian kingdom was destroyed by the Frankish king Theodoric.”²³⁷

The Thuringi were always subservient to others while the papacy arose, and therefore fail to meet our criteria and must be rejected as being one of our kingdoms.

Turks

“The name Tukiue (Tou-Kiue) or Turk is first used by the Chinese in recording the events of A.D. 545, and the following years, when the Turks, or descendants of the Asena, revolted against the Jwen-Jwen. These latter were crushed and disappeared from history, at least under that name. The victorious Turks advanced across their territory, came into collision with the Hephthalites or Ephthalites, whom they defeated, and are heard of on the Oxus, about A.D. 560. The period 546-582 marks the first brilliant epoch of early Turkish history.”²³⁸

The Turks would become a major force in European history in later centuries, even being the ones to finally conquer the seemingly invincible Constantinople in 1453, but as the papacy arose they were just emerging as a force in Asia. Consequently, they fail to meet our criteria and must be rejected as one of our kingdoms.

Vandals

“Owing to defeat at the hand of the Franks the Vandals could not settle in Gaul and in 409 their king Gunderic led them across the Pyrenees. They appear to have settled in Spain in two detachments. One, the Asdingian Vandals, occupied Galicia, the other, the Silingian, Andalusia. The Silingian Vandals were well

²³⁵ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Suebi.”

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Thuringia.”

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Germany.”

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Turks.”

nigh exterminated during the next 20 years but their Asdingian brethren marched across Spain and took possession of Andalusia. In 428 or 429 the whole nation set sail for Africa, upon an invitation received by their king from Bonifacius, count of Africa, who had fallen into disgrace with the court of Ravenna. Gunderic was now dead and supreme power was in the hands of his bastard brother Gaiseric who was for 50 years the terror of Constantinople and Rome. Probably in the month of May 428, he assembled all his people on the shore of Andalusia, and numbering the males among them from the graybeard down to the newborn infant found them to amount to 80,000 souls. The nation was transported to Africa on ships supplied by Bonifacius. Although he soon returned to Imperial allegiance only three cities of Roman Africa-Carthage, Hippo and Cirta-remained untaken by the Vandals by May 430. At length (Jan. 30, 435) peace was made between the emperor Valentinian III. and Gaiseric. The emperor was to retain Carthage and the small but rich proconsular province in which it was situated, while Hippo and the other six provinces of Africa were abandoned to the Vandal. Gaiseric observed this treaty no longer than suited his purpose. On Oct. 19, 439, he suddenly attacked and took Carthage. The Vandal occupation of this great city, the third among the cities of the Roman Empire, lasted for 94 years. Gaiseric seems to have counted the years of his sovereignty from the date of its capture. Henceforward he made of Carthage a pirate's stronghold, whence he issued forth, like the Barbary pirates of another day, to attack, as he himself said, 'the dwellings of the men with whom God is angry,' leaving the question of who those men might be to the decision of the elements. Almost alone among the Teutonic invaders of the empire he set himself to form a powerful fleet, and was probably for 30 years the leading maritime power in the Mediterranean.

The wrongs of Hilderic, a Catholic, with the blood of the emperor Theodosius in his veins, afforded Justinian a long-coveted pretext for overthrowing the Vandal dominion. A great expedition under the command of Belisarius reached Africa in the Beginning of Sept. 533. A large force of Vandals was then occupied in Sardinia under Gelimer's brother Tzazo, and the landing of Belisarius was entirely unopposed. He marched rapidly towards Carthage and on Sept. 13, defeated Gelimer at Ad Decimum, 10m. from Carthage. Next day he entered Carthage and ate the feast prepared in Gelimer's place for its lord. On the return of Tzazo from Sardinia a force was collected considerably larger than the imperial army, but the Vandals were defeated and Gelimer took to flight. He took refuge in a mountain fortress called Pappua on the Numidian frontier, and there, after enduring great hardships in the squalid dwellings of the Moors, surrendered to his pursuers in March 534.²³⁹

The Vandals were certainly powerful for a time, and that time ended in 534, just after the papacy had officially risen. Therefore they meet our criteria and are the ninth kingdom we have identified.

Visigoths (West Goths)

The history of the Visigoths was discussed along with that of their kinsmen, the Ostrogoths. From that discussion it was decided that the Visigoths were indeed a powerful kingdom as the papacy arose. As a result they were the fifth kingdom we identified.

Out of the twenty-eight candidates we began with, we found nine that matched our criteria. While this might be close enough if you work for the government, it definitely will not do where the Bible is concerned. If the Bible says there were ten kingdoms, then there were unquestionably ten kingdoms. The fault lies, not with the Bible, but with our search.

Have we perhaps misinterpreted or misunderstood the history of one of the groups we studied? Or have we perhaps omitted some small group which the Bible includes as the tenth kingdom? I believe our methodology has been sound and that our decisions on the twenty-eight we have thus far examined are accurate. Furthermore, I believe that we have examined every group large enough to have possibly been included in the Bible's list of ten kingdoms. Then what can possibly explain the discrepancy?

²³⁹ Ibid., s.v. "Vandals."

It is sort of like the old saying, 'you can't see the forest for the trees.' Our phantom kingdom is not one of the small nomadic groups who burst on the scene for a time and then faded into obscurity after a crushing military defeat. In fact, the kingdom we have failed to identify exerted more power and influence in Europe during this period of time than any other. We have overlooked the very obvious, the Eastern Roman Empire. Constantinople was the most powerful city in the Western world and exerted tremendous influence over many of the kingdoms we have already identified.

We need to realize that we are not restricted to looking for kingdoms based only in Western Europe. Our only qualification is that the kingdom exerted a fair amount of influence in the Christian world. Daniel paints a picture of the papacy arising among ten kingdoms, and certainly no student of history could deny the tremendous impact the Byzantine Empire had on the development of the papacy. In fact it was the proclamation of the Byzantine Emperor, Justinian, that we use to date the official beginning of the papacy. Therefore, we can say that Byzantium does meet our criteria and is our tenth and final kingdom.

Now that we have identified the ten kingdoms our next task is to determine which three of the ten are the ones subdued by the papacy. The first, and most obvious, is Rome itself.

“The removal of the seat of empire to Constantinople effected a radical change in the political situation of Rome, but the civil administration remained unaltered. The Gothic rule merely superimposed upon the Roman social order a Teutonic stratum that never penetrated beneath its surface. The senate, the principal magistrates, both provincial and municipal, the prefect of the city, and the Roman judges enforcing the enactments of the Roman law, were all preserved. Hence there was no visible change in the constitution of the city. The wars of Belisarius and Narses against the Goths (A.D. 535-555) caused terrible slaughter and devastation in Italy, and finally subjected her to Constantinople. In place of a Gothic king she was ruled at first by a praetorian prefect and later by an exarch (first mentioned in 584), who had his seat of government at Ravenna. The pragmatic sanction (554), promulgating the Justinian code, separated the civil from the military power, and, by conferring on the bishops the authority over the provincial and municipal government, soon led to the increase of the power of the Church.

Roman institutions were altered; but their original features were still to be traced, and no heterogeneous element had been introduced. The dawn of a new epoch can be dated from the invasion of the Lombards (568-572). Their conquest of a large portion of Italy reduced the inhabitants almost to slavery. But, in the unsubdued parts of the country—namely, in Ravenna, Rome, and the maritime cities—a very different state of things prevailed. The necessity for self-defence and the distance of the Empire, now too weak to render any assistance, compelled the inhabitants to depend solely on their own strength. In Rome we behold the rapid growth of papal power and the continual increase of its political influence. Not only the superintendence but often the nomination of public functionaries and judges was in the hands of the popes. And the ascension to St. Peter's chair of a man of real genius in the person of Gregory I., surnamed the Great, marked the beginning of a new era. By force of individual character this pope was the true representative of the city, the born defender of Church and State. His ecclesiastical authority, already great throughout Italy, was specially great in the Roman diocese and in southern Italy. The offerings of the faithful had endowed the Church with enormous possessions in the province of Rome, in Sicily, Sardinia, and other parts. The administration of this property assumed the shape of a small government council in Rome. The use made by the pope of his revenues greatly contributed to the increase of his moral and political authority. When the city was besieged by the Lombards and the emperor left his army unpaid, Gregory supplied the required funds and thus made resistance possible. When the defence could be no longer maintained he alone, by the weight of his personal influence and the payment of large sums, induced the Lombards to raise the siege. He negotiated in person with Agilulf and was recognized by him as the true representative of the city.

A prefect of Rome is not mentioned between 599 and 772, and then again there is silence until the time of the Ottos. It is impossible to say whether the office was discontinued. In the later days the prefect was an official of the pope, who had taken over the care of the aqueducts and the preservation of the city walls. There is also much doubt about the existence of a senate. We know that many senators had lost their lives in the long war. The pragmatic sanction of 554 did mention the senate, but this was the last formal

recognition of it as a governing body; and, if we may trust the despairing cry of Gregory the Great, it had disappeared, or at least was reduced to a shadow.”²⁴⁰

Clearly the popes came to dominate Rome not only spiritually, but also politically, economically, socially, and in just about every other way. The rule of the popes supplanted the traditional government of Rome which had existed for centuries.

The other two kingdoms were subdued in a slightly different manner.

“In the last phase of the (Langobardi) kingdom it produced two rulers of unusual ability. Liutprand, who destroyed the independence of the great southern duchies, Benevento and Spoleto, and Aistulf who threatened Rome itself. Their success led directly to the events which brought the Lombard Kingdom to an end. The popes, thoroughly alarmed, and hopeless of aid from the East, turned to the family which was rising in power among the Franks of the West, the mayors of the palace of Austrasia. Pope Gregory III. applied in vain to Charles Martel. But with his successors Pippin and Charles the popes were more successful. In return for the transfer by the pope of the Frankish crown from the decayed line of Clovis to his own, Pippin crossed the Alps, defeated Aistulf and gave the pope the lands won by the Lombards from the empire, Ravenna and the Pentapolis (754-756). Finally, invited by Pope Adrian I., Pippin’s son Charlemagne once more descended into Italy. As the Lombard Kingdom began, so it ended, with a siege of Pavia. Desiderius, the last king, became a prisoner (774), and the Lombard power perished. Charlemagne, with the title king of the Franks and Lombards, became master of Italy.”²⁴¹

“When Leo the Isurian published his decrees against the worship of images in 726, Gregory II allied himself with Liuprand, the Lombard king, threw off allegiance to Byzantium, and established the autonomy of Rome. But the Lombards were unnatural allies, and increasingly the pope began to look for help in the Franks. Pippin twice crossed the Alps and forced the Lombard king Aistolf to relinquish his acquisitions, including Ravenna, the Pentapolis, the coast towns of Romagna and some cities in the duchy of Spoleto. These he handed over to the pope of Rome, in 756, a donation which confirmed the papal see in the protectorate of the Italic party, conferred upon it sovereign rights, and placed the popes in the position held by the Greek exarch.”²⁴²

The popes acquired Ravenna and Lombardy by bargaining with Frankish rulers. The Lombards were one of the kingdoms, and Ravenna was the center of the holdings of the Ostrogoths. In return for the military conquests of their enemies the popes crowned the Frankish kings as “Emperor of the Romans.” Thus began the Holy Roman Empire (some give its official beginning as A.D. 962 with the crowning of Otto I), which will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. The real temporal power of the popes is traced to this period of time when the papacy acquired great tracts of land through her dealings with the Franks. Regardless of the methods used, the papacy did eventually subdue three of the ten kingdoms we identified.

The fact that the ten horns Daniel mentions are seen on the fourth beast demonstrates the fact that they are not spread about on the seven heads. At most they can be on the sixth and seventh heads, which are here represented by this beast. Later it will be seen that they are indeed all on the seventh head.

In the present verse here in Revelation we have discussed the blasphemous conduct of the popes. Daniel also pointed out this aspect of the papacy, “*and he shall speak great words against the most High.*” Most of the pope’s proclamations throughout history have been contrary to the Bible.

In the end God’s people will win out over Satan’s. The pope will be despoiled and his deceptions will be revealed.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Rome.”

²⁴¹ Ibid., s.v. “Lombards.”

²⁴² Ibid., s.v. “Italy.”

“The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him” (Daniel 7:26-27).

13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

Some of the blasphemies of the papacy were discussed in the previous verse. Little more needs to be said here, except to reemphasize the fact that Rome has profaned all things righteous and holy. She has totally departed from the Bible, and in fact no longer uses the Bible written by God, but rather uses her own tainted version, the “Catholic Bible.” This Bible is not God’s word but the Catholic’s interpretation of it. Another example of the blasphemy of Rome is the supposed authority of the priests to forgive sins. In the Bible we see men heal the sick, raise the dead, cast out demons, and do all sorts of miraculous works, but there is not one single example in the entire Bible where a man was given the power to forgive sins. Only God and Christ are ever seen to do that. It is clear then that the pope has indeed set himself up to be God.

The pope is said to “*blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.*” God’s tabernacle is His dwelling place, the Church. The apostle Peter said, “*Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me*” (II Peter 1:13-14). This clearly shows that our bodies can be referred to as tabernacles. Paul then completes the picture when he says, “*Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are*” (I Corinthians 3:16-17). Unlike the Old Covenant, where God dwelt in a tabernacle made with men’s hands (the Temple), He now dwells directly in the hearts of His people.

As a result, the papacy, through her conduct and her teachings, has blasphemed God, His people here on Earth, and those in Heaven. This is why it is quite proper to say that the pope has blasphemed everything righteous and holy. He has made a mockery of Christianity. It is no wonder that Muhammad rejected Christianity as well as Judaism, as corrupt. He saw that neither were practicing what they professed, and so rejected them. Certainly this has been true of many others throughout history. Most people would have been exposed to Roman Catholicism and would have erroneously assumed that it was Christianity.

13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.

“*War with the saints*” refers to the great persecutions brought against the Lord’s Church by the Roman harlot. I think it is appropriate here to pause and discuss the saints of God. The term saint(s) occurs 101 times in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and sixty-two in the New Testament, including thirteen times here in the Revelation. The common usage of the term today evokes thoughts of those who lived extraordinarily righteous lives, or perhaps performed some great act of faith and heroism, but nevertheless are now deceased. The attachment of the word saint to the names of individuals is most prominent among Catholics, with a large number of ‘saints’ being honored with their own days.

“For legitimate public veneration of a person as a saint the sanction of at least the local church has always been necessary: he or she must be ‘canonized’, and over the centuries this has been effected in various ways. The Virgin Mary, the apostles, and evangelists were recognized as saints by general consent; the early martyrs were spontaneously recognized as such by the faithful who had witnessed their sufferings; and so in a similar way were the early confessors. Later on, individual bishops canonized, by giving permission for a religious festival, or feast, to be kept in a dead person’s honour. These local recognitions were frequently extended to other places, sometimes to the church at large. Many of the greatest saints were canonized in this or a similar way, by a process of what may be called *informal* canonization, or by the prescription of long usage.

From the tenth century canonization in the West came more and more into the hands of the bishop of Rome; Pope Alexander III (d. 1181) in effect reserved future canonizations to the Roman see, and a process of formal canonization emerged. But the present fixed process in the Roman Catholic church, involving a minute inquiry into the candidates life, has been in full operation only since 1634.²⁴³

The papacy in essence claims that the only way someone can become a saint is by decree of a pope, a doctrine completely foreign to the Bible. From the usage of the word in the Bible, it is quite clear that saint is synonymous with the term Christian. There are dozens of passages in the Bible that make clear the true meaning of the word saint, the following are but a few examples. *“And it came to pass, as Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda”* (Acts 9:32). Many epistles similarly open with greetings to all the saints in a particular locality. *“But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem”* (Romans 15:25-26). *“For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:12). *“But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints”* (Ephesians 5:3).

The honorable names of many true first century saints have been hijacked by Rome in an attempt to bolster their claim to be the church that Jesus founded. These men and women knew nothing of the great Harlot of the Tiber, for she did not exist in their day. It was the unrighteous desires of evil men for power not granted them in the scriptures which led to the development of this beast. The Apostle Paul new all too well the proclivity of certain men in this direction and feared what might become of the Lord’s Church. *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him”* (II Corinthians 11:2-4).

“The simplicity that is in Christ” was corrupted over the centuries and the chaste virgin that Paul spoke of became the Great Whore who sold all semblance of truth and righteousness in order to achieve enormous wealth and power. It is just sad to think of how many real saints were slaughtered as heretics while many who proudly wore the mark of the beast were proclaimed to the world to be saints.

Daniel, in talking about the papacy said, *“I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them”* (Daniel 7:21). *“And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High”* (Daniel 7:25). Here “he” refers to the pope’s blasphemy and his persecution of those faithful to God. John says that the beast shall *“overcome them.”* Likewise, Daniel said he *“prevailed against them,”* and that he *“shall wear out the saints of the Most High.”* This does not mean that the Church will be wiped out and cease to exist for a period of time. Remember that chapter twelve told us that the Church, represented by the woman, would flee into the wilderness where it would be nourished for the 1,260 years of the pope’s power. The Church would be scattered and oppressed, but would never die.

Likewise, Daniel, in speaking of the Church, said it would last for ever. *“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever”* (Daniel 2:44). This is very similar to the captivity of the Children of Israel in Assyria and Babylon. From the perspective of the world, they had been destroyed. However, God kept His people intact and allowed them to return to the Promised Land. Likewise, Christianity went into hiding for 1,260 years and to any casual observer appeared to be dead. Appearances notwithstanding, God took care of it, and finally it was allowed to emerge victorious over Satan.

During this time the papacy had the allegiance of the nations and was therefore able to make use of the secular governments to suppress those who held views which differed with the official Catholic doctrine. Rome’s

²⁴³ Donald Attwater, *The Penguin Book of Saints*, (Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1965), pp. 9-10.

domination lasted until “*the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom*” (Daniel 7:22). This was the end of the 1,260 year period when God brought judgment against the unrepentant papacy. “*And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time*” (Daniel 7:25). We have already seen this way of expressing the 1,260 year time period in chapter twelve.

The persecution of the papacy against those who held “heretical” views on religious matters, often took very cruel and bloody forms. Certainly many who were the victims of this persecution held views which were just as unscriptural as did the Catholics themselves, but we can be just as certain that many people who desired to follow the Bible were also victims.

“Then, in the 1200s, a storm of heretic-hunting burst upon Europe. The first victims were the Albigenses, or Carthi, centered around Albi, France. They doubted the biblical account of creation, considered Jesus an angel instead of a God, rejected transubstantiation, and demanded strict celibacy. Bishops executed a few Albigenses leaders, but the sect continued growing. The Third Lateran Council in 1179 proclaimed a military crusade against them, but it was a minor expedition with little success.

In 1208, Pope Innocent III declared a major crusade to destroy the Albigenses. Some 20,000 knights and peasants answered the call, forming an army that scourged southern France, smashing towns where the belief was strong. When the besieged city of Beziers fell, soldiers asked papal legate Arnald Amalric (or Arnaud Amaury) how they could distinguish the infidel from the faithful among the captives. He commanded: ‘Kill them all. God will know His own.’ Thousands were slaughtered—many first blinded, mutilated, dragged behind horses or used for target practice. The legate reported to the pope: ‘God’s wrath has raged in wondrous wise against the city.’

This was the beginning of numerous ‘internal crusades’ against nonconforming Christians and rebellious lords.

Another group targeted for extermination were the Waldensians, followers of Peter Waldo of Lyon, lay preachers who sermonized in the streets. The church decreed that only priests could preach, and commanded them to cease. They persisted. The Waldensians had been excommunicated as heretics at the council of Verona in 1184, and the Albigensian crusade was directed at them as well. Executions ensued for five centuries. The lay preachers fled to Germany and Italy, where they frequently were caught and burned. Some hid in caves. In 1487, Pope Innocent VIII declared an armed crusade against the Waldensians in the Savoy region of France.

Also condemned were the Amalricans. French theologian Amalric of Bena preached that all people are potentially divine, and that church rites aren’t needed. After his death in the 1200s, his followers were burned alive as heretics, and his body was dug up and burned.

A similar fate befell the Apostolic Brethren, who preached and sang in public. Leader Gerhard Segarelli was burned as a heretic in 1300. His successor, Dolcino, led survivors into fortified places to withstand attacks and wage counterattacks. Troops of the bishop of Milan overran their fort and killed nearly all of them. Dolcino was burned in 1307.

In 1318 a group of Celestine or ‘Spiritual’ Franciscan monks were burned because they refused to abandon the primitive simplicity of Franciscan garb and manners. Others executed as heretics included Beghards and Beguines, who lived in Christian communes, and the Brothers of the Free Spirit, a mystical order of monks.

The Knights Templar, religious warriors of an order which originated in the Crusades, were accused in France in 1307 of spitting on crucifixes and worshipping the devil. They were subjected to extreme torture, which killed some of them; others ‘confessed.’ About seventy were burned at the stake.

Killing heretics was endorsed by popes and saints. They quoted Old Testament mandates such as ‘He who

blasphemes the name of the Lord shall be put to death.’ St. Thomas Aquinas declared: ‘If coiners and other malefactors are justly doomed to death, much more may heretics justly be slain.’²⁴⁴

As Rome’s doctrine became increasingly unscriptural more and more people began to rebel. As will be pointed out in chapter 18, the Catholic Church became enormously corrupt and the stench of its filth was not hidden from the masses. Most still feared to question the papacy, but others, either foolhardy or brave, did take on the beast. While many lost their lives or were otherwise punished, their efforts paved the way for continued resistance that eventually toppled this abomination.

“*Power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.*” This alludes to the great power and influence that the papacy enjoyed for many centuries. During the Dark Ages the papacy was the greatest political and economic power in the world.

“The modern conception of church and state as two distinct entities did not exist in the Middle Ages. Christendom was a structure unified religiously, culturally, and politically and rested on pope and emperor. The pope was believed to be superior by the will of Christ. As all bishops stood under the pope, so all princes stood theoretically under the emperor. Both powers were supreme; neither was absolute, for both stood before the law of God and the voice of conscience. Relations between the two powers were constantly in a state of flux; their interests conflicted, and their spheres of influence overlapped. As the Middle Ages grew older, tension mounted until it exceeded the strength of the structure of society.

Church and society were neither differentiated nor separated from one another in the Middle Ages. The two blended. The philosophy of the medieval church was concerned with the hereafter, but its actions were directed toward the temporal; the church did not retreat from the world, nor was the world withdrawn from the church. The two coalesced at so many points that the separation became blurred. Abuses that marked church life in the Middle Ages—overinvolvement in secular concerns and undue preoccupation with the affairs of princes and nations—were, to a large extent, due to the obscurity of the demarcation.

In its earliest stages the medieval church was relatively unorganized; the primacy of the see of Rome was generally admitted by the faithful, but the bonds between it and the local or national churches were loose. By reason of its apostolic origins, the church of Rome enjoyed a preeminent position as the final court of appeals in matters of faith and morals. In the mid-11th century a dramatic change overtook the church and its structure: the motivating force was the reaction of Pope Gregory VII (reigned 1073-1085) to the absorption of the bishops into the constitutional structure of the empire. Secularization had gone as far as it could go without extinguishing the ‘liberty of the Church’ that ‘the justice of God’ demanded. In the reform that Pope Gregory directed against the right of Emperor Henry IV to invest bishops the papal program ultimately succeeded in bringing the hierarchy of Germany—and ultimately of all Christendom—under the authority of the pope. This was the beginning of ecclesiastical centralization: at this time the words ‘Curia Romana’ (Roman court) came into general use with regard to the ruling bodies in the church, and the title ‘Vicar of Christ’ was commonly attributed to the pope. At this time, too, the college of cardinals, electors of the pope since 1059, emerged as a power in church administration. Subsequently the church’s government tended to become more centralized, bureaucratic, and oligarchic. Under the growing influence of Roman law, canon law became more and more universal in scope and extent.

By the opening years of the 13th century the Holy See virtually presided over the whole Western world. Innocent III (reigned 1198-1216) demonstrated the international significance of the medieval papacy when he settled the feudal dispute between Philip Augustus of France and King John of England. Further, he condemned the Magna Carta as an illicit intrusion on his overlordship in England. Maintaining that it was his right to give the imperial crown to whomsoever he would, because the empire pertained to the papacy by reason of its translation from the Greeks to the Romans to the Germans, and by reason of papal

²⁴⁴ Haught, 1990, pp. 54-9.

coronation and anointing, he constituted himself supreme judge in the so-called Throne Controversy between Otto IV and Philip of Swabia.”²⁴⁵

This passage leaves little doubt that the papacy was given power “*over all kindreds, and tongues and nations.*” The pope was, in reality, the monarch of the entire Western world. There were times when certain rulers would contest the authority of Rome, but over all, the pope reigned supreme for many centuries in Christendom.

13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Rome’s power and sway was nearly universal in medieval Europe. All the nations of Europe accepted Roman Catholicism as their official national religion, and therefore Rome was in a position to dictate policy on many things to the temporal rulers. It literally became against the law not to be a Roman Catholic. Therefore most people went along with it, even if they did not necessarily agree with it. To most people it was better to go along with Catholicism than to suffer the consequences.

We notice in this verse, however, that not all people worshipped the beast. Those who had their names written in the book of life did not submit to the coercion and persecution. We also notice that the book of life belongs to the Lamb, who is Christ. The book of life contains the names of those who are faithful to God, and who, through their obedience to Him, have received the forgiveness of sins. This forgiveness was made possible through the offering of the Lamb, Christ, who was the perfect sacrifice. He bore the penalty for sins which every man really deserves, which is death. “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man*” (Hebrews 2:9).

“*The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.*” We know that Christ was not crucified at the foundation, or beginning, of the world, but much closer to the end. Then what does this verse mean? First we need to make very explicit the reason Christ had to die. He died to bear the penalty for man’s sins. “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*” (Colossians 1:14). When did man first sin? It was near the foundation of the world, in the Garden of Eden. Since Christ died because of the sins of man, His death really goes back to the beginning when Adam and Eve sinned. It was when they sinned that Christ’s death on the cross became necessary. God knew that He had made creatures subject to temptation that would inevitably sin. Therefore, it was given from the very beginning that Christ would have to die at some point to redeem the sinful creatures that God had made.

The Hebrew letter sheds a little further light on this subject. “*For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? Because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*” (Hebrews 9:24-10:4). Christ died toward the end of the world, but His death reaches all the way back to the foundation of the world. His life was given for all men who ever have lived or ever will live.

13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.

This is the same phrase which appeared at the end of each of the seven letters in chapters two and three. It is the

²⁴⁵ *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “Catholic Church.”

Lord's way of telling us that something very important has just been said, and that we should pay very close attention to it. What He desires for us to see here is the identity of the seven-headed beast He has just described. This is the natural place for this phrase to appear, since He has just concluded his description of the seven-headed beast and is about to introduce another character to our story. Before He moves on He wants to make sure we have understood everything thus far. It is very important that we do understand the first half of this chapter, because if we do not, we will be totally lost in the second half of the chapter, and indeed the rest of the book.

13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

The "he" referred to in this verse is the beast. This beast, the Roman Catholic Church, as the tool of Satan, has captured, or imprisoned, and murdered many of God's people. This persecution is what is under consideration here. In the preceding verses we have discussed many aspects of the papacy's war against the saints. For centuries this war was very one-sided. The papacy had the backing of the secular governments and found it very easy to suppress dissension; now God is promising to turn the tables on Rome. This will be done by removing the support of the nations which have upheld Rome's power for centuries.

God is promising His people that He will now pour out His wrath upon Rome and avenge their tortures and deaths at the hands of the Catholics. The Catholics will be the ones to be imprisoned and killed. This is exactly what we saw during the French Revolution. Catholicism was the target of great persecution during this time, and for decades afterward in France and elsewhere around the world. God is promising His people that Rome will reap what it has sown. God had promised to take vengeance on Rome for its past atrocities against Christians, but the saints must wait until God determines the time is right. This is what is meant by the "*patience and faith of the saints*." They had to wait and trust God to do what He had said He would do when the time was right. It was a bad situation, but their faith should be strong enough to see them through it.

13:11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

Now John sees another beast appear on the scene, in addition to the seven-headed beast he has been describing in this chapter. This beast came up from the earth, rather than the sea, where the seven-headed beast originated. This shows that his effects would be regional and not global. The papacy, which is the first beast, exercised power and authority over the whole of Western civilization, but this second beast will be limited in the range of its authority and power.

"*He had two horns*." In his prophesy Daniel spoke of a ram with two horns. "*The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia*" (Daniel 8:20). The two horns represented two nations: Media and Persia. Obviously, we are not talking about the same empire here, because the Medo-Persian Empire fell centuries before Christ. We now have a good idea of what the two horns represent on the beast John saw. This beast will most likely be a conglomeration of two nations, just as the two-horned ram in Daniel was. The beast John sees is actually a kingdom made up of two separate nations.

This beast had "*horns like a lamb*." This shows that it will have the appearance of being meek and gentle as a lamb. That it will appear to be similar to THE Lamb, Christ. The fact that this beast spake as a dragon shows its true character. Satan is the dragon, so if this beast speaks like a dragon, then he speaks like Satan. Obviously, this beast, like the seven-headed beast, will be an instrument of Satan used against God's people.

13:12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

This new beast appears to be merely an assistant of the first one. He has the same power, and certainly the same intentions (the destruction of God's people), as the first beast. Rather than supplanting the first beast, the second beast actually makes men worship the first beast. We are not through with the first beast, but are merely entering a

different phase of his power. Consequently, we must be talking about something which took place during the 1,260 years through which the first beast had his power. Or to put it more properly, we are looking for a kingdom, made up of two nations, which arose during the 1,260 years, and supported the papacy. History tells us that there was indeed a kingdom which arose during the time in question which exhibited the characteristics we are looking for. It was the Holy Roman Empire. This Empire was composed of Germany and Italy who were represented by the two horns of the beast.

“Holy Roman Empire is the name given to the territory ruled by German kings between 962 and 1806. The Holy Roman Empire was founded by Otto I of Germany, who was crowned Holy Roman Emperor in A.D. 962. The essential feature of the Holy Roman Empire during the greatest phase of its history was the union of Germany and Italy (except the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies) under one ruler.”²⁴⁶

Much more will be said about the Holy Roman Empire later in this chapter.

Again mention is made of the “*deadly wound which was healed*.” As we said before, this is in reference to the supposedly fatal wound the Roman Empire received in A.D. 476. However, the power of the Empire was revived in the form of a spiritual empire, the Roman Catholic Church. Instead of dying, the first beast recovered from the wound and lived on.

13:13 And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

This beast, which we have identified as the Holy Roman Empire, will perform great wonders, even making fire to come down from heaven to demonstrate its power. This, however, cannot be taken literally. Only God, or His appointed representatives, has the power to literally rain fire from heaven. This beast certainly is not a representative of God. What is meant here is that this kingdom will have great power and authority such that it will appear to be by the hand of God; the only one who is really capable of raining fire from heaven. There will be something about the Holy Roman Empire which will cause many people to attribute its power to God. This is, of course, the fact that it is so intimately tied to the papacy, which most people naively assumed to be an agency of God.

Fire raining down from Heaven has the sound of judgment from God Himself. This is exactly what He did to Sodom and Gomorrah. “*Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven* (Genesis 19:24). God also promised something similar for the kingdom of Gog. “*And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone* (Ezekiel 38:22).” Men can do little against fire raining from Heaven. The source is beyond their reach and their doom is sealed. This is the kind of feeling the Holy Roman Empire will give to those who oppose the papacy. In a crude sense, the Holy Roman Empire became the popes own pit bull to go and do his dirty work for him, in the name of God of course.

Having the Holy Roman Empire as his own personal muscle, the pope was able to coerce every other monarch in Europe to bow to his wishes and persecute heretics. The fire was primarily in the form of persecution and harassment by the civil authorities against those who taught or practiced anything that differed with the dogma of the Roman Harlot. Since it was all done in the name of keeping the purity of the faith it appeared to be Heaven sent. It was the ability to coerce secular governments to vigorously attack all ideological enemies of Rome that gave the papacy its great power and longevity.

13:14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

²⁴⁶ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Holy Roman Empire.”

This verse continues the thought started in the previous verse. The “miracles” performed by the beast, are not really miracles at all. God is the only one who can perform miracles, either directly, or through an appointed representative. To say this beast was capable of miracles was to say he was doing so in God’s name. This beast will appear to man to have received his power from God. That is, the Holy Roman Empire will appear to have been established by God, and to be ruling with His blessing. The phrase “*in the sight of the beast*” sheds further light on this. To say that someone does something in the sight of another is to indicate approval. The idea here is that the first beast is overseeing the actions of the second beast. Again, the first beast is the papacy, which most of the world considered to be the representative of God. To the world it would appear as if God approved of something if the pope approved of it. The Holy Roman Empire would appear to the world to be the work of God because of its involvement with the papacy. In reality, this was nothing more than a deception, since the popes represent Satan and not God.

“*Make an image to the beast*” has reference to the beast which had received the deadly wound but had survived. The wound was by a sword, which indicates defeat in battle. The old Roman Empire had seemingly been killed by military invasions, but was miraculously resurrected in the form of the papacy, spiritual Rome. Therefore, the “image” is the likeness of old Rome. In other words it will appear as though the old Empire has actually returned. This new beast, the Holy Roman Empire, will cause spiritual Rome to take on the appearance of the old Roman Empire.

“Holy Roman Empire is a “designation applied to an amorphous political entity of Western Europe, originated by Pope Leo III in 800 A.D., and in nominal existence until 1806. In its initial stages, the organization was styled Empire of the West. It became known as the Holy Empire in 1157 and as the Holy Roman Empire in 1254.

The Holy Roman Empire represented, as the original styling implies, an attempt to revive the Western Roman Empire, which had collapsed in 476.”²⁴⁷

The popes and the Holy Roman emperors sought to exploit the legend of the old Empire by trying to revive it. By claiming to be a revival of the old Empire the Holy Roman Empire gained much greater prestige that would have otherwise been possible.

13:15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.

The Holy Roman Empire gave life to the image of old Rome. It revived thoughts of how things were in the old days of the mighty Roman Empire. Although the new Empire never reached the extent of power and wealth that the old one did, it nevertheless conjured up images in peoples minds of the old Empire and its glory.

The Holy Roman Empire gave “*power to...the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should...speak.*” To “*speak*” here means to do so with great authority. The idea is that during this time the power of the papacy over nations and rulers should be increased. He would be able to “speak” with authority, and to dictate official policy to kings and princes.

“*And cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*” The Holy Roman Empire acted as the executioner of the Catholic Church. The Church tried to separate itself from the executions, but this was only a formality. The following passage shows how the papacy used the secular governments to carry out executions of convicted heretics.

“Whatever scruples the Church had, during the eleventh and twelfth centuries, as to its duty toward heresy, it had none as to that of the secular power, though it kept its own hands from blood. A descent usage from

²⁴⁷ Funk & Wagnall’s, 1973, s.v. “Papal States.”

early times forbade any ecclesiastic from being concerned in judgments involving death or mutilation, and even from being present in the torture-chamber where criminals were placed on the rack. This sensitiveness continued, and even was exaggerated in the time of the bloodiest persecution. While thousands were being slaughtered in Languedoc the Council of Lateran, in 1215, revived the ancient canons prohibiting clerks from uttering a judgment of blood or being present at an execution. In 1255 the Council of Bordeaux added to this a prohibition of dictating or writing letters connected with such judgments. Had this shrinking from participation in the infliction of human suffering been genuine, it would have been worthy of all respect; but it was merely a device to avoid responsibility for its own acts. In persecutions for heresy the ecclesiastical tribunal passed no judgments of blood. It merely found the defendant to be a heretic and 'relaxed' him, or relinquished him to the secular authorities with the hypocritical adjuration to be merciful to him, to spare his life and not to spill his blood. What was the real import of this plea for mercy is easily seen from the theory of the Church as to the duty of the temporal power, when inquisitors enforced as a legal rule the mere belief that persecution for conscience sake was in itself a heresy, to be visited with the full penalties of that unpardonable crime.

The early teachings of Leo and Pelagius were revived as soon as heresy became alarming. Early in the twelfth century Honorius of Autun proclaimed that the rebels against God who were obdurate to the voice of the Church must be coerced with the material sword. In the compilations of canon law by Ivo and Gratian the allusions to the treatment of heretics by the church are singularly few, but there are abundant citations to show the duty of the sovereign to extirpate heresy and to obey the mandates of the Church to that end. Frederic Barbarossa gave the imperial sanction to the theory that the sword had been entrusted to him for the purpose of smiting the enemies of Christ, when he alleged this in 1159 as a reason for persecuting Alexander III and supporting his antipope, Victor IV. The second Lateran Council, in 1139, orders all potentates to coerce heretics into obedience; the third, in 1179, sanctimoniously says that the Church does not seek blood, but it is helped by the secular laws, for men will seek the salutary remedy to escape bodily punishment. We have seen how inefficacious all this proved; and in despair of voluntary assistance from the temporal princes the Church took a further step by which it assumed for itself the responsibility for the material as well as the spiritual punishment of heretics. The decree of Lucius III at the so-called Council of Verona, in 1184, commanded that all potentates should take an oath before their bishops to enforce the ecclesiastical and secular laws against heresy fully and efficaciously. Any refusal or neglect was to be punished by excommunication, deprivation of rank, and incapacity to hold other station, while in the case of cities they were to be segregated and debarred from all commerce with other places.

The Church thus undertook to coerce the sovereign to persecution. It would not listen to mercy, it would not hear of expediency. The monarch held his crown by the tenure of extirpating heresy, of seeing that the laws were sharp and that they were pitilessly enforced. Any hesitation was visited with excommunication, and if this proved inefficacious, his dominions were thrown open to the first hardy adventurer whom the Church would supply with an army for his overthrow.

It was applied from the highest to the lowest, and the Church made every dignitary feel that his station was an office in a universal theocracy wherein all interests were subordinate to the great duty of maintaining the purity of the faith. The hegemony of Europe was vested in the Holy Roman Empire, and its coronation was a solemnly religious ceremony in which the emperor was admitted to the lower orders of the priesthood, and was made to anathematize all heresy raising itself against the holy Catholic Church. In handing him the ring, the pope told him that it was a symbol that he was to destroy heresy; and in girding him with the sword, that with it he was to strike down the enemies of the Church. Frederic II declared that he had received the imperial dignity for the maintenance and propagation of the faith. Every prince and noble was made to understand that his lands would be exposed to the spoiler if, after due notice, he hesitated in trampling out heresy."²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ Henry C. Lea, *A History of the Inquisition of the Middle Ages*, (New York, NY: Tussell & Russell Publishers, 1955), pp. 223-6.

It was during the time of the Holy Roman Empire that the papacy enjoyed the height of her power. It was also at this time that the drive to persecute all religious dissenters reached a fever pitch. During this time thousands of Christians were labeled as heretics, unjustly tried, and cruelly tormented and executed. Those who took a stand for God, and refused to worship the image of the beast, spiritual Rome, were in grave danger of losing their lives. Only the protection of God saved the Church from extinction during this time.

13:16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

This is the infamous “mark of the beast.” Much has been made of this throughout history, but there is really nothing sensational here at all. We went a long way toward answering it back in chapter seven. There we saw the phrase “*sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads*” (verse 3). It was explained there that the seal in the forehead represented a conscious decision to serve God. The head is the seat of all rational thought and decision making. Therefore, if the seal is located in the forehead the person has made a voluntary commitment. Here the mark of the beast in the forehead denotes those who have made a conscious decision to serve the beast and to follow his evil ways. In other words, we are talking about sincere devout Roman Catholics, those who recognize the pope as the head of the universal Church.

What does it mean to have the mark in the right hand? There were many who did not necessarily subscribe to the Catholic viewpoint, but faced with the alternative of persecution, they acknowledged the supremacy of the pope, and practiced Catholic doctrine. They did not truly accept Catholicism, but were merely “shaking hands” with it. It was the most expedient thing for them to do. The reference cited in the above verse contained a sentence which exemplified this attitude.

“The second Lateran Council, in 1139, orders all potentates to coerce heretics into obedience; the third, in 1179, sanctimoniously says that the Church does not seek blood, but it is helped by the secular laws, for men will seek the salutary remedy to escape bodily punishment.”²⁴⁹

Most men did not possess sufficient religious conviction to risk life and limb in the defense of their views. Many people questioned the doctrines of the papacy, but they did so privately. If done openly it would have almost certainly have been harshly addressed by the papacy.

We also notice that everyone “*both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond,*” received the mark. Again the reference cited in the previous verse showed how even kings were subject to overthrow if they did not go along with the dictates of Rome. Certainly, the weak and the poor could offer no opposition to the inquisitor, who in most cases, answered only to Rome. As a result, those in Medieval Europe who did not accept Catholicism, either genuinely or out of convenience, were marked as heretics and punished. If they recanted, their lives might be spared, but if they refused to denounce their heretical beliefs they would be executed without delay. The mark itself is nothing more than practicing Catholicism. It is said to be in the forehead if the person is sincere, and in the right hand if he is only going along with it.

The literal marking of men has been carried out by many cultures of the past. Slaves were often tattooed or branded to facilitate their capture and return if they attempted escape. It was also more difficult for someone to steal slaves if they were so marked. While most slaves do not find themselves enslaved of their own will, there is nonetheless a strong parallel between slavery and Catholicism. Many slaves were born into the condition and never knew anything else. Likewise, most people in medieval Europe were born into a world where allegiance to Rome was a way of life. The papacy had enslaved the masses but they had never known anything else. For most, the mark of the beast was placed in their foreheads by their parents when they were children. Few ever realized that they had the power to remove the chains and be free.

While the true “*mark of the beast*” is not physical, there are some tangible signs that indicate a person does submit to

²⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 224.

the beast. Anything can be a mark of something if it identifies a person with that thing. Therefore, anything which would reveal a person as a Catholic can truly said to be a mark of the beast. Catholic priests and nuns are easily recognized by their dress; this is a mark which identifies them as servants of the beast. On Ash Wednesday, most Catholics will be seen with a small smudge of soot on their foreheads; this identifies them as servants of the beast. Of course, there is the famous “sign of the cross,” which Catholics often make. While all of these items are marks of the beast, none of them are actually THE mark of the beast.

13:17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

We have already seen that those who refused to accept Catholicism were subject to persecution. The papacy launched a severe campaign to stamp out religious dissenters beginning in the twelfth century. There were many different punishments administered by the inquisitors, which included such things as flogging, forced pilgrimages, the wearing of crosses to denote your conviction as a heretic, seizure of property, imprisonment, and even death. It seems quite odd that the cross would be the symbol chosen to mark a heretic, but it was done on a wide scale.

“In this respect the wearing of crosses was even worse. The origin of this penance was that during his missionary labors St. Dominic had ordered penitents to wear two small crosses, sewn on the breast of their clothing in token of contrition. The Inquisition adopted the practice and it was very frequently inflicted, being prescribed, like flagellation, for those who voluntarily made a confession of heresy. Next to imprisonment this penance figures most often in the sentences of Bernhard Gui; it was rather less extensively used later. The small marks which St. Dominic had required became under the Inquisition very large ones—as a rule two-and-a-half palms in height, two in breadth. They were saffron in color and had to be worn one on the breast, the other on the back. Other symbols besides crosses were sometimes used. Thus false witnesses had to wear the symbol of red tongues, prisoners liberated on bail hammers, sorcerers the representation of demons. The wearing of distinguishing marks was designed to be, and was felt to be, a less tolerable penalty than flogging. The shameful garb had to be worn continuously indoors and out, exposing the wearer at all times to the jeers, if not the fanatical hostility, of the crowd. The penance was enjoined sometimes for an indefinite period, and so long as he had to wear it, it would be difficult for the penitent to obtain employment.”²⁵⁰

One aspect of the Inquisition which had a profound effect on everyone was the laws of seizure of property of heretics. Even if the accusations weren’t brought against an individual until after his death, his property would still be seized from his heirs. If a person sold something to another person and was later found to be a heretic, the merchandise would then be seized even though its present owner was not a heretic. This caused people to be very wary of whom they did business with. There was also the possibility of being accused as a collaborator with heretics which added further uncertainty in business dealings. This would make it extremely difficult for those who opposed Rome to buy or sell anything. If a person would not openly proclaim allegiance to the papacy, as true Christians would not, they would likely be turned away by many business establishments. The following passage touches on this subject.

“In addition to the misery inflicted by these wholesale confiscations on the thousands of innocent and helpless women and children thus stripped of everything, it would be almost impossible to exaggerate the evil which they entailed upon all classes in the business of daily life. All safeguards were withdrawn from every transaction. No creditor or purchaser could be sure of the orthodoxy of him with whom he was dealing; and, even more than the principle that ownership was forfeited as soon as heresy had been committed by the living, the practice of proceeding against the memory of the dead after an interval virtually unlimited, rendered it impossible for any man to feel secure in the possession of property, whether it had descended in his family for generations, or had been acquired within an ordinary lifetime.”²⁵¹

²⁵⁰ A. S. Turberville, *Medieval Heresy and the Inquisition*, (London, Archon Books, 1920), pp. 208-9

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

You can see from this just how difficult it must have been to live as a Christian during this time. People were very wary of anyone who acted in the least bit suspicious. Even if someone were trying to lead a Christian life in secret, it would be very hard to go undetected. Even if you weren't turned over to the inquisitors by your neighbors, they probably wouldn't conduct any business with you if they had any reason to suspect that you held views contrary to the official Church doctrine as issued from Rome. Thus we can understand this verse when it tells us that *"no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast."* In those days unless you were a practicing Catholic you would find it very hard to trade with anyone. This is one of the main reasons why many people had the mark of the beast in their right hands. Many of those who did not agree with the papacy, found themselves forced to submit to Rome by the economic realities of the time. Only those with a strong spiritual character would have been able to resist the temptation to buckle under the pressure.

"Save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." We have already said that the mark of the beast is nothing more than living as a Catholic, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. Or in other words, accepting and following the dictates of Rome, regardless of whether or not you agree with them. The name of the beast is the Roman Catholic Church or the papacy. One has the name of the beast if he acknowledges himself to be a Catholic or a subject of the pope. The number of the beast is simply another way to identify him and will be discussed in detail in the next verse.

13:18 Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

"Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast." This is the Lord's way of trying to get our attention. He is about to reveal something to us that we should not miss. This is an important key to identifying the beast. The number of the beast, we are told, is the number of a man. Therefore, we are looking for a man whose name adds up to six-hundred-threescore and six. A score is twenty, which means the number is six-hundred-sixty-six (666), expressed in more common terms.

We need to pay special attention to the statement *"him that hath understanding."* Now this does not mean that you must have a degree from Harvard to figure this out, but it does mean that we need to think about it before we just start trying to fit this number to every prominent person we can think of. One does not have to look far to find any number of wild speculations as to the identity of this man. People will put forward ideas that really have no basis in reality whatsoever. We must realize that whoever this man is, he must fit one way or another with the rest of the book of Revelation.

For nearly two-thousand years now, man has argued and debated about the infamous "man of 666." I suppose the most common view today is that this man is the so-called "antichrist." This, however, is simply not possible. The truth is that there is no such person as THE antichrist. Despite all the hype in the world today, there is not one single shred of biblical evidence to support the notion of a man called the antichrist.

The word antichrist(s) is only used four times in the Bible; all by the Apostle John. The word antichrist simply denotes a person who is against Christ. Notice the following passages: *"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time"* (I John 2:18). Here John says there were already MANY antichrists in his day. Clearly he did not believe that there was to be just one person with that designation.

"Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (I John 2:22). Here John says that EVERYONE who denies Jesus is an antichrist. Again this runs contrary to the idea that there is to be one man with this title.

"And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (I John 4:3). Again, John applies the terms to all those who deny Christ. He once again says it was already present in his day. There is no way to make this verse harmonize with the modern idea of AN antichrist.

“For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist” (II John 1:7). Again, John says that anyone who denies Christ is AN antichrist. He never refers to THE antichrist anywhere. The Bible simply does not mention such a character. Those who espouse such an idea have misinterpreted and perverted the word of God in order to do so.

Although there is no such person as THE antichrist, there is a very evil man which the Bible does talk about. Many of the passages which refer to this man are often attributed to the mythical antichrist. I am referring to *“the man of sin,”* or the *“son of perdition.”* The apostle Paul spoke extensively of this person in II Thessalonians chapter two. *“Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day (the end of the world) shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition”* (II Thessalonians 2:3). We are talking about none other than the pope of Rome here.

This becomes very evident when we look at the next verse. *“Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God”* (II Thessalonians 2:4). The pope has exalted himself to the point where he claims to be Christ’s one and only representative here on the earth. He claims to speak for God and to have the final say in all matters of doctrine. He has been so pompous and arrogant as to claim that he is infallible in all matters of Church doctrine. He even claims the power to forgive sins. This is exactly what this verse describes. A man who has elevated himself to the point where he is equal with God.

“And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming” (II Thessalonians 2:8). Here the pope is also referred to as *“that wicked.”* That title certainly fits the pope well, since he is the puppet of the master of all that is wicked, Satan. We are told that the Lord will destroy him with the spirit of his mouth. We have already discussed this at several places in our study. In His letter to Pergamos, Christ promises to come and fight against them with the sword of His mouth (Revelation 2:16). We saw this fulfilled in chapter eleven when the angel came down from Heaven and delivered the Bible to the common people. The Bible was the sword of the Lord’s mouth that He had promised to use to destroy the power of the papacy, and He did just that.

“Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders” (II Thessalonians 2:9). Here we have confirmed for us what we already knew. The pope’s work is of Satan, and not of God as he so boastfully claims. *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”* (II Thessalonians 2:10). We know the pope uses deception to coerce his followers into believing his teachings. He has rewritten the Bible to fit his own needs. He claims his words to be equal to the Bible in authority, although in practice they carry more weight than the Bible. *“Them that perish”* refers to those who are duped by the pope and follow his false teachings. Many people have the opportunity to study the Bible and do not take it. Were they to study diligently they would discover the deceptions of the papacy, and then be able to turn from it and embrace God. If a person fails to study when he has the opportunity it is his own fault for being deceived. Therefore he must bear the responsibility for his participation in the worship of the beast.

Then Paul tells us why people willingly follow something which is so obviously in error. They *“received not the love of the truth.”* What this means is that so many people do not have the spiritual interest and motivation to put forth the time and effort to check out the pope’s story. They accept it without first checking God’s word to see if the pope’s claims to authority are justified. For most people it is easier to take the priest’s word as good, than to spend their own time studying.

I heard a friend of mine say once that love equals time. When he explained it I realized how profound a statement it really was. If you love someone, then you will try to spend a great deal of time with them, whether it is your children, husband or wife, parents, or just friends. When we care about someone we want to be around them. Similarly, if we love to hunt or fish, then we will try to spend a lot of time hunting or fishing. If we love to watch television or listen to the radio we will spend many hours doing that. The point is that whatever we love we put time into. Paul speaks of a *“love of the truth.”* If we really love God’s Word, and we certainly should, then we will spend a good deal of time in studying it. If we do this we will certainly realize how erroneous the teachings of the papacy are.

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie. That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thessalonians 2:11-12). God will not force anyone to accept His teachings. If someone wishes to accept error then God will allow him to do so. In fact He will even make it easy for that person. He will send them a strong delusion and they will believe the lies of the pope or other false teachers. This is a grave warning to all professed Christians to be careful what they believe. We should not misunderstand the meaning of this passage and think God is purposefully trying to deceive anyone. It is not God’s desire that any man should be lost. *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (II Peter 3:9).

The delusion which Paul speaks of is a very subtle one. It is the way in which the Bible is written. Have you ever wondered why God did not organize things in the Bible a little better? In order to study a particular subject a person may have to scrutinize several dozen passages. There is no doubt that the Bible would be much easier to understand and follow if, for example, all of Paul’s writings were in one book instead of fourteen. A book in which he proceeded logically from one subject to the next. But it is not this way at all and for a very good reason; God demands dedication. It takes dedication to study the Bible. Intelligence, education, and similar attributes, contribute much less to a person’s success in studying the Bible than does dedication and sincerity.

Take for example the subject of baptism. There are millions of people who believe it is necessary for salvation, but there are many more millions who believe it is not. Regardless of who’s right, millions of people are wrong. Are we to believe that God did not know this dispute would arise? Certainly He did. Then why did He not try to avert it. He could have had one of the New Testament writers include a very clear unmistakable statement on this subject that could be understood with little or no effort, but He did not do this. He left it so that serious study was needed and as a result many who were neither dedicated nor sincere would be deceived. This is the *“strong delusion”* which God sends.

Another passage which we should mention at this time is found in I Timothy chapter four. *“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth”* (I Timothy 4:1-4). Here Paul tells us that some men shall depart from the faith; this means they will depart from true Christianity. The cause of this will be that they will listen to the *“doctrines of devils.”* Paul then tells us what two of these doctrines are, *“forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats.”* There is no need to beat around the proverbial bush here. I would suppose that everyone knows exactly who practices these *“doctrines of devils.”* Since the sixth century the Catholic Church has forbade their clergy to marry. Until a few years ago Catholics were not allowed to eat red meat on Fridays. Neither of these things are commanded by the Bible, therefore for Rome to bind them on people is to usurp the authority to legislate laws of the Church, an authority which belongs to God alone. The evidence pointing to the evils of the papacy in the Bible is just overwhelming. Even though we can be certain that the papacy is from Satan, all of this still does nothing to tell us if the pope is indeed the man of 666?

First of all we must establish how a name is counted. Some have suggested that a name with six letters in the first, middle, and last names is what it means. For example, some discontented liberals suggested the man could be Ronald Wilson Reagan. Others have come up with many different ways of counting. They have found ways to make Napoleon, Hitler and a host of others the man of 666.

The problem, is that to English speaking people the answer will not be all that apparent. Our alpha and numeric systems are separate and distinct. What this means is that our alphabet and our numbers are not related. While this may be true for English, it is not for many other languages. In many languages certain of the letters also double as numbers. Most everyone is familiar with Roman numerals. These numerals are also letters in the Latin alphabet. When using a language of this sort, it becomes readily apparent how a name is counted. You simply add up the value of all the numerals in the name. For example, the name Eddie Lincoln has a value of 1102. All one has to do is pull out the numbers and add them up. If you wish to check my math the value of Roman numerals is listed below in table IX.

I believe too, that Americans are often perhaps a little conceited when they assume that this name will be in English. What would justify such a thought? The beast, the man of 666, had his power during the 1,260 year period from A.D. 533 to 1793. What was the predominant language during this period of time? This period of time corresponds roughly to the period known as the Dark Ages. During this time learning was nearly absent in Europe except in the monasteries of the Catholic Church. The language they used was Latin. Therefore, it would seem logical that the number of the beast should be counted using the predominant language of the time period of his power. Furthermore, there is no argument that Latin is by far the most important language of the entire Christian era.

We now need to turn back to the history of the period in question to learn if the pope indeed bore a title that equates to 666. As was mentioned back in verse five, the pope's full title is "Bishop of Rome, Vicar of Jesus Christ, Successor of the Prince of the Apostles, Supreme pontiff of the Universal Church, Patriarch of the West, Primate of Italy, Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province, and Sovereign of the State of Vatican City."²⁵² Let's break this down and examine closely each part of the title and see just how blasphemous or presumptuous they are. The last part, "Sovereign of the State of Vatican City" deals solely with the pope's temporal power. He is the ruler of the smallest sovereign nation on earth. These next five parts list, in order of increasing power, list the spiritual titles the pope claims. "Bishop of Rome," "Archbishop and Metropolitan of the Roman Province," "Primate of Italy," "Patriarch of the West" and "Supreme pontiff of the Universal Church." All five of these presume authority which is not authorized by the scriptures. Actually all of these things are true, the pope is all of these things. The only problem is that according to God's word the pope shouldn't be any of these things. The papacy does lots of things that are unscriptural, and these titles in and of themselves are not noteworthy enough to be the subject of our search. "Successor of the Prince of the Apostles" is more egregious in that is now directly attacks the Bible. It makes Peter out to be something he was not. It makes a mockery of the model of leadership established by Christ in the New Testament Church. The ultimate in self-serving, presumptuous blasphemy is the title "Vicar of Jesus Christ." It is bad enough to take liberties with God's word and change it to suit your own needs, but to claim to have the authority to speak for God is absolutely incorrigible. Vicar means "a person who represents and performs duties for a higher official in a church. The term comes from the Latin word *vicarius*, meaning a *substitute*. The pope of the Roman Catholic Church is called the Vicar of Christ on earth."²⁵³

Did you catch the meaning of the word vicar? Substitute! The pope claims to be the Christ's substitute. We all no doubt remember having substitute teachers in school. The substitute may now have really taught anything, yet they still yielded the full authority of the teacher. In fact, you would probably get into more trouble for embarrassing the teacher by acting up when she wasn't there. The pope is not actually claiming to be Jesus, just someone who sits in His seat and wields the same power and authority. That is why he can forgive sins and change church doctrine. What is so absurd is that millions of people fall for it! It was understandable when people did not have Bibles, but now they are just too lazy to study them!

"The title of 'vicar of Jesus Christ,' borne by the popes, was introduced as their special designation during the 8th century, in place of the older style of 'vicar of St. Peter' (or *vicarius principis apostolorum*)."²⁵⁴

It is quite interesting and informative to learn where and how this title originated. It gives us clear insight into the deceptive workings of the beast. The title first appears in a document known as the Donation of Constantine, a letter supposedly written by Emperor Constantine to pope Sylvester in the fourth century. The following is an excerpt which shows the first use of the term vicar of Christ.

"And when, the blessed Sylvester preaching them, I perceived these things, and learned that by the kindness of St. Peter himself I had been entirely restored to health: I together with all our satraps and the whole senate and the nobles and all the Roman people, who are subject to the glory of our rule -considered

²⁵² Ibid., s.v. "Pope."

²⁵³ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. "vicar."

²⁵⁴ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. "vicar."

it advisable that, as on earth he (Peter) is seen to have been constituted vicar of the Son of God, so the pontiffs, who are the representatives of that same chief of the apostles, should obtain from us and our empire the power of a supremacy greater than the earthly clemency of our imperial serenity is seen to have had conceded to it,—we choosing that same prince of the apostles, or his vicars, to be our constant intercessors with God. And, to the extent of our earthly imperial power, we decree that his holy Roman church shall be honoured with veneration; and that, more than our empire and earthly throne, the most sacred seat of St. Peter shall be gloriously exalted; we giving to it the imperial power, and dignity of glory, and vigour and honour.”²⁵⁵

This letter, however, was a forgery, this was well established as early as the fifteenth century. The following passage provide us with some very interesting information concerning the true origins of the letter.

“The supposed grant by the emperor Constantine, in gratitude for his conversion by Pope Silvester, to that pope and his successors for ever, not only of spiritual supremacy over the other great patriarchates and over all matters of faith and worship, but also of temporal dominion over Rome, Italy and ‘the provinces, places and civitates of the western regions.’

The famous document, known as the *Constitutum Constantini* and compounded of various elements (notably the apocryphal *Vita S. Silvestri*), now universally admitted to be a gross forgery, was fabricated at Rome between the middle and the end of the 8th century, was included in the 9th century in the collection known as the False Decretals, and two centuries later was incorporated in the *Decretum* by a pupil of Gratian. It was regarded as genuine both by the friends and the enemies of the papal pretensions throughout the middle ages, though at the close of the 10th century Leo of Vercelli, Otto III.'s chancellor, proclaimed its true character, as, in 1452, did the heretical followers of Arnold of Brescia. Though little use of it was made by the popes during the 9th and 10th centuries, from this time forward it was increasingly employed by popes and canonists in support of the papal claims, and from the 12th century onward became a powerful weapon of the spiritual against the temporal powers. It is, however, as Cardinal Hergenrother points out, possible to exaggerate its importance in this respect. By the partisans of the Empire the Donation was looked upon as the *fons et origo malorum*, and Constantine was regarded as having, in his newborn zeal, betrayed his imperial trust.

The genuineness of the *Constitutum* was first critically assailed by Laurentius Valla in 1440, whose *De falso credita et ementita Constantini donatione declamatio* opened a controversy that lasted until, at the close of the 18th century, the defence was silenced. In modern times the controversy as to the genuineness of the document has been succeeded by a debate scarcely less lively as to its date, its authorship and place of origin. The efforts of Roman Catholic scholars have been directed (since Baronius ascribed the forgery to the Greeks) to proving that the fraud was not committed at Rome. Thus Cardinal Hergenrother holds that it was written by a Frank in the 9th century, in order to prove that the Greeks had been rightfully expelled from Italy and that Charlemagne was legitimate emperor. The evidence now available, however, confirms those who ascribe an earlier date to the forgery and place it at Rome. The view held by Gibbon, Dollinger (*Papstfabeln des Mittelalters*, Eng. tr. 1871) and others, that the *Constitutum* is referred to in the letter of Adrian I. to Charlemagne (778), is now largely rejected; and the same must be said of Friedrich's attempt to find such reference in the letter addressed in 785 by the same pope to Constantine VI., emperor of the East, and his mother Irene. Still less safe is it to ascribe the authorship of the forgery to any particular pope on the ground of its style; for papal letters were drawn up in the papal chancery and the style employed there was apt to persist through several pontificates.

On one point, however, agreement seems now to have been reached, a result due to the labours of Scheffer-Boichorst (*Mitteilungen des Instituts für osterr. Geschichtsforschung*, x., 1889), xi., 1890), namely; that the style of the *Constitutum* is generally that of the papal chancery in the latter half of the 8th century. This being granted, there is room for plentiful speculation as to where and why it was concocted. We may still hold the opinion of Dollinger that it was intended to impress the barbarian Pippin and justify in his eyes the

²⁵⁵ Ernest F. Henderson, *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages*, (London: George Bell, 1910), pp. 319-329

Frank intervention in favour of the pope in Italy; or we may share the view of Loening that the forgery was a pious fraud on the part of a cleric of the Curia, committed under Adrian I., with the idea of giving a legal basis to territorial dominion which that pope had succeeded in establishing in Italy. The donations of Pippin and Charlemagne established him as sovereign *de facto*; the donation of Constantine was to proclaim him as sovereign *de jure*. It is significant in this connection that it was under Adrian (c. 774) that the papal chancery ceased to date by the regnal years of the Eastern emperor and substituted that of the pontificate.”²⁵⁶

This leaves little doubt that this document was forged by papal writers in Rome with the consent of, and probably at the direction of, one of the popes. In their quest for power and wealth they would stop at nothing. After all, if they were willing to alter God’s word for their own purposes, forging a document such as this is a trivial matter. The fact that the papacy did something such as this is not surprising and really isn’t the point we should be concerned with. The real point is since the papacy was responsible for writing it, they created the term ‘vicar of Christ’ for themselves. It is this title which has come to be THE primary title of the popes. I believe they feel a need to use this title as much as possible. For in this title lies the whole of the Roman apostasy. It is the pope’s position as vicar of Christ that gives him the authority to go against so many biblical principles. Therefore it is paramount that they emphasize this point over and over and over.

Now the questions is, does the pope’s title the “vicar of Christ” add up to 666 in Latin? The Latin or Roman numeric system is given below.

THE ROMAN NUMERIC SYSTEM	
Letter	Numerical Equivalent
I	1
V	5
X	10
L	50
C	100
D	500
M	1000

Table IX

In Latin vicar of Christ is “vicarius filii Dei.” Now counting the pope’s title we have the results given in table X.

²⁵⁶ *Britannica*, 1929, s.v. “Donation of Constantine.”

THE NUMBER OF THE POPE'S NAME	
Name	Numerical Equivalent
V	5
I	1
C	100
A	-
R	-
I	1
V	5
S	-
F	-
I	1
L	50
I	1
I	1
D	500
E	-
I	1
TOTAL	666

Table X

The reason that the letter 'u' in vicarious is written as a 'v' in the table is that the Latin alphabet does not contain the letter 'u.' Therefore 'u' and 'v' are considered to be the same letter.

We have now identified the infamous man of 666. It should not come as any surprise that this man turned out to be the pope. Everything we have seen thus far has been pointing in that direction. He may not be THE antichrist, but he (the popes down through the ages) has certainly done more to harm god's people than anyone else.

Chapter Fourteen

The Seven Vials: Preparation for the seven vials

14:1 And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads.

The Lamb, which we have now seen many times, is Christ. The Lamb stood upon mount Zion which was part of the city of Jerusalem. “*For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem*” (Isaiah 30:19). Zion was also known as the city of David. “*Nevertheless David took the strong hold of Zion: the same is the city of David*” (II Samuel 5:7). Zion figured very prominently in the history of the Old Testament. It was the residence of David and Solomon as the kings of Israel, and of their successors as the kings of Judah. It also figured prominently in Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ. One prophesy pictures Christ coming out of Zion. “*The Lord said unto my Lord, 'Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.' The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies*” (Psalm 110:1-2). He is said to come out of Zion because He was the heir to the throne of David who ruled from that city.

Christ had with Him a large group of 144,000 people. In chapter seven we likewise saw this 144,000 and found that they represented the Church in its infancy, when it was composed only of Jews. They had the name of God “*written in their foreheads.*” We have seen this expression several times already. We even saw it in the last chapter referring to those who had the mark of the beast in their foreheads. All this means is that they served God with their minds. They had made a conscious choice to obey God and to turn away from sin.

Chapter thirteen described to us the rise of two evil beasts that are the work of Satan. Chapter fourteen now gives us a picture of Christ and His Church standing in the City of the Kings. Since the Church was composed only of Jews at the time spoken of here, we know that it was in its infancy. We are in essence seeing the Church rise out of Mount Zion, just as we saw the two evil beasts rise from the earth and sea in the last chapter. The purpose of all this is that God is showing us the “players” in the great drama which is going to be played out in subsequent chapters.

14:2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:

John now hears a voice, but he does not identify the speaker. He does tell us that the voice had the character of many waters and thunder. We have seen both of these descriptions used before. We have said previously that these voices do not actually sound like water and thunder, but John is merely alluding to the strength and power of the voices by comparing them to these two phenomena. Christ's voice was likened to many waters in chapter one. In chapter four

it was said that “*thundering and voices*” proceeded from the throne of God. In chapter six the voice of one of the four beasts was likened to thunder.

Since we are not given any clue as to what was said we must conclude the message itself is not important to us here. It was not what was said that was significant to us, merely the fact that something was said. Since we are dealing with the establishment of the Church here, it is safe to assume that this voice had something to do with that. In the account of the creation in Genesis chapter one, we continually find the statement “*God said.*” John chapter one tells us that Christ is the Word of God. Therefore, when God speaks Christ is involved, since He is the Word. This is part of the mystery of the Godhead. You could put it this way, God thinks it, Christ says it, and the Holy Spirit carries it out. Here in our present case, we find a voice speaking at the same time Christ was active in the establishment of His Church. Therefore, it seems reasonable that this is the voice of God showing the activity of Christ, the living Word of God. In addition to the thunderous voice, John also heard harpers playing. This represents the heavenly host’s joy and celebration over the salvation of man, through the sacrifice of Christ.

14:3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.

John now sees the multitude of 144,000 singing a song of praise to God. That it was a song of praise to God is implied in the statement “*before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders.*” In Heaven man is to praise God continually. “*Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them*” (Revelation 7:15). Therefore, since the 144,000 were in Heaven they must have been praising God. This song was undoubtedly a song praising God for their deliverance from sin. God had now kept His promise to Israel, a promise that went all the way back to the days of the great patriarch Abraham. It was to Abraham that God promised the Messiah who would benefit all mankind. “*And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed*” (Genesis 26:4). Now the Jews are the first to enjoy the blessings of the Christ by being granted first access to His Church.

“*No man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand.*” This is not because the song was too hard, or that it was sung in some strange language. What this really means is that only the Jews were included in this 144,000 and no one else was allowed to join them for the present time. We are looking here at the beginning of the Church before the Gospel was given to the Gentiles; this was the first three and one-half years. The Jews enjoyed a very unique relationship with God, and no Gentile could rightly lay claim to it. Only the Jews could sing of their salvation through Christ at this time. Verse six will show us the inclusion of the Gentiles into the Church.

Someone might object and say that certainly there had to be at least a few Gentiles in the Church during the first three and one-half years. You could make a very reasonable argument for this to be the case. Wouldn’t it be plausible to assume that somewhere, a Jew had a Gentile friend who was converted before Cornelius? Unfortunately, assumptions are just that, assumptions, unless we can back them up. All the evidence lends credence to the notion that not even a single Gentile became a member of the Lord’s Church during the first three and one-half years.

The idea of the three and one-half year period comes from prophecies of Daniel concerning Christ. “*And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate*” (Daniel 9:26-27).

The seven days of this week, in real time seven years, were in effect a missionary period for God among the Jews. This is what Daniel was referring to when he said, “*he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.*” This week began with the ministry of Christ; for three and one-half years Christ preached and taught among the Jewish people. Then, His ministry concluded, He was crucified on the cross. This is when the Messiah was “*cut off.*” He was cut off in the middle of this period as is shown by this phrase, “*in the midst of the week he shall cause the*

sacrifice and the oblation to cease.” The sacrifice and oblation has reference to the offerings under the Old Law. When Christ died on the cross He fulfilled the Old Law and thereafter it was no longer in effect and the offerings which were part of it were no longer accepted by God.

When Jesus died the veil in the Temple, which covered the entrance into the Most Holy Place, was torn in two. *“Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent”* (Matthew 27:50-51). The rending of the veil evidenced that God would no longer accept sacrifices offered in the Temple. The Most Holy Place was where the high priest went yearly on the Day of Atonement to offer a sacrifice for the sins of the people. However, since the perfect Lamb had been offered on the cross, there would no longer be a reason for the Temple sacrifices. The apostle Paul explained well the end of the Old Law. *“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross”* (Colossians 2:14).

Daniel told us that the covenant was to be confirmed with man for one week. Christ was crucified in the middle of this week, and for the remaining three and one-half years the apostles continued the work by carrying the gospel to the Jews. It is very easy to see from the conversion of Cornelius that the apostles did not recognize the Gentiles as being fit for membership in the Lord’s Church. Peter said to Cornelius, *“Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?”* (Acts 10:28-29). Peter was convinced by a vision given him of God that the Gentiles were to be offered the opportunity for salvation. *“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, ‘Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him.’”* (Acts 10:34-35).

Peter, and the Jews who had accompanied him, were amazed at what happened after the gospel was preached to Cornelius and his family. *“And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, ‘Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days”* (Acts 10:45-48).

Does their reaction suggest any possibility that they have allowed ANY Gentiles into their fellowship previously? Then when others heard that Peter had preached the gospel to Gentiles, they confronted him about what they perceived to be a grievous error. *“And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. And when Peter was come up to Jerusalem, they that were of the circumcision contended with him, saying, ‘Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them’”* (Acts 11:1-3). Peter then recounted the entire episode to them, and *“When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, ‘Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life’”* (Acts 11:18).

Clearly, the only conclusion we can possibly reach is that not even one single Gentile became a member of the Church during its first three and one-half years, until the conversion of Cornelius. Therefore, we have no difficulty saying this 144,000 is comprised entirely of Jews.

14:4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.

John continues here to give us the characteristics of the 144,000. They are said to be virgins, not defiled with women. This is not spoken in the physical, but the spiritual sense. God has never commanded physical celibacy for anyone, but has commanded spiritual celibacy for everyone. God spoke of the nation of Israel as a virgin. *“Turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities”* (Jeremiah 31:21). The Apostle Paul referred to the Church as a virgin. *“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (II Corinthians 11:2). The idea here is that these Jews had not defiled themselves with idols or any type of false worship. You may notice that we are speaking of things reminiscent of the woman in

chapter twelve. In fact the 144,000 and the woman are one and the same during the time the gospel went only to the Jews.

“These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.” Christ said *“If ye love me keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). Members of the Lord’s Church will do anything and everything that Christ has commanded of them without hesitation. Just as sheep willingly follow their own shepherd without doubt, these Christians did what they were commanded of Christ without questioning His reasons.

“These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb.” These are redeemed because they have submitted themselves to God’s will and lived lives of obedience to Him. These people were the *“firstfruits”* which means they were the first *“fruits”* harvested. This is probably the greatest clue that these 144,000 are the Jewish converts to Christianity. They were the first, preceding the rest of mankind by 3½ years.

14:5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Guile is from the Greek word *“dolos”* which Strong’s defines as *“a trick (bait), i.e. (figuratively) wile:-craft, deceit, guile, subtily.”*²⁵⁷ The idea here is that these people did not speak deceitfully. This in turn implies purity of heart. Christ said *“For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man”* (Mark 7:21-23). This agrees with the statement that they are *“without fault.”* The fact that they are *“Before the throne of God”* shows their acceptance in Heaven for their faithful service to God.

14:6 And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people,

The first five verses of this chapter have shown us the first three and one-half of the Church when it was composed of Jews only. Now we see the *“everlasting gospel”* is being taken to the rest of mankind. This is synonymous with Acts chapter ten when the gospel was first given to the Gentiles in the person of Cornelius and his household. The fact that an angel brought the gospel from Heaven shows its divine origin.

14:7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

John had been seeing a vision that showed him the beginning of the Church. Once he has seen this, the angel tells him something that suddenly brings us back to the eighteenth century. *“The hour of his judgment is come,”* refers to God’s impending judgment of Rome. Judgment is from the Greek *“krisis,”* which Strong’s defines as *“decision (subjective or objective, for or against); by extension a tribunal; by implication justice (specifically divine law):- accusation, condemnation, damnation, judgment.”*²⁵⁸ In short, justice will now be served. Rome will get what she has deserved for a very long time now. The angel exhorts men to *“fear God, and give glory to him.”* God has tolerated Rome’s sins for a long time now. Many generations have seemingly gotten away with their disobedience to God, but now His wrath is about to be poured out in great measure. A wise man will abandon ship while he still has the opportunity.

“Worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” The angel now exhorts men to worship God, and then gives a good reason why. He mentions God’s power in creating the world upon which man lives. This shows man’s dependence on God for His very survival. It is as the Apostle Paul said, speaking of God, *“For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, ‘For we are also*

²⁵⁷ Strong, 1982, s.v. *“Greek #1388”*

²⁵⁸ Ibid., s.v. *“Greek #2920.”*

his offspring” (Acts 17:28). The angel here is advising the worship of God as opposed to the worship of the pope which has been so widespread.

14:8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

John now sees a second angel flying through Heaven proclaiming another message. The subject of this message is the fall of Babylon. The Babylonian Empire fell in the sixth century B.C. to the Medo-Persian Empire. The city continued to exist, however, until the third century A.D. Clearly the angel’s message cannot concern a city that was destroyed so long ago; and indeed it does not. The name Babylon is used to represent another city that has many things in common with the original Babylon. That city is Rome. Babylon was the captor of the nation of Judah, and held God’s people in slavery and oppression for many years. Likewise, Rome oppressed God’s people for centuries. Therefore, Rome, because of its great evil, is referred to by the name of another very evil city, Babylon.

At the time the angel is speaking, the papacy had not yet fallen. This statement is made just prior to the beginning of God’s vengeance. This statement is made in prospect of a foregone conclusion. This is similar to a football game where one team is winning by thirty points in the third quarter. People will then say “this game’s already over.” They certainly did not mean it was over in the sense that the clock had expired, because there was still an entire quarter to play. The game could be said to be over in the sense that the final outcome was beyond doubt. Similarly, the outcome of God’s battle against Rome was certain. Rome was about to be toppled; it was just a matter of when the clock would tick down to zero.

“She made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.” Rome seduced the rest of Europe into following her evil ways. We have already seen where spiritual unfaithfulness has been spoken of as fornication in several places, the same thing is done here. Wine is spoken of here to denote Rome’s effect on the rest of the world. When a person is drunk they lose sight of reality and, as a result, exercise very poor judgment. Wicked men have always sought to get women drunk so that they could “take advantage of them.” We have the same thing occurring here. Although we are not speaking of real alcohol, Rome attempted to seduce the world governments through political and spiritual maneuverings. One such deception was the apparent miracles that the beast in chapter thirteen was capable of performing. *“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast”* (Revelation 13:14). Rome sought to intoxicate Europe with her religious babbling and hocus pocus, and then take advantage of them while they were in a compromising position.

14:9 And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand,

14:10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb:

A third angel now delivers another message. The message is simple, anyone who takes part in the sins of the Roman Catholic Church will suffer the effects of God’s wrath which is about to be unleashed. Again the mark in the forehead or hand simply denotes obedience to the Catholic Church either out of belief of their doctrines or out of fear of reprisal if you did not cooperate. Either way you have forsaken God if you give in to the Catholics. All such people will be subject to the great wrath of God which is about to be unleashed. The *“wine of the wrath of God,”* unlike the wine of the wrath of the beast’s fornication, is not meant to deceive. The idea is that the wrath of God will be so severe that the Catholics will be staggered and amazed by it as if they were drunk. *“Poured out without mixture.”* Quite often things are diluted or watered down before they are used because they would be too overpowering otherwise. In this case, the wrath of God will be poured out full strength since it is intended to overpower and destroy. This shows the severity of the punishment. God will have no mercy on the papacy since she has shown no mercy toward His children. *“For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment”* (James 2:13).

“He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.” Those who side with the beast will be punished with fire and brimstone. We normally associate these things with

eternal Hell. In fact, in chapter twenty, we find the “*lake of fire and brimstone*” mentioned as the place where the devil and the beast will be cast. This will be at the end of the world and we have not yet reached that point in our story. Sometimes fire and brimstone are spoken of without referring to eternal Hell. In Genesis 19:24 God literally rained fire and brimstone out of heaven upon Sodom and Gomorrah. David even used this term in a figurative sense. “*Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup*” (Psalm 11:6). All that is meant in our present case is that the beast’s punishment will be extremely severe. This point is proven by the last phrase of the verse, “*in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb.*” This shows that eternal Hell is not under consideration, because the holy angels and the Lamb will not be there. These will simply witness the just punishment of the beast here on the earth.

14:11 And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.

Continuing the thought of the previous verse, the Catholics will be punished with “*fire and brimstone*” which will result in “*the smoke of their torment.*” When something is on fire the smoke rises into the sky for all to see. Likewise, the world will see the smoke of the beast’s destruction. Chapter eighteen talks extensively about the world’s reaction to the beast’s demise.

“*For ever and ever*” shows that their punishment will not be temporary. Once the papacy has fallen she will never recover. “*They have no rest day nor night,*” shows us that the great persecutors, the Catholic Church, will become the persecuted. They will learn what it is like to be the hunted and the harassed. They will suffer at the hands of God the things they have inflicted upon His people for over a thousand years.

14:12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.

When the destruction of Spiritual Rome gets under way it will have had power for 1,260 years. Throughout all of this time God’s people have had to demonstrate tremendous patience awaiting their avenging by God. All they can do is continue to follow the commandments of God and leave everything else up to Him. The statement “*here is the patience of the saints,*” refers back to the previous verse. He has just shown His people the destruction of the papacy, something they have looked forward to for centuries. Then in this verse He tells them that it is the payoff for their patience. They had to wait and endure many things, but now all will be avenged, and their patience will have been rewarded.

14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.

Here John is told to write that those who die in the Lord after the fall of spiritual Rome are blessed. Certainly, anyone who dies in the Lord is blessed since Heaven will be his eternal home. Why is a special blessing pronounced upon those who die after the fall of the papacy? The key to understanding this is in the latter half of the verse. “*Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.*” To rest from one’s labors means to pass from this life of work and toil. This is true for men of all ages. But for someone’s works to follow them means that the things they have done will continue to have an effect long after their death. During the period when the papacy enjoyed her power it greatly limited the Lord’s Church. Today it is not at all uncommon to find congregations which have been in existence for well over 100 years, or to find the effects of a man continuing decades after his death. As long as the Catholics had their power, Christians were constantly under threat of persecution. Christians were often found and killed as heretics. This did not end the Lord’s Church but certainly ended many congregations and scattered others throughout this period of time. The reason that the Church did not completely pass away under the stress of this persecution is that others were continually discovering the truth and keeping it alive.

There is also another way in which Christians who live after the fall of the papacy can be said to be blessed. There are two important factors which affect the Church, these are peace and prosperity. Peace means no significant

persecution, and prosperity means the Church is strong and growing. For the first three centuries of its existence the Church prospered, but had little peace. Then when Constantine made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire peace was achieved. Unfortunately, however, corruption became rampant and prosperity was lost. Then the Church did not enjoy a good measure of peace or prosperity until the early nineteenth century. After the fall of the papacy the Church experienced a period of unparalleled peace and prosperity, particularly in America. In this sense also those who live after the fall of spiritual Rome are blessed. They are privileged to live in the golden age of the Lord's Church.

14:14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

Now John looks and sees someone sitting on a cloud. He says this person looks like the Son of man, but he does not say it is Him. It is doubtful that this was actually Christ sitting on the cloud because we will see in the next verse that an angel tells this person to do something. It does not seem likely that an angel would be giving instructions to Christ. This person was most likely an angel. The crown suggests the angel possesses power and authority. The angel also had a sharp sickle in his hand. A sickle is an instrument made of a curved metal blade with a wooden handle and is normally used to harvest grain. When it is swung the blade will cut the stalks of grain allowing them to be gathered for threshing. This sickle will be used by the angel to reap in the next verse.

14:15 And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe.

Now John sees another angel come from the temple, which is the dwelling place of God. This angel tells the angel sitting on the cloud to use his sickle to reap the earth. The harvest is said to be ripe which means the time to reap has come, but we are not told what is to be reaped. Obviously we are not talking about actual grain here, but the earth's spiritual harvest of souls. It is very tempting to form a picture in our minds of the "Grim Reaper" in a black robe carrying a sharp sickle in his hand coming to do evil to mankind. We should remember, however, that these are angels doing the reaping so they will not harm God's people. Any destruction wrought by these angels will be directed against the Roman Catholic powers. Although it might be tempting to say this is at the end of the world our context will not allow that conclusion. We are at present dealing with the destruction of the Catholic powers, and not the end of time.

14:16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

The angel sitting on the cloud did as he was instructed and used his sickle to reap the earth. There are no negative comments made about those being reaped here at all. In the following few verses we will see another scene where a harvest is reaped. That harvest is spoken of as a harvest of wrath. This one, however, is not. What we have here is the harvest of the righteous. To say they are harvested, does not mean that their lives were cut down and they were removed from the earth. The purpose of a harvest is to remove a crop from a field, where it is of no use, and place it in a position where it can be used. Here God is gathering up all of His scattered people, they are uniting, and the Church will spread and grow as a result. We have here a picture of the Restoration. While the Reformation accomplished many good things, foremost of which was the weakening of the papacy's power over world governments, it fell short in the end. The cry of many reformers was that the Bible should be the only source for spiritual knowledge. While they might have set out with good intentions most failed to reach the desired end. It was not until the turn of the eighteenth century that a significant and successful movement was undertaken to actually RESTORE Christianity on a wide scale to its original form, rather than just REFORM the present corrupt system. This movement was known as the Restoration.

The Reformation was instrumental in weakening and eventually toppling the Catholic Church from power. The reformers did a great deal of hard work and many paid for their efforts with their lives. As the dust of the Reformation settled, and Rome fell, the door was opened wide for the Lord's people to come out of hiding and to "restore" the Church to its rightful position. Men such as Walter Scott, Barton W. Stone, James O'Kelly and many others began to boldly proclaim God's truth, where all had been too afraid to do so only a few years before. In many

cases men began to teach and practice the same doctrines, though they were separated by hundreds of miles and had never heard of each other. The reason they were able to do the same things without having any knowledge of each other is that they were all following the Bible in its simplicity, laying aside the doctrines of men which had so corrupted the work of the Reformers.

“Only by believing that God was leading them can you account for the fact that these men living in widely separated communities, unknown to each other, were devoting their efforts to one subject, the restoration of the church as it was in the apostolic age. Years elapsed before James O’Kelly, Abner Jones, Elias Smith and Barton Stone learned of each other’s work in their respective fields, but when they learned of the work of restoration that was being carried on by others, they saw that they were all striving for the same thing. They were not working for the reformation of any religious group, but for the restoration of the ONE CHURCH of the New Testament. So we have religious leaders who once called themselves Methodists, Baptists and Presbyterians, all working for unity, all wanting to wear no other name but Christian, all working for the restoration of the word of God as the only safe guide in religious matters.

They were searching for unity. Not a unity achieved by one group giving up their creed and accepting the creed of another group, but the unity brought about by all of them giving up their respective creeds, confessions of faith, church manuals, and taking their stand on the divinely inspired word of the Lord. Here was a guide all could accept. They did not ask their religious neighbors to reject their own creed and accept one formed by them, but only to do as they had done, to surrender their belief in and their obedience to all human doctrines and accept in their stead the doctrines proclaimed by Christ and his apostles.”²⁵⁹

The work of these men truly followed them as this verse had said it would. The men of this era did much to rebuild and strengthen the Lord’s Church into a flourishing and vital entity. The result of their work is still manifest today in the many congregations that presently exist as the offspring of those they founded nearly two centuries ago.

14:17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

After the first angel had completed his harvest of the righteous, another angel appears on the scene also with a sharp sickle. This angel is also said to have come from the temple, the dwelling place of God, showing he was acting on divine authority.

14:18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe.

As we have seen before, fire is often used to test the worth and purity of different materials. This angel has power over fire and is thus able to test and try men. This would indicate to us that his mission is perhaps one of judgment. He then calls out to the other angel that held the sickle and directs him to reap just as the other angel had done. He is qualified to direct the other angel in reaping since he has the ability to test men and determine those who should be reaped. We were never told explicitly what the other angel reaped, but in this case we are told it was grapes. These grapes were “fully ripe” which means the proper time has come for them to be gathered.

14:19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.

Nothing negative was said about the first harvest, but here we can see that this second harvest is one of wrath and vengeance. This is God’s wrath upon spiritual Rome. A winepress consists “of a shallow vat, built above ground or excavated in the rock and, through holes in the bottom, communicating with a lower vat also frequently evacuated in

²⁵⁹ Robert H. Brumback, *History of the Church Through the Ages*, pp. 296-7.

the rock. An upper vat measuring eight feet square and fifteen inches deep had at times a lower vat four feet square and three feet deep. The grapes were crushed by treading, one or more men being employed according to the size of the vat.”²⁶⁰ The evil men of the earth are to be gathered and then trampled like grapes in a vat. This shows their complete overthrow at the hands of God.

14:20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

Those subject to God’s vengeance were trodden in the winepress of His wrath. Since we are not really dealing with grapes here, but people, we understand why blood came out of the press and not grape juice. These people were not literally squeezed in a winepress, but the events which occurred had basically the same effect. The Catholic power was decimated through the events of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This great destruction is illustrated by the amount of blood that is said to have come from the winepress. A horse’s bridle would be about 5 feet from the ground. A furlong is said to be equivalent to 606 feet and 9 inches.²⁶¹ If the blood came out in a river that was on average 100 feet wide, this would be 3,630,792,000 gallons of blood. If the average person has 6 quarts of blood in his body, then it would take approximately 2.4 billion people to produce this amount of blood. This is more than the world’s population at that time. Obviously, all of this is meant in a figurative sense, but it does serve to demonstrate the magnitude and effect of God’s vengeance against Spiritual Rome.

The harvest scene we see here in Revelation is reminiscent of the parable of the wheat and the tares told by Jesus. “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (Matthew 13:24-30). Here in Revelation we have also seen the righteous and the wicked were allowed to grow together for 1,260 years prior to the time of the harvest. When the harvest finally comes, we see that the two groups are reaped separately.

²⁶⁰ Davis, 1983, s.v. “wine.”

²⁶¹ Smith, 1986, s.v. “weights and measures.”

Chapter Fifteen

The Seven Vials: The angels receive the vials

Near the end of the previous chapter, we saw God taking vengeance on the papacy in the form of the reaping angel. This angel with his sickle probably would look very much like the grim reaper to the Catholics as he came to bring about their destruction. All that the information in the last chapter really amounted to was an overview of what occurred. In chapter thirteen, we saw the emergence of the two great beasts that Satan used to fight against God and His Church. In the first part of chapter fourteen, we saw the emergence and growth of the Church. Toward the end of that chapter, we saw the result of their conflict, the defeat of Satan's worldly and religious powers and the restoration of God's Church to its rightful place of prominence. Missing in all of this was the details of how this very decisive conflict was carried out. We will now go back in time, in this and the next chapter, and find out some of the details of how all of this happened.

15:1 And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.

After John has been allowed to see Rome's demise and the Restoration of the Lord's Church, he now sees another vision. This one is of seven plagues. These plagues are the result of God's wrath. When pharaoh refused to allow the Children of Israel to leave Egypt, God brought ten plagues against them to finally persuade them to release His people (Exodus 3-12). Here God will bring these seven plagues to bear against the Catholic Church to punish it and to destroy its power. Seven representing completeness, these plagues will bring about the utter and complete end of the beast's power and dominion. It should also be noted that these are the "last" plagues. The seven seals showed us the fall of paganism in Rome, the seven trumpets showed us the fall of the Roman Empire, now these last seven plagues will show us the fall of the last part of Rome, the papacy. This means the final defeat of the beast and of course his master, Satan.

15:2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God.

The word sea here is used in the same sense as in chapter four. It refers not to a large body of water, but to a large bowl that was employed in the Temple for the priests to wash their hands in before performing their service to God. The one in chapter four was said to be "a sea of glass like unto crystal" (Revelation 6:4). It was likely the same sea that John was seeing here. "Glass mingled with fire" indicates how brilliant and shiny it is. It sparkles as though there was actually fire in the glass.

Upon this sea are standing *“them that had gotten the victory over the beast.”* Since the sea in the Temple was used by the priests to wash their hands it is a sign of cleanliness. These saints are shown standing on this sea in Heaven, which shows their spiritual cleanliness, purity and innocence. They have been made spotless by the blood of the Lamb. The victory spoken of here is not the type won on a carnal battle field. This victory was won by everyone who remained faithful to God despite the oppression and persecution of the beast. It was a spiritual battle of the highest degree. It is as the apostle Paul said, *“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”* (Ephesians 6:11-13). Here we are seeing all of those who had heeded Paul’s advice and were able to stand against Satan and they are now standing with God.

These men have won a victory over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name. All of these are different ways of referring to the same thing. As Shakespeare said, *“A rose by any other name would smell just as sweet.”* Similarly, the beast, whether referred to by his image, mark, or number, will smell just as rotten.

The fact that these people had harps shows that they were worshipping and praising God. This will be seen more clearly in the next verse.

15:3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints.

These Christians who had overcome the beast sang *“the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.”* Moses represents the Old Testament dispensation and Christ the New. They were the lawgivers in their respective eras. Notice, however, that a distinction is made between the two. This is so that no one will think they are of equal importance. Moses is mentioned as a servant, while the Lamb is not. This shows that Christ was superior to Moses. The song which these people sing praises God for the things that He has done on their behalf. He is now about to begin judgment on the beast which has tormented the saints for 1,260 years. Throughout all of this time the saints have been patiently awaiting the events which are now soon to occur. Beyond this, God is about to destroy the seventh and final head of the great beast that Satan has used for over 3,500 years to oppress God’s people. Certainly the righteous of all ages would sing for joy over such a wonderful event.

“Just and true are thy ways” denotes the fact that God is very honest and fair in all His dealings. His people have suffered many things, but now He is about to pay back those who have done this great evil. He will give them exactly what they deserve. *“Thou King of saints”* shows God’s place as Lord and King over His people.

15:4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

“Fear” does not strictly mean to be afraid in this passage. It certainly does include the idea that the world will be afraid of the great and awesome power of God which they have seen brought to bear against Rome. In addition to this, it also includes the idea of respect. The world will see God’s justice and His love for His people and will praise Him, not out of fright only, but also out of respect and admiration. The world will also recognize God’s holiness because of His actions against those who had oppressed His people.

“All nations shall come and worship before thee,” certainly does not mean that every person in the world will become a Christian. what this does mean is that God will be respected and feared around the world. We definitely saw this come to pass in the Western world in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Catholic’s power was stripped and the nations considered themselves *“Christian”* nations, but not Catholic nations. This was just the opposite of the way things were during the Dark Ages.

“For thy judgments are made manifest,” shows that the world will recognize God’s displeasure with the Catholics and will see His hand in their downfall. When I speak of the world in this passage I do not mean to imply that

everyone is to be included. What this means is that many people will see and understand what has transpired and will know that God was behind it all. To use an earlier illustration, the world will see the smoke of the beast's destruction, and will know exactly who lit the fire.

15:5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened:

“*Temple of the tabernacle of the testimony.*” The Jewish temple consisted of two parts, the holy place, and the most holy place. The term tabernacle here represents the entire structure and the term temple represents the most holy place. This is where the ark of the testimony was located. The idea is that the most holy place is open to view before John. This is the place where God's presence was said to dwell.

15:6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles.

In verse one John introduced us to these angels but then left them for a few moments to mention other things. Now he again takes up the story of these seven angels which have the seven plagues. They were clothed in pure and white linen showing their holiness and innocence before God. They were also wearing golden girdles, just as Christ was said to be wearing in chapter one. It was explained there that a girdle was an essential item of clothing for that time period. It was worn about the chest or breast area of the body. The girdle itself bears no significance here, but the fact that it is made of gold shows the value and importance of these angels. These angels came from the temple that John saw open up before him in the previous verse. This tells us that they are coming from the presence of God, and are being sent out to do His bidding.

15:7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever.

When the angels were introduced in verse one, they were spoken of as the “*seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God.*” Now we see one of the four beasts, or creatures, giving the angels “*vials full of the wrath of God.*” We seemingly have a contradiction. How could the angels be given what they already had? The answer is that they did not already have the plagues when we first saw them in verse one. They were referred to as they were in verse one for the sake of identification. This statement was made in prospect of what would come to pass. It is similar to Eve being called the mother of all living in Genesis 3:20. At that point, she was yet to become a mother, but when Adam gave her this name he knew that it was appropriate because she was destined to soon be the mother of all living. Likewise, John, being inspired of God, knew what the purpose of the angels was and identified them as the carriers of the plagues before they actually received them. The wrath of God these angels had was contained in golden vials. Vial is from the Greek “*phiale,*” which Thayer defines as “*a broad, shallow bowl, deep saucer.*”²⁶² It is just a symbolic container for God's wrath.

15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

The temple where the angels had just come from is the place where God's throne is. No man was able to enter the abode of God, Heaven, until these angels had fulfilled their mission by pouring out their vials of God's wrath upon the beast. This whole scenario must be related to the Law of Moses to be understood. Under that Law the High Priest would enter the Most Holy Place, which was where God was said to dwell between the cherubim, once a year on the Day of Atonement. He would take with him the blood of sacrificed animals and would make atonement for the people's sins. This did not bring forgiveness of their sins, only the blood of Christ could do that, but it did roll

²⁶² Thayer, 1989, s.v. “*φιάλη.*”

the sins forward to the next year. Ultimately they were all washed away when Christ died on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice. Hebrews chapters nine and ten cover this point extremely well.

The application of all this in Revelation can now be easily determined. As we know, the High Priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year to make atonement for the people's sins. If suddenly he were forbidden by God to do this, then it would mean that God would no longer accept any sacrifice for the people's sins. This very thing happened to the Children of Israel during the Babylonian captivity. The people had continually moved further and further into idolatry, immorality, and every other sort of evil. Finally, God had had enough. He would listen to no more pleas for mercy or leniency. He then punished Judah and Israel alike for their sinful ways.

The same type of thing is now occurring here in our story. God has been very patient and longsuffering with Rome, just as He had promised He would be. He had also promised that if they did not repent He would punish them. In the letter to Pergamos, which covered the period from A.D. 313 to A.D. 533 we find such a warning. *"Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth"* (Revelation 2:16). This was the period when the apostate Roman church was beginning to take shape. The next letter, which is to Thyatira, also has a warning to repent. *"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds"* (Revelation 2:21-22). Thyatira covers the period from A.D. 533 to A.D. 1400. Rome did not repent after the Lord's first warning and here certain punishment is announced.

Around the year 1400 the Reformation began and thereafter Rome's power was slowly broken. This period is covered by the letter to Sardis which extends from A.D. 1400 to A.D. 1793. *"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee"* (Revelation 3:3). Here we clearly see that the Lord plans to come in judgment against Rome and warns everyone else to stand clear so that they are not hurt in the battle. It is during this time, while God is in the process of punishing Rome that no one can enter the temple. God will no longer entertain pleas of mercy on Rome's behalf. They must now be made to pay for their sins against God and His people.

Chapter Sixteen

The Seven Vials: The Pouring Out of the Seven Vials - The Fall of Papal Rome

We will see the seven vials of God's wrath poured out against Rome in this chapter. It is interesting to note that the effect of the first three vials will be spoken of in similar ways to the first three trumpets. The first will affect the earth, the second the sea, and the third the rivers just as the trumpets did.

16:1 And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth.

The time has now come for the wrath of God to be poured out upon the beast. This has been talked about for quite some time now. We have even been given hints and highlights of it in previous chapters. Now the time has come; Rome must fall for good. The angels are instructed by a "great voice out of the temple" to go and pour out the vials they were given upon the earth. Of course the entire earth is not meant to suffer from these plagues, just the beast and his followers. The great voice came from the temple where God dwells, and was His voice pronouncing the final judgment against Rome.

16:2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

When the first vial was poured out we can see that its effect was restricted to the beast and his followers. "There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon" the followers of the beast. This indicates a very painful experience but one which is not fatal. This is referring to the French Revolution which we saw back in chapter eleven. We saw there the devastating effect that it had on the Catholics. The most powerful nation in the world turned against Rome. The following passage shows the great impact the French Revolution had upon the future of the entire Western world.

"The American Revolution helped to spark the French Revolution of 1789, which proved to be the most violent and far-reaching of all the liberal upheavals. Not only did the French Revolution advance liberal ideals; it brought drastic changes in the legal, social, and economic order of France, the largest and most populous country in western Europe. The struggle was intensified by the passionate opposition of privileged groups at home and by the intervention of foreign powers. Even more than the English or American Revolutions, it was a watershed in the flow of Western history. As Tocqueville later wrote, 'The French Revolution had no territory of its own; indeed, its effect was to efface, in a way, all older frontiers. It brought men together, divided them, in spite of law, traditions, character, and language—turning enemies

sometimes into compatriots and kinsmen into strangers...’ Not until the Russian Revolution of 1917 was an uprising to have such an impact on the Western world.”²⁶³

Note also how the following passage describes conditions in the West after the French Revolution. It is a far cry from the centuries when the Catholics dominated Europe.

“Roman Catholicism, however, was to find political liberalism inassimilable, and from the French Revolution into the twentieth century the Roman Catholic lands have been generally divided by a profound antagonism which has dominated their political and cultural development.”²⁶⁴

Little more than these general comments needs to be made here since the whole affair was dealt with at great length back in chapter eleven. This was, from the Catholic perspective, a devastating blow. However, it probably would not, in and of itself, have been fatal. There are still six more vials yet to be poured out. In the end, Rome will not escape God’s wrath.

16:3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea.

This verse contains very dramatic wording, but it should not alarm us. The sea will not literally turn to blood, this is just God’s way of informing us that the next area of battle will be on the seas. Much like what we saw with the second trumpet, when we saw the Vandals become the rulers of the Mediterranean Sea, and eventually go on to sack Rome. Now we need to examine world history in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and attempt to find some major naval conflict that would have a bearing on the papacy.

We saw back in chapter eleven that Napoleon did not share the same view of the Catholics as did the revolutionary French government. He adopted a more conciliatory attitude, at least for a while. The following passage serves to show why he behaved as he did.

“Napoleon now indicated a startling turn of policy. He expressed his desire for reconciliation with the pope, and his conviction that the Roman religion was the only one to lay firm the foundations of government. The papacy quickly responded and the negotiations were promptly undertaken which were to result in the Concordat of 1801.

Napoleon’s policy signified no conversion to Christianity. He was personally a voltairian, with no belief in any of the historical religions. But he had a shrewd eye for the political purposes of religion. A year or two before in Egypt, while he was caught up in his romantic dream of carving out an empire in Asia and Africa, he had flirted with Islam. He agreed with Henry IV that Paris was worth a mass: ‘Would not the dominion of the East, perhaps the subjection of the whole of Asia, be worth a turban and a pair of slippers?’”²⁶⁵

Napoleon was a prime example of someone who had the mark of the beast in his right hand. He did not believe the Catholic doctrine, but it was convenient for him to go along with the papacy for his own personal political gain. Now that we have established the attitude of Napoleon, and therefore France, toward the Catholic Church, we can begin to understand this verse. The papacy had been stabbed in the back during the French Revolution, but now it seemed that all was forgiven and France had returned to the pope’s side. The pope moved very quickly to make-up with France. He needed their support in an ever more chaotic and turbulent world.

²⁶³ Greer, 1987, p. 404.

²⁶⁴ J. Nichols, 1956, p. 111.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 126-7.

France and Britain were the two great world powers of that era of time. They had been at war off and on for centuries. France, along with her ally Spain, was the last hope for Catholicism to regain its dominance of the European continent. Britain was sternly anti-Catholic. In fact the sentiment was such that “Catholics could not vote or hold public office” in Britain.²⁶⁶ Britain had broken with the Catholics centuries before and had set up their own church, the Church of England, with the king of England as its head.

The conflict between France and Britain was not limited to land battles. Both sides possessed large and powerful navies with the France-Spain alliance having a slightly larger force. Superior leadership, however, namely in the person of the famous admiral, Horatio Nelson, allowed the British to achieve control of the seas. There were numerous engagements between the respective navies, but the decisive blow was struck off the coast of Trafalgar, Spain.

“Admiral Horatio Nelson’s British fleet defeated a combined French and Spanish fleet there on October 21, 1805, in one of the greatest naval battles in history. The victory gave England undisputed control of the sea.

...Napoleon’s admiral, Villeneuve,...decided to attack the British fleet with a French and Spanish fleet. His fleet outnumbered Nelson’s, 33 ships to 27. But Nelson surprised the enemy by having his ships cut through the French battle line. The British fleet did not lose a ship in the battle, but it destroyed or captured over half the French and Spanish ships.”²⁶⁷

Thus another severe blow was struck at the Catholic powers as the second vial was poured out upon the sea. The pope must have been devastated. He had just regained the friendship of France and then they are defeated by Britain, the pope’s long-time nemesis.

16:4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood.

The third vial was poured out upon the rivers, which means its effect is to be over a large area of the land, just as the third trumpet had been. By the time of the French Revolution, the temporal holdings of the pope were extensive. Nearly all of these lands, and the accompanying temporal authority that went with them, were taken away by the French.

“The first papal lands were granted in 754 A.D. by the king of the Franks Pepin the Short to Pope Stephen III. Additions were made by gifts and purchases until the papal states included nearly the whole of central Italy. Papal control reached its height late in the twelfth century under Innocent III. The acquisitions of the papacy were for the most part retained until 1797, when French forces under Napoléon Bonaparte, later Napoleon I, Emperor of France, seized much of the territory.”²⁶⁸

“The General of the Army in Italy was Bonaparte. When he won his notable successes against Sardinia and Austria in 1796, the Directory instructed him to take the city of Rome and despoil the Pope. The papal court called for terms. The Directory required, however, not merely an indemnity, but an explicit retraction of all the violent expressions in bulls and briefs about the Revolution. This Pius VI could not agree to, and he broke the truce by appealing to Austria to attack the French. Napoleon at once moved further into the papal states and set even more stringent terms. By these France took the better half of the papal states and a large indemnity. This seizure of the papal lands was the beginning of the end of the Temporal Power, an ending which was to be the focus of Roman Catholic interest throughout the nineteenth century.”²⁶⁹

²⁶⁶ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Great Britain.”

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Trafalgar.”

²⁶⁸ *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Papal States.”

²⁶⁹ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 125-6.

The loss of most of his territory was a great blow to the pope, since he knew that much of his power was tied to his wealth and possessions. Even beyond that, the prestige of the papacy received a major blow here. An enemy was able to march right into the pope's "back yard" and do as he pleased. Despite his self-proclaimed power and authority, the pope was powerless to impede the advancing enemy. The vicar of Christ seemed to have been abandoned by the very One he claimed to represent. Despite his loudest pleas for help, none of his remaining supporters were strong enough to save him. This is very reminiscent of the latter days of the Roman Empire when the Goths, Vandals and Huns were able to pretty much do as they pleased when they invaded Italy, something that would have been unthinkable only a few decades earlier. It was the most powerful sign of the weakness and vulnerability of the Empire. The same is true here. Napoleon's ability to march right into Italy and force the pope to give up much of his land was a severe blow to the prestige of the papacy. No longer was the papacy seen as a great towering figure that was to be feared and obeyed.

16:5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus.

"The angel of the waters" is the angel of the territory affected by the third vial, which the water represents. Having seen the successful attack on the temporal holdings of the papacy the angel praises God for accomplishing this righteous and just deed. "Thou art righteous" shows that this was a good thing which God did to the power of the Catholic Church. It was something that they deserved and had brought upon themselves because of their abominable conduct. They had lived wickedly and had tried to annihilate God's true servants from the face of the earth. God's eternal nature is alluded to by the words "O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be." There never has been even a single moment when God did not exist, and there never will be.

16:6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy

The angel continues to praise God for His judgment of the papacy, and to discuss some of the evil deeds performed by the Catholics, which caused them to be deserving of God's wrath. They have "shed the blood of saints and prophets." We simply have no idea how many of God's people were slain by the Catholics over the time they reigned supreme. We can be assured, however, that God knows every single one, and is now returning the shed blood of His saints upon the heads of those who were guilty of their murders.

Twice recently we have seen mention made of the "patience of the saints" (Revelation 13:10, 14:12). They were patient for century after century as God continued to allow the Catholics to enjoy supremacy. They waited patiently as more and more of their number was cut down by the barbarous Catholics. Finally, the time for vengeance had come. God has now begun to repay Rome for her corruption and wickedness. "Thou hast given them blood to drink," shows that God was laying a heavy hand of judgment upon them, and that many were going to lose their lives. He was taking vengeance according to Exodus 21:23-25. "And if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. All of this and more had certainly been earned by Rome because of their evil treatment of God's people. As our verse says, "for they are worthy."

16:7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

John now hears another voice which he places as coming from the altar. In chapter six John saw "under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." Therefore, the voice here is likely that of a man who has been redeemed from the earth. He is speaking on behalf of all those who have been sacrificed on the altars of Catholicism. He joins with the angel in praising the works of judgment God has brought against Rome.

The phrase “*even so*” in this verse comes from the Greek word “*nai*” which is defined by Strong’s as “a primary particle of strong affirmation; yes:-even so, surely, truth, verily, yea, yes.”²⁷⁰ This shows that this man was in full agreement with the comments just made by the angel. He also was rejoicing to finally see judgment taken against the great persecutor of God’s people. “*True and righteous are thy judgments*” shows again that God was doing the right thing. He was only giving the Catholics what they deserved. They had brought all of this upon themselves.

16:8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire.

We can quickly discern that the target of God’s wrath here is not the sun which our planet orbits. If it were then all men would suffer, not just those who are deserving of it. We have seen the sun mentioned before and have identified it as representing some great source of power or authority. Here the great power which is suffering the wrath of God is the papacy. The sun represents the pope himself. The following passages illustrate how two successive popes were imprisoned and otherwise humiliated.

“Now came another riot in Rome, in which a general of the French embassy was killed. The Directory was infuriated and the French army marched on Rome. With this support in the offing, a group of Roman radicals proclaimed the abolition of the pope-king and the reign of liberty and equality. They set up a tree of liberty on the Capitol and invited Pius to abdicate and recognize the ‘Roman Republic.’ He refused. They occupied the Vatican and in October 1798 gave him forty-eight hours to get out of Rome. So the Pope left and a *Te Deum* was sung in St. Peter’s over the deposition, at which some of the cardinals assisted. The pope made his way north into exile, dying in Valence in 1799. In the civil registry of the French Republic his death was noticed as follows: ‘Citizen John Braschi. Trade pontiff.’

The conclave to elect his successor was held in Austrian territory (Venice) and at Austrian expense. While Bonaparte was away on his Egyptian expedition, the Austrians had occupied the papal states, and now wished for a new pope who would accept this situation. On the eve of the meetings, however, General Bonaparte returned to France and seized power in a virtual military dictatorship, the so-called ‘Consulate.’ Realizing that Napoleon might be the power to deal with, rather than Austria, the cardinals at length chose a ‘religious’ pope with a pro-French reputation, Pius VII. Before the new Pope had gotten back to Rome, Napoleon had in fact entered Italy and won the battle of Morengo.”²⁷¹

The previous passage left out a couple of very important details concerning the fate of Pius VI, which this next one gives us.

“In 1798 the armies of the Directory created a republic in Rome and the Pope (Pius VI, reigned 1775-1799), who had been hostile to the Revolution, was carried to France, a prisoner, and within a few months was dead.”²⁷²

For over a thousand years the true political power in Europe lay with the popes in Rome. Now a pope had been deposed by the citizens of Rome itself, and he then eventually died in a French prison. Was this truly the same great man who for centuries had been the center of all political, religious, social, and economic life in Europe? The power and prestige of the papacy had fallen to unbelievable depths in a period of just a few years. To the people of the times it was certainly a most astounding thing to behold.

In the days of the Holy Roman Empire the new emperors always paid a visit to the pope, in Rome, for the official

²⁷⁰ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #3483.”

²⁷¹ J. Nichols, 1956, p. 126.

²⁷² Latourette, 1953, p. 1010.

coronation ceremony. Napoleon had visions of himself one day becoming the emperor of the whole of the European continent. He knew that the support of the pope would make this goal much easier to realize. This was the basis for the favorable attitude that he demonstrated toward the pope at first.

“Napoleon was an adventurer, a usurper; nothing could give him such claim to legitimacy as religious support. And indeed, he was looking ahead to his own establishment on the throne. Lafayette guessed shrewdly when he heard of how ‘the old fox’ had now become to Napoleon ‘the Most Holy Father.’ ‘Confess,’ he said, ‘you want the little flask broken over your head.’”²⁷³

“...Napoleon’s private plans ranged wider. As he later put it, he felt called of God to be Emperor of Europe. The majority of people in Spain, Italy, and South Germany acknowledged the Roman pope, who might thus be a very useful ‘lever.’ Napoleon admired the quasi-political organization of the Roman Catholic Church as an instrument of control.”²⁷⁴

Napoleon’s true attitude toward the pope can be seen in his crowning as emperor. Instead of traveling to Rome, as was traditional, Napoleon had the pope brought to him. In the past every single emperor had traveled to Rome to be crowned. This was a way of acknowledging the pope’s superiority over the emperor. Napoleon’s decision in this matter was, in itself, a slap in the face to the dignity of the pope. It also demonstrated how much his prestige among the nations had already eroded. In the past, the pope would have simply refused to go. He knew the emperor needed him worse than he needed the emperor. Now, however, the situation was reversed. The pope was looking for any shred of credibility that might help him to rebuild his shattered image. Being able to anoint the emperor of Europe would certainly be an important first step in regaining some measure of respect. Unfortunately, for the pope, things did not turn out quite as he might have expected.

“...Napoleon had himself proclaimed as hereditary emperor in 1804. By ‘emperor,’ however, he meant more than ruler of France, as was indicated by his pilgrimage to the tomb of Charlemagne. He persuaded Pius VII to come and crown him, to the resentment of Hapsburg Francis and the scandal of the royalist de Maistre. Even then, however, Napoleon deprived the Pope of the symbolic honor of conferring the crown on him, by taking it out of his hands and crowning himself.”²⁷⁵

Notice how Napoleon crowned himself, demonstrating his belief that he did not owe his authority to the pope, as had always been the understanding during the days of the Holy Roman Empire. Napoleon had no real respect for the pope, he merely sought to use him for whatever good he might be able to wring from him, and then toss him aside when he was through.

“The attitude of Napoleon towards the Church was masterful. He was himself a nominal Roman Catholic, but had very little religious faith. Yet he saw that a large proportion of his subjects were loyal Roman Catholics and he regarded that Church as an institution which must be recognized and used for his purposes. At his orders, the vacancy in the Papacy left by the death of Pius VI was not immediately filled. However, in 1800 a conclave was held in Venice which elected a Benedictine monk, Chiaramonti, who took the title of Pius VII and reigned through striking vicissitudes until 1823. Napoleon restored Rome to the Pope, but by no means all the Papal states. After long negotiations, in 1801 the concordat of France was concluded between the Pope and Napoleon. Such of its confiscated lands as were in the possession of the state were to be restored to the Church, bishops were to be appointed by the Pope on nomination by the state, and while the lower clergy were appointed by the bishops, the government could veto the episcopal choices. The clergy were to be paid by the state. To this concordat Napoleon added (1802) the Organic Articles, but against the protest of the Pope. By them no Papal decrees were to be published or synods held

²⁷³ J. Nichols, 1956, p. 127.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

²⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

in France without the permission of the state. At the same time Protestants were given religious freedom and their ministers were to be paid by the government.

When he assumed the title of Emperor, harking back to the precedent of Charlemagne, Napoleon had the Pope share in the coronation (1804). However, he treated that dignitary far more cavalierly than Charlemagne had the Pontiffs of his day. Napoleon brought Pius VII to Paris for the ceremony, was anointed by him, and then placed the crowns on his own head and the head of his empress.

Pius VII and Napoleon had a complete break. The latter attempted to induce the Pontiff to abandon his neutrality in the life and death struggle with England and to join the blockade against that power. The Pope refused. In 1808 Napoleon's troops occupied Rome and in 1809 the Papal States were merged in the French Empire. Napoleon contemplated making Rome his second capital. Pius VII retaliated by excommunicating Napoleon as 'robber of the patrimony of Peter.' Napoleon countered by having him imprisoned, eventually at Fontainebleau."²⁷⁶

The following passage adds further details to the seizure of the Papal States and the imprisonment of the pope. After Napoleon realized that the pope was no longer of any use to him he sought to dispose of him and to claim his territory.

"Napoleon's effort to control the whole continent, moreover, brought him to absorbing the papal states like so many others. When Pius refused to close the ports of the papal states to the British, Swedes, and Russians, French troops closed them. Then Civita Vecchia, the port of Rome itself, was seized. Finally in 1809, the Papal States were annexed entirely and the pope's temporal power brought to an end. Napoleon had been trying to push the Pope in this direction, arguing that although he would recognize the pope's spiritual supremacy, in civil matters 'I am your Emperor.'

When Pius replied to this French occupation by an excommunication, he was spirited away to confinement in France. His one weapon as a prisoner of Napoleon was to refuse to do any ecclesiastical acts, in particular to refuse to institute the Emperor's nominees to vacant episcopal sees. For nearly five years (1809-1814) the old man withstood the Emperor."²⁷⁷

We can see from this that over a period of about fifteen years two popes were imprisoned, one dying in captivity, and the majority of the territory possessed by the papacy was taken away by force. Thus a vial of God's wrath has been poured out upon the pope himself. Much of his prestige and temporal authority was lost to the sword of Napoleon.

"And power was given unto him to scorch men with fire." The effect of this vial was not limited to the pope, but all Catholics suffered from seeing their leader ridiculed and imprisoned. Thus all men who had the mark of the beast were figuratively scorched with fire.

16:9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory.

"And men were scorched with great heat," simply reiterates a point from the previous verse. The angel possessing the fourth vial was said to have power given unto him to *"scorch men with fire."* The scorching was a mental one brought about by physical ravages imposed on the papacy by Napoleon. It is similar to how most Germans must have felt as World War II drew to a close. Their powerful and flamboyant leader had let them down. He was now dead, having committed suicide. Foreign armies were pouring onto German soil, and the people were totally helpless. Certainly this was a very agonizing time for the German people. The same was true for Catholics in the early nineteenth century. They could feel the "heat" from the events in France and Italy.

²⁷⁶ Latourette, 1953, p. 1011.

²⁷⁷ J. Nichols, 1956, pp. 133-4.

In response to the heat the Catholics were feeling, they “blasphemed” the name of God. Blasphemy does not have to take the form of direct statements against God. The word “blasphemy” is from the Greek word “blasphemeo,” which Strong’s defines as “to vilify; specifically to speak impiously:-(speak) blaspheme (-er, -mously, -my), defame, rail on, revile, speak evil.”²⁷⁸ One of the meanings here is to speak impiously. This means that one speaks without the proper reverence for God. The pope continued to do exactly this. Instead of repenting of his sins and glorifying God, he continued to exalt himself. “*Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God*” (II Thessalonians 2:4). He refused to recognize that it was God who was bringing about these disasters as a punishment. He continued to proclaim himself to be the vicar of Christ.

16:10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain,

The seat of the beast would be the place where he sits and rules from. The pope’s home will bear the blunt of the fifth vial. During the Middle Ages the papacy directly controlled most of central Italy. The popes ruled this region just as any other king would, with Rome as the capital. This vial will cause the pope’s kingdom to become full of darkness. This shows a condition of despair and doom from the pope’s perspective.

“From 756 to 1870 the popes had direct control of several provinces and cities, including Rome, in central Italy. This area was called the Papal States. Pepin the Short, King of the Franks, had given part of the territory to Pope Stephen II. Pepin’s successor Charlemagne added to it. In return Pope Leo III crowned him emperor and gave him the support of the Church in his campaign for power in Western Europe. After the Reformation, the political power of the pope gradually declined. In 1860, the Papal States became subject to Victor Emmanuel II, who became king of Italy in 1861. Only the land around Rome remained under Church control. In 1870, Victor Emmanuel took Rome by force and asked its citizens to vote on whether or not the city should become the capital of a united Italy. The people voted to accept the Italian monarchy. Thereupon Pope Pius IX shut himself up in the Vatican and regarded himself as a prisoner.

The popes after him followed the same policy for nearly 60 years. Then an independent Papal State was created in 1929 through an agreement between Pius XI and the Italian government. The agreement was called the Treaty of the Lateran.”²⁷⁹

The extensive kingdom which the pope’s had ruled for centuries was suddenly gone. His temporal power was stripped away. Even the great Eternal city which had been the main focus of political power in the West for over two millennia, and had been the seat of the papacy’s power for over a thousand years was wrenched from her hands. After the seizure of Rome and its incorporation into the kingdom of Italy, five successive popes over a period of fifty-nine years refused to leave the Vatican in protest over this action. This self-imposed imprisonment shows their great distress at what had befallen them. They behaved similarly to a spoiled child who was not allowed to have his way. Their pride could hardly withstand the events of the past eighty years, dating back to the beginning of the French Revolution. They figuratively “*gnawed their tongues in pain.*”

This also demonstrates the fact that they had no one to turn to. For the first time in a long time, there was no one who was willing to come to their aid. They had been forsaken by all of their former “partners in crime.” This is further evidence of the weak and powerless condition of the papacy. In past centuries, many nations would have come running at the request of the pope. Now, however, in a vastly different world, his pitiful cries were hardly noticed by most leaders.

²⁷⁸ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #987.”

²⁷⁹ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Papal States.”

This marks the official end of the papacy's temporal power. We see that "*his kingdom was full of darkness.*" Darkness signifies that the sun has set on the papacy's kingdom. Her day of dominion is now over. This language is similar to what was said when the fourth trumpet was sounded marking the end of the western third of the Roman Empire. "*And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise*" (Revelation 8:12).

16:11 And blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

Again, as mentioned after the fourth vial, the pope continues to refuse to repent and submit himself to God. His pride and arrogance will not allow him to give up his unscriptural position and humble himself before God. He continues to blaspheme God by exalting himself above God. He is suffering from pains and sores as a result of the five vials now poured out upon his domain. He is not dead, but he is definitely suffering from a great deal of pain. Despite his serious wounds and the accompanying pain he remains stubborn and still is unwilling to yield to the God of Heaven, but by now it matters little. The pope is no longer a major factor in world affairs. He no longer dominates Christendom. His temporal power has been broken for good.

These first five vials have shown us the end of the temporal power of the papacy. The remaining two will take us close to the end of the world, and will show us the final destruction of the spiritual power of the papacy.

16:12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.

The sixth vial causes the Euphrates River to dry up. The obvious question is, even if this river did dry up, who would it affect? Certainly the people in the immediate area would be devastated by the loss of their water supply and the resulting food and vegetation which it provides. But outside of that area, who would really be affected? Obviously, this statement cannot be meant literally. This is only reasonable since the effects of the first five vials have all been given in symbolic terms. We are seeing here a symbolic drying up of this great river. The reason for this river to be dried up is "*that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared.*" The actual river would provide no real obstacle, so again we see that something symbolic is intended here. The Euphrates River has long been the symbolic dividing line between the East and the West.

"Historically, the [Euphrates] river is one of the most important in the world. For centuries the river formed the eastern limit of Roman control, and during the supremacy of the Eastern Roman Empire, numerous towns and important centers of art and literature flourished along its banks."²⁸⁰

Until recently the world had basically always consisted of two separate spheres of existence. While the Roman civilization, and its legacy have ruled the Western world, there was another, almost completely separate world in the East. Great civilizations were built in such places as China and Japan. Except for a small amount of trade, there was little interaction between these two alien worlds. It was the need for raw materials, to fuel the Industrial Revolution in the nineteenth century, that caused the European powers to venture into heretofore unknown lands.

"Colonial expansion by the European powers increased as the Industrial Revolution continued. The industrial nations needed such raw materials as copra and cotton for their factories, and Africa and Asia had great quantities of these materials. These continents also provided vast markets where the industrial nations could sell their manufactured goods, such as gins, cloth, and iron. Chiefly for these two reasons, the European powers—especially France and England—established many colonies in Africa and Asia. During the 1800's and early 1900's, most of Africa and about a third of Asia became European colonies."²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Funk & Wagnall's, 1973, s.v. "Euphrates."

“The economic and military strength of Western nations—especially the European countries—controlled most of Asia during the 1800’s. In 1842, China agreed to British trade at five Chinese ports. Two years later, trade began between the United States and China. In 1854, Matthew C. Perry, the leader of an American naval mission, signed a treaty that opened Japan to limited trade with the U.S.”²⁸²

From these two passages we can see when and why the Euphrates began to “dry up” as far as being the symbolic barrier between East and West. The two sides began to interact as never before, and “*the way of the kings of the east*” was prepared. This simply means that they began to have an impact on the Western world for the first time. Up to this point our story has progressed completely oblivious to what was going on in the East. Now this will no longer be possible. The world has gotten “smaller.” Improved methods of travel and communication have greatly increased the rate of movement of people, goods and information. The East and West are now undeniably tied together. In the twentieth century the two world wars brought the world even closer together. It forced many nations, including the United States, to abandon isolationist policies. It promoted cooperation along military, economic, political and other fronts. It created an atmosphere which fostered the creation of such political and military entities as NATO, the Warsaw Pact, OPEC, the United Nations, and many others.

Although this vial was not aimed directly at the papacy it did certainly have an affect on her. For centuries Europe was more or less isolated from the rest of the world and the popes were able to exercise a great deal of spiritual and temporal authority. The inclusion of other nations into the scheme of things, especially nations with paganistic religious beliefs that would not bow to Rome, simply made the papacy a smaller fish in a larger pond. The nations of Europe grew less and less interested in the antics of the pope. If he wanted to lock himself up in the Vatican for sixty years who really cared? There was a whole big world out there now, and the Catholics owned an increasingly smaller piece of it.

16:13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet.

John now sees “*three unclean spirits like frogs*” appear on the scene. These are not real frogs, but something that has some characteristics in common with frogs. Frogs are generally considered by most people to be hideous and loathsome creatures. People’s distaste for these creatures has even fostered the myth that touching one can give a person warts. As a result, we know we are looking for something which is very distasteful and unpleasant.

We also see that these spirits come from the mouth of the dragon, beast, and false prophet. Before we can hope to identify the frogs we need to positively identify their sources. The dragon is of course the Devil as we have now seen countless times in Revelation. The beast is the Roman Catholic Church which we have also seen numerous times. Who is the false prophet? This term is thrown in with the other two as if we should know what it means. It may not be apparent at first, but with a little bit of thought we will be able to determine the identity of this person.

The false prophet is only mentioned in two places other than the current one. One occurrence is chapter twenty, verse ten, but this passage does not seem to offer us any clues. The other passage, however, is a little more helpful. “*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone*” (Revelation 19:20). The key here is that we find the false prophet wrought miracles before the beast. This is not the first time we have seen such a statement. Back in chapter thirteen we found the exact same thing occurring. “*And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them*

²⁸¹ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Europe.”

²⁸² *Ibid.*, s.v. “Asia.”

that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live” (Revelation 13:12, 14).

All of this is in reference to the second beast encountered in chapter thirteen. The beast that had “*two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon*” (Revelation 13:11). We identified this beast as the Holy Roman Empire back in chapter thirteen. Putting two and two together here, we have both the Holy Roman Empire and the false prophet performing miracles before the beast. They are one and the same! But wait a minute, how could the Holy Roman Empire possibly be referred to as a prophet? First of all, let us mention again that this is a book of symbols. We should not be looking for an actual prophet, but rather something which will fit the symbol of a prophet.

Let us digress for a moment and discuss exactly what a prophet is. Put simply, a prophet is someone who speaks for someone else. The definition in Smith’s Bible Dictionary includes “one who speaks for another, especially one who speaks for a god, and so interprets his will to man.”²⁸³ God has used many prophets throughout history to accomplish different tasks. He used Moses to free His people from bondage and lead them to the Promised Land. He used Daniel to receive visions of the future. He used Jonah to preach repentance to the Gentile city of Nineveh. He used John the Baptist to prepare the way for His Son. For all these prophets and every other one He has used, regardless of the mission(s) they were sent on, He ultimately had one purpose in mind. Every prophet’s job was to turn people to God. Whether it was through preaching repentance and strict adherence to the Law, or whether it was in receiving visions of the future. Each prophet, through his actions, was meant to cause people to acknowledge God more fully.

What does this have to do with the relationship between the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire, if anything at all? What did the papacy desire from the Holy Roman Empire, which, by the way, she started and maintained. By using this Empire as a secular arm, Rome sought to persuade, through various means, the people of Europe to more completely acknowledge the pope as the supreme head in all spiritual and secular matters. Whether it was through indoctrination, coercion, persecution, or whatever means necessary, the Holy Roman Empire definitely did a great deal for the cause of its master, the papacy. It was during the time of this Empire that the papacy enjoyed her greatest pinnacle of success. In this sense, the Holy Roman Empire certainly was a prophet of the papacy.

After all of this wrangling over the false prophet, we are still no closer to identifying the three frogs than when we began. The next verse will give us the final clues we need to unravel this mystery.

16:14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.

The three unclean spirits which came forth from the mouth of the dragon, beast, and false prophet, are here spoken of as spirits of devils. The dragon is Satan, and the other two are agencies through which Satan operates against mankind. As a result, we can see that this term is very appropriate.

These spirits will also work “*miracles.*” As with the beast in chapter thirteen, these will not be actual miracles. It will be things which will amaze and astound people to the point that they will believe they have seen a miracle. But God, or His duly appointed representatives, are the only ones capable of performing real miracles. Just like the beast in chapter thirteen, these spirits will seem to be from God, although they are actually from Satan.

The spirits “*go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*” Obviously, whatever is to transpire here it will have a worldwide effect. This should be expected since the sixth vial showed us the coming together of the East and West into one sphere of activity and influence. Somehow these three spirits will manage to draw the nations of the world into a great conflict.

Now we need to identify the three unclean spirits and the great conflict which they will bring about. The fifth vial brought us in time to 1870. The logical procedure now is to search world history after this time to find some great

²⁸³ Smith, 1986, s.v. “prophet.”

world conflict which fits what we are looking for. The most notable event which we could consider would be World Wars I & II. This would certainly agree with the statement that “*the kings of the earth and of the whole world*” would be involved.

The key question now must concern the three unclean spirits. Does this match anything connected with the World Wars? In World War I there were two sides the Central and Allied Powers. The Allied Powers consisted of Britain, China, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United States, and numerous smaller countries. The Central Powers consisted of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire at the outset. Over a year after the conflict began Bulgaria sided with the Central Powers, but in reality it made little difference since Bulgaria was not a powerful military nation.

Even if we can say that there were three main nations on one side this does nothing to prove that it matches what we see here in Revelation. The three unclean spirits are said to come from the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet. Will Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire fit these symbols? The Ottoman Empire is descended from the Turks who successfully attacked Constantinople in A.D. 1453. They followed the Islamic religion which we saw back in chapter nine. There the fifth trumpet revealed a godless horde of Muslims who conquered the southern third of the Roman Empire. They were pictured as coming from the bottomless pit where Satan dwells. Certainly then, we can say that the Ottoman Empire came from the dragon, who is Satan.

To say that a nation came from the beast is simply to say that the nation has a very close relationship with the papacy and openly supports her. This can definitely be said of Austria-Hungary. Even today, although they are separate countries there continues to be a close association with the papacy.

“Austria and the pope have a concordat under which the Roman Catholic Church in Austria receives financial support from the national government. About 90 per cent of the people are Roman Catholics.”²⁸⁴

Hungary was taken over by the Communists in the 1940’s and thereafter organized religion was discouraged. But today about two-thirds of the people are still Roman Catholics.²⁸⁵ Clearly Austria-Hungary was a stronghold of Catholicism and can correctly be said to have come from the beast.

The third nation is Germany. For this entire scenario to fit, Germany must be connected with the false prophet, which is the Holy Roman Empire.

“The Empire of the West (Holy Roman Empire), at first an unstable union of Germany and Italy and later a loose union of Germanic states, remained in almost constant existence for more than 800 years.”²⁸⁶

From this we can clearly see that Germany definitely came from the Holy Roman Empire or the false prophet. Then it seems that we have found the identification of three unclean spirits in a great world conflict. But what about World War II? It was an even greater and bloodier conflict. Could that be what is intended instead of World War I? In reality, the Second World War was merely a continuation of the first. Many things were left unsettled after World War I. Arbitrary boundary lines were drawn by the victors to form new nations. The lines quite often crossed ethnic, racial, and religious lines thereby separating people of similar backgrounds and forcing together people of very diverse viewpoints. This resulted in many people feeling angry and bitter about the situation. It was a powder keg waiting to go off, and within a few years, it did. At the end of World War II, the Communists took over much of Eastern Europe and suppressed most of the problems in that area. But in our present day, now that the Communist Empire has fallen, many of these smaller countries have picked up where World War II left off.

If we examine World War II, we will find that, although some of the players had changed sides, things were more or

²⁸⁴ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Austria.”

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Hungary.”

²⁸⁶ *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Holy Roman Empire.”

less the same. This time the Allies faced a coalition of nations known as the Axis Powers. There were some nine nations in this coalition, but only three were considered major players. They were Germany, Italy, and Japan.

We have already identified Germany as coming from the false prophet. Italy is the seat of the papacy and can easily be said to come from the beast. Japan in paganistic and can be said to come from the dragon. In both cases, the three nations went *“forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.”*

The fact that the battle is called the great “day” does not mean that it is to take place in a single twent-four hour period. In this verse day is from the Greek word “hemera” which Strong’s defines as “day, i.e. (literally) the time space between dawn and dark, or the whole twenty-four hours (but several days were usually reckoned by the Jews as inclusive of the parts of both extremes); figuratively a period (always defined more or less clearly by the context):-age.”²⁸⁷ From this definition we can see that the word day can mean a long period of time whose length will be determined by the context.

I believe that there is one question left unanswered in all of this. What was the purpose in all of this occurring? I think it was Satan’s last gasp effort to hold on to what he had. In the first war he used an Islamic nation and two devoutly Catholic nations. In the second war he used a nation of pagans and again two devoutly Catholic nations. Had they been victorious it seems very likely that the papacy would have regained a good deal of her prestige. Although it probably would not have returned to its former glory, it certainly would have fared better in a Europe dominated by Catholic powers as opposed to the alternative. This was the last and greatest confrontation between God and Satan. This is why it is referred to as *“that great day of God Almighty.”* Never before had the world seen any type of conflict which affected so many people and saw so much destruction and death.

16:15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.

It appears at first glance as if Christ is speaking here of His second coming. The wording is very similar to other passages that compare His return to the stealthful approach of a thief. Not that Christ will come with the intent of stealing as a thief does, but His return will be quiet and without warning just like the approach of a thief. An example of this is I Thessalonians 5:2 which tells us that *“the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.”* This is not the only time this terminology is used. *“Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee”* (Revelation 3:3). This is part of the letter written to the Church at Sardis. This letter describes the Lord’s Church from around the year 1400 to 1793. The Lord promised here to bring judgment upon the Catholics unless they repented and returned to the truth. He says He will come upon them as a thief. This is not speaking of His second coming, but is symbolically speaking of His judgment against Rome. This judgment was indeed brought about in a very swift and dramatic way. Within three years of the start of the French Revolution the entire Catholic Empire was on the verge of collapse. Surely no one anticipated this sudden turn of events. It came upon them as a thief in the night.

The wording in the present verse seems to indicate that we are not talking about Christ’s second coming, but His judgment and punishment of evil men and nations. He begins by saying *“I come as a thief.”* This does not have to mean that He will literally return to the earth. It can also mean that He will come to the earth in that His presence will be felt on the earth in a very dramatic way by those who are suffering His wrath.

“Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked.” This simply warns people to keep themselves unspotted from the world, to keep their lives clean from sin. The reason for saying this is that there were to be very troublous times in the future. The World Wars were certainly traumatic for many people throughout the

²⁸⁷ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #2250.”

world. The “little season” during which Satan will be loosed is now just around the corner. Unless people are very careful and wary they will be led astray by Satan’s evil tactics. This will be discussed in detail in chapter twenty.

The real key to placing this verse in time is the very last phrase, “*and they see his shame.*” During this time the Lord is going to come and despoil men and nations. His judgment will bring them to shame in the eyes of others. This parallels the situation when God brought judgment against Israel because of their sins. “*Moreover I will make thee waste, and a reproach among the nations that are round about thee, in the sight of all that pass by. So it shall be a reproach and a taunt, an instruction and an astonishment unto the nations that are round about thee, when I shall execute judgments in thee in anger and in fury and in furious rebukes. I the Lord have spoken it*” (Ezekiel 5:14-5). “*All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?’*” (Lamentations 2:15). Here the Lord said He was going to come and punish Israel and the nations about them would see their disgrace and shame. This is the same type of thing spoken of here in Revelation. Men are exhorted to be righteous unless they want to be partakers of God’s wrath and laid to an open shame before the world. If this had been talking about Christ’s second coming then no one would be shamed before the rest of the world, since the world would be destroyed. “*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up*” (II Peter 3:10). This shows us that the Lord is not talking about His second coming here.

16:16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

The “*he*” meant in this verse is the dragon. Satan will cause the world to be drawn to a place referred to as “*Armageddon.*” This is where the great battle spoken of in verse fourteen is to take place. The term Armageddon comes from the Greek word “*Armageddon,*” which is defined by Strong’s as “of Hebrew origin [Hebrew 2022 and Hebrew 4023]; Armageddon (or Har-Megiddon), a symbolic name:-Armageddon.”²⁸⁸ The two Hebrew words mentioned here are defined by Strong’s as follows: “Hebrew 2022. a mountain or range of hills (sometimes used figuratively):-hill (country), mount (-ain), X promotion.”²⁸⁹ “Hebrew 4023. rendezvous; Megiddon or Megiddo, a place in Palestine.”²⁹⁰ From the above definitions we see that Armageddon can be a symbolic name, and can mean rendezvous. This again suggests the notion that we are not actually looking for a physical battle at this location. The usage of this term is very similar to the use of the word Gehenna by Christ. Gehenna is from the Greek “*geenna*” which Strong’s defines as “valley of (the son of) Hinnom; gehenna (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem, used figuratively as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment:-hell.”²⁹¹ Hinnom was a valley located just outside Jerusalem which was notorious for several things. Along the eastern side of the Valley Solomon erected high places for the heathen deity Molech. Ahaz and Manasseh made their children ‘pass through the fire’ in this valley. Josiah scattered human bones and other corruptions in the valley to put an end to these practices. After this time the sewage of Jerusalem was conducted into the valley to be carried away by the brook Kidron. It was also the principle garbage dump of Jerusalem. Since fresh fuel was added daily it burned continuously, hence Christ’s reference to it as the place “*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:44). Because of all the terrible things it was known for, it became associated with the place of eternal punishment. Similarly Har-Megiddo was known as a place of great battles.

“The scene of the struggle of good and evil is suggested by that battle-field, the plain of Esdraelon, which was famous for two great victories, of Barak over the Canaanites and of Gideon over the Midianites; and for two great disasters, the deaths of Saul and Josiah. Hence it signifies in Revelation a place of great slaughter, the scene of a terrible retribution upon the wicked.”²⁹²

²⁸⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #717.”

²⁸⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Hebrew #2022.”

²⁹⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Hebrew #4023.”

²⁹¹ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #1067.”

We are not looking for any particular battle located at Mount Megiddo, but are seeing depicted for us the ultimate struggle between the forces of good and evil, the struggle in which Satan and all of his evil cohorts will be defeated with a great slaughter. This is of course the legendary battle of Armageddon, the subject of much conversation and debate in the past. It is not, as many people presume it to be, a great armed conflict often referred to as “World War III.” It is not some great battle that is yet future, but World Wars I & II which are already past.

16:17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.

The final vial is now poured out in the air. This is the culmination of God’s judgment against His enemies which began way back in chapter five with the seven seals. When the seventh seal was opened, it revealed the seven trumpets. When the seventh trumpet was blown, it revealed the seven vials. Now as the seventh vial is poured out it does not reveal another set of seven. Rather, the statement is made “*It is done.*” This gives a sense of finality. The final and decisive blow of the judgment of Satan has been struck.

When this vial was poured out “*there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne.*” Judging by its point of origin, and the fact that it is called great, this seems to have been the voice of God. He is pronouncing the ultimate climax of His judgment against evil. Notice that this vial is poured out “*into the air.*” We have previously seen the earth, sea, and rivers mentioned. This is the first time anything has affected the air. We saw that the sixth vial dried up the Euphrates River, which signified the coming together of the East and the West into one world. As a result, when the seventh vial is poured out, it has the capacity to affect the entire world, whereas all past judgments were limited to the Western world. Thus we see the term air being used which denotes a worldwide impact for this vial of God’s wrath.

Since this is the final blow God will strike against evil, it must of necessity be a decisive blow against Satan. This is indicated by the fact that the vial is poured out into the air and Satan is referred to as “*the prince of the power of the air*” (Ephesians 2:2). This final blow will be struck against the kingdoms of the world, the minions of the “*god of this world*” (II Corinthians 4:4)

16:18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.

We have seen all of these phenomena previously. They indicate unsettled and troublous times. When the sixth seal was opened in chapter six bringing paganism in Rome to an end, a great earthquake was the first symbol used to denote this tremendous event. This shows the great “tremor” that went through the entire Empire as Constantinople replaced Rome as the capital. You could say it was an “earthshaking” event. Of course the center of the quake was in Rome itself. In chapter eleven, the French Revolution is also spoken of as a great earthquake. The earthquake in the present verse is said to far exceed all past ones. In both of the other cases just cited the effects were far reaching. Especially the French Revolution, which threw the entire European continent into war and revolution. Every nation from the smallest to the greatest was embroiled in the series of conflicts set off by the Revolution. The situation mentioned here is to be worse. Worse even than the fall of Rome or Constantinople. This will be, as were these past earthquakes, very terrible from the perspective of the ones affected by it. I believe this event will more closely parallel the French Revolution. I think it will be accompanied by worldwide turmoil and chaos. Subsequent verses seem to uphold this view.

I believe we have recently witnessed the pouring out of the seventh vial. While the eventual affects of this are yet to be determined, it should be clear to anyone who is observant, that the world is forever changed, and the biggest changes are still to come. I am speaking of course of the events of September 11, 2001. I do not believe we can simply brush this aside as an isolated, although very tragic event, which will not ultimately produce lasting change.

²⁹² Smith, 1986, s.v. “Armageddon.”

To the contrary, I believe history will show this to have been one of the most profound events in human history. It will spark the events outlined in the next two verses.

16:19 And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath

The “great city?” We are not given any clues to identify what city this is talking about so we are reduced to speculation. Jerusalem is one possibility, since it has long figured in the affairs of God’s people. Some suggest that Jerusalem would fit since it is already divided into three parts: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim. However, we have not seen Jerusalem mentioned to this point throughout the entire book of Revelation, even though we have been in that part of the world. This tends to cast some doubt on it being the city in question. Would God suddenly insert something new in our story without giving us some clue to help us understand what He meant?

Rome is another candidate, since it has been the center piece of Revelation to this point. In reality, however, it has not been the city of Rome which has been under consideration, but the political and spiritual entities that it has given rise to.

There is also the possibility that He is not talking about a literal city at all. Thus far we have seen the term city applied to the Lord’s Church in chapter eleven, France in chapter eleven, the Catholic Church in chapter fourteen, and will see it applied to Heaven in chapter twenty-one. The only one that could possibly refer to an actual city is the reference to France in chapter eleven. It could be interpreted as meaning Paris only, where much of the activity was centered. That is a possibility, although I tend to believe that the entire nation of France is the intended meaning of the term there. My point is that there is no occurrence of the term city in Revelation where it is definitely used to mean a city. This is not surprising, since we are dealing with a book filled with symbolic language. If an actual city is meant in this case, it is the only time in the entire book where the word is so used.

What is the great city? When we look at the world today what is the great power that stands above all others? The United States. With the fall of the Soviet Empire in the 1980s, the only legitimate power left is the U.S. Could the United States become the Disunited States? Whether or not this is what Revelation is referring to, I believe that America is destined to fall apart. We are headed that way too fast to escape it.

If America does break apart, where will the splits occur? Ever since the Civil War there has been constant animosity between the North and the South. The differences between the two regions continues to grow rapidly. The South is by nature generally much more conservative morally, religiously, politically, and in many other ways. The majority of people in the North probably favor abortion, feminism, gay rights, and numerous other ungodly things. In contrast, the majority of people in the South do not support these things. As these things become more of an issue in the coming years the chasm between North and South will only widen. Finally, some state in the South may get enough of it and secede again. Only this time, it will be amid widespread social, economic, and political chaos. This will give a climate where little if any real resistance can be offered by the North, unlike the case in the nineteenth century. In reality, these viewpoints are not strictly North/South. They are usually tied more closely to rural and urban lifestyles. Since the North is much more urban than the South, this is why you see the disparity between North and South.

What will be the “third part” if this split actually does occur. The Midwest, except for the highly industrialized states along the Great Lakes, generally shares many values with the South and likely would side with the South in such a split. The West would probably be the third piece of the puzzle. They, like the Northeast, have many liberal tendencies. It might even be their desire to remain united with the Northeast, but that would be difficult if the midsection of the country seceded.

It was very interesting to note how the voting broke down by region during the 1992 presidential election. The general trend was for the Northeast and the West to vote for Bill Clinton, while the South and Midwest voted for George Bush. I feel this happened because morality was made such an issue in this campaign. The voters have let it be known where they stand on moral issues. This same general pattern has been seen in the elections of 1996, 2000 and 2004, with the 2000 election being a very divisive issue for many people.

How could the events of September 11th possibly hasten the fall of America? The initial reaction was toward patriotism and even respect for God. The more long term change was to awaken many people to what is really going on. For decades the “silent majority” has watched as liberals have push for numerous changes in the direction of this country that have moved us farther and farther from God. Many of those who were formerly silent are now making themselves heard. Political correctness is not playing as well in a changed America. The problem is, the government, and especially the courts, will still side with the liberals. Ultimately, what the events of September 11th have served to do is harden the resolve of both sides. This country is headed for internal conflict on a scale not seen since the Civil War. I do not expect a repeat of that tragic era, but I do look for a similar secession of states.

“*The cities of the nations fell*” shows a time of great strife and chaos throughout civilization. It is not that something will happen to the cities to destroy them that will not also happen elsewhere. Cities are considered to be the strength of a nation. If the cities fall this shows a complete breakdown of the entire nation. It is something we seem to be headed towards today at a rapid pace. Our cities are crumbling due to violent crime, drugs, gangs, poverty, corrupt government, and other problems. Our entire society is crumbling, but nowhere is it more visible than in the large cities.

“*Great Babylon*” is another name for the papacy. To say that Rome “*came in remembrance before God*” does not imply that He had forgotten about them. It simply means that He is now going to focus His wrath on them once again. The fact that the papacy is mentioned separately from the “*great city*” here in this verse lends further credence to the idea that they are two separate entities. It will be amid the worldwide chaos as civilization breaks down and the United States breaks apart that the papacy will suffer further from God’s wrath.

We have recently seen the Catholic Church in America racked by scandal and accusations. Literally hundreds of priests have been charged with sexual misconduct, the majority of this committed against children! It is no secret that over the years the Catholic priesthood has attracted a very large number of homosexual men. Although the Church takes a public stand against this abhorrent practice, they have nevertheless turned somewhat of a blind eye to the problem among the priesthood. One reason is that so many of the superiors are themselves sexual deviants. Another is that they have had a difficult time recruiting priests and have found themselves in a position to “take what they could get.” This whole situation is just further evidence of the despicable nature of the beast. Before it is over I believe the size and strength of the Catholic Church in America will be greatly reduced.

At present, the Catholic Church is desperately struggling to hold what is left of its shattered Empire together. But there are mounting differences between the pope and his subjects, especially in the developed nations. In the United States, for example, the people, priests, and even most bishops tend to favor more liberal and modern views on issues than does Rome. It is only a matter of time before such issues as abortion, birth control, women priests, and others become very divisive among the Catholic ranks.

The break up of America could be a major blow to the papacy. The stronghold of Catholicism in this country is in the Northeast. If that part of the country is on its own, without a moderating influence from the South and Midwest, just how liberal would they become? Perhaps so liberal that there could end up being a permanent split between American Catholics and the papacy? If so, this would be a tremendous blow to the pope. Ultimately something will happen that will turn most of the pope’s subjects away from him. Perhaps the aforementioned sex scandal is the beginning of the end.

16:20 And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.

Islands and mountains represent nations and governments and powers of the world. When it says they fled away and were not found it means that they have fallen. This shows a period of great chaos and anarchy throughout the world. As mentioned previously our societies are already quickly decaying and will soon reach the point where governments will lose control.

We have recently seen the very surprising and unexpected fall of the Soviet Empire. The United States is suffering from severe political, social, economic, and moral crises. Unless dramatic steps are taken we are soon to follow the Soviets into demise. I think we can look for the social and economic systems of the entire world to utterly collapse

in the not to distant future. Currently it is only the threat of intervention by the United States that keeps countries like North Korea, Iran, China and others from moving against their neighbors militarily. If we are no longer a major player in world affairs regional conflicts would soon engulf the entire world.

The recent war in Iraq also sent a major political jolt through the world. It has further alienated an already hostile Arab population. It also drove a major wedge between the United States and many of its long time allies in Europe. No one who pays attention to the world scene can doubt that the events of September 11th made this conflict possible. The world is becoming a more divided and dangerous place. How will the struggle between Islam and the West play out. Might this be responsible for much of the turmoil to come?

16:21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

This shows further the great despair of men during this period. Hail has been used before in Revelation to show a great catastrophe. In chapter eight we saw hail as one result of the first trumpet. This was the first invasion of Rome by Alaric and the Goths. In chapter eleven, hail is mentioned as one of the conditions immediately following the French Revolution. Both of these events were very disastrous and far reaching in their effects. The one under consideration here is to be much worse. The stone is referring to the individual pieces of hail. The size of the hail was such that it weighed about one talent. The weight of a talent varied with the substance being weighed. For general items, a talent was about 129 pounds and six ounces.²⁹³ To achieve this weight a hailstone would have to be nearly 20 inches across. Clearly this is not meant literally. The effect of this hail was so great that men blasphemed God. Instead of repenting of their evil deeds and submitting themselves to God, they continued to be stubborn and resist God to their own destruction. Just as a rebellious child does not realize that punishment is for his own good, these wicked men will not repent when God punishes them.

What effect will the chaos brought on by the seventh vial have on the papacy? The Catholic Church needs some measure of peace and stability in order to prosper since it is a political organization as well as a religious one. The Lord's Church does not have this need. It can, and has, survived all sorts of political and social upheavals throughout history. The unsettled conditions of the world will further weaken the power of Rome. This will be the blow that finally breaks the spiritual power of the papacy and reduces her to the point that she will be little more than another denomination. I believe most Catholic Churches around the world will cease to bow to Rome.

²⁹³ Davis, 1983, s.v. "weights."

Chapter Seventeen

God's Judgment of Rome: Judgment of the Whore

17:1 And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters:

After the seven vials of God's wrath had been poured out, one of the angels bearing the vials came and spoke to John. His purpose was to show John more details about the papacy which he refers to here as "*the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.*" The reason the woman is spoken of as a whore is that the papacy has been guilty of false worship and idolatry which is quite often referred to as fornication or adultery in the Bible. The Children of Israel did the same thing. "*Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them*" (Ezekiel 16:17). The Catholics also practiced idolatry and other abominations which prompted God to call them "*the great whore.*" The "*many waters*" which the woman is seen sitting upon will be explained in verse fifteen to be a multitude of people. To sit on something means that it acts as a base or foundation. The papacy could not exist without the support, financially and otherwise, from a great number of people around the world. Therefore, all who have the mark of the beast and support the papacy are those upon which this whore sits.

17:2 With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.

For many centuries the papacy managed to get world leaders to submit to her. These world leaders committed spiritual fornication with Rome. This term is often used in reference to idolatry and false worship which is exactly what was occurring in this instance. The papacy had seduced these leaders into participating in her ungodly deeds. This is why the papacy was referred to as a "*great whore*" in verse one. She was willing to sell herself to the nations of the world for wealth, prestige, and power.

"The inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication." Not only were the leaders seduced, but the general populace as well. They were duped into believing and following the false doctrines of the Catholics. Their condition is likened here to drunkenness. Rome had in essence, gotten them drunk and taken advantage of them, as an unscrupulous man will often try to do with a woman. Ultimately, it was the people, not Rome, who were at fault; just as a woman will only find herself in that position if she gets drunk in the first place. It was her decision to drink, therefore what happened to her was ultimately her responsibility. Likewise, these people could have resisted the false doctrines that were given them to "drink" but they chose not to do so. They are the ones who chose to drink, no one forced it on them. Because of the weakness of the people and their leaders, the papacy was able to dominate the entire Western world for over a millennium.

17:3 So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

The angel now carries John away into the wilderness where you expect to find wild beasts. Here he shows John a very horrific beast that has seven heads and ten horns. We were first introduced to this beast in chapter twelve, but will be given a clearer picture of him here in chapter seventeen. Seated upon this beast was a woman. We can tell immediately that this woman is not the one mentioned in chapter twelve. That woman was righteous, while this one is sitting upon an evil beast which is “*full of names of blasphemy*.” This is the same beast we saw in chapter thirteen and it was stated there that he was full of the names of blasphemy. This shows that the seven powers which the heads represent behaved in a disrespectful and blasphemous manner towards God. They persecuted His people and corrupted His worship. They acted as though He did not even exist. They showed absolutely no regard or respect for God. The beast is said to be scarlet colored which may well be a reference to the blood of the righteous he has shed countless times throughout history.

17:4 And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication:

Our attention is now turned to the woman riding upon the hideous beast. The woman is described as being beautifully and richly attired. She was wearing garments of purple and scarlet. “Purple raiment was costly, and consequently its use was the privilege of the rich exclusively. It was worn by persons of wealth and high official position, and especially by kings. Indeed, it was a sign of royalty, and was put on Jesus in mockery of his claims.”²⁹⁴ “The color (scarlet) and the method of obtaining it were early known. It was much used in the hangings of the tabernacle and in the high priest’s vestments. It was employed in the ceremony attending the purification of the leper, and in the preparation of the water of separation.”²⁹⁵ From the first color we receive the impression of power and authority. From the second we get the idea of religious meaning and significance. Together we have a picture of the papacy with her great spiritual authority.

The woman was further adorned with “*gold and precious stones and pearls*.” This is a further indication of her wealth. At the height of its power the papacy was unbelievably wealthy. Of course, much of this wealth was obtained at the expense of her own people. The woman also had a golden cup in her hand. It was normal for royalty to drink from vessels of silver and gold so this also adds to her aura of power and wealth. In this cup, however, was the “*abominations and filthiness of her fornication*.” Everything we had seen to this point has pointed to a wonderful and wealthy woman, but here we see her true character. She was similar in character to the scribes and Pharisees of Christ’s day. “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also*” (Matthew 23:25-6). This woman appeared very beautiful and alluring from the outside, but inside she was rotten to the core.

17:5 And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

This beautifully attired woman had a name written on her forehead, a name that described her as she really was and betrayed her marvelous appearance. Back in chapter ten, as preparation was being made for the pouring out of the seven vials of God’s wrath, which was to destroy the papacy, the statement was made “*the mystery of God should be finished*.” The term mystery is applied to the apostate Roman Church. Indeed her origins and practices are mysterious, having no basis in scripture whatsoever. At one time in history, Babylon was a great and powerful city

²⁹⁴ Davis, 1983, s.v. “purple.”

²⁹⁵ Ibid., s.v. “scarlet.”

and, during the sixth century B.C., became the most powerful nation in the world after subduing Assyria. It was a city noted for idolatry and excess, and like Sodom and Gomorrah has become synonymous with great wickedness. At the time Revelation was written Babylon was the most infamous city of the past. Everyone knew of that city's reputation for sin and wickedness. Spiritual Rome has many similar characteristics thus leading to the comparison between the two.

“THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” Today there are literally hundreds of groups practicing spiritual harlotry. Groups that have splintered off from the Catholic Church because of ideological differences, but they too practice false doctrines of one type or another. These are the so-called “denominations.” The word denomination implies division, but the Lord's Church is not divided. These churches are also guilty of spiritual fornication like Rome and are in essence the daughters of Rome, which is where apostasy really first took hold and flourished. Rome is, therefore, the mother of numerous spiritual harlots.

This woman's name was written on her forehead where everyone should have been able to see it. This denotes the fact that Rome's sins and apostasy were visible to the whole world. The problem, however, is that the world did not want to see the truth of the matter. They accepted the papacy and never questioned her authenticity. Just as men are often blinded and taken in by the physical beauty of a woman, despite the fact that she might have a very objectionable character. Eventually their blindness will be their downfall.

The entire world was exactly as Jesus described the Jews during His day *“For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them”* (Matthew 13:15). Even today, most people fail to see the apostasy of Rome and her many spiritually immoral daughters, the denominations. They remain blind to the truth and continue in their sins.

17:6 And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.

We have already seen that this woman is of very bad character. Here we see just how bad she is. She is said to be *“drunken with the blood of the saints.”* Of course blood would not actually make a person drunk, but we are not talking about a literal woman anyway. The thought is that this woman has slaughtered so many of Christ's servants that she did not just have a taste of their blood, but was a glutton. She drank of the blood of the saints until she could not drink any more.

After having given us a description of this hideous woman, John now tells us how he reacted. He *“wondered with great admiration.”* This does not mean that he admired the woman in the way we would use the word today. He wondered and marveled at this woman who was so richly attired, and yet was of such an evil character. In short, John was amazed at what he saw, and did not fully understand the identity or meaning of this woman.

17:7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns.

The angel that is talking with John now asks him why he marveled or wondered after this woman and the grotesque beast upon which she was riding. The angel then offers to tell John about these two evil creatures, which he proceeds to do in the next verse.

17:8 The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

The seven headed beast is spoken of here as something that *“was, and is not.”* This indicates that it has died. This is further supported by the statement *“and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition.”* The bottomless pit is where we saw the Arabs arise from in chapter nine. It is the dwelling place of Satan and of all

things which are evil. Certainly, then, it is the place where this woman and the seven-headed beast came from. The beast originally came from the pit but then was destroyed. This is the meaning of the word perdition. It comes from the Greek word “apoleia,” which Strong’s defines as “ruin or loss (physical, spiritual or eternal):-damnable (-nation), destruction, die, perdition, X perish, pernicious ways, waste.”²⁹⁶ Thus we see that this beast was killed, which refers to the overthrow of Rome in 476 by Odoacer.

The beast is now dead, but something very unexpected happened. The beast was resurrected. This is what is meant by the last phrase of the verse, “*the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.*” This has reference to the revival of Rome, which at one point seemed dead, but then suddenly came back to life in the form of the papacy. Because of this seemingly miraculous occurrence “*they that dwell on the earth shall wonder.*” People will be in awe of the remarkable recuperative powers of this beast. This is the same thing we saw in chapter thirteen. “*And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast*” (Revelation 13:3). Here we are told exactly who it was that wondered after the beast. It was those “*whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world.*” In other words, most people did wonder after the beast, but Christians did not. Those who have their names written in the book of life are Christians. This verse tells us that their names have been written there “*from the foundation of the world.*” This does not teach predestination as some might think. God has not chosen any particular person, but rather a type of people. Those who are holy and righteous will be accepted of God. This was decided before the world was ever created. “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*” (Ephesians 1:4).

The reason Christians will not wonder after the beast is because they should understand what is going on. They had these very same prophesies which we are presently studying to help them understand the events as they occurred. Therefore there was no reason for them to wonder after the beast.

17:9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.

The phrase “*and here is the mind which hath wisdom,*” is similar to the phrase in chapter thirteen “*Here is wisdom.*” The idea is that a very important statement is about to be made, and careful attention should be paid to it. The important message is that “*the seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth.*” The question is whether this is meant literally or figuratively. The Lord has already put us on alert that something unusual is going on in this verse with the statement “*here is the mind which hath wisdom.*”

In prophesy mountains represent powerful nations and governments. The seven heads of the beast are seven world empires which Satan has used as his instruments in an attempt to destroy God’s people. The woman will be shown in verse eighteen to be Rome. She is in essence a close-up view of the seventh head, the head presently in power. She rides upon the beast because she is the representative of the head currently in power, and she is the greatest accomplishment of Satan. The papacy enjoyed more power, and for a longer time, than any other empire of any time in history. Despite her unholy power and glory, she failed in her primary mission: the eradication of the Lord’s Church.

In the present verse, the seven heads also have another meaning. It is pointing to the fact that this seventh head sits on seven literal mountains. We already know that it is Rome that we are dealing with here. Indeed Rome fits with this description having long been known as the “City of Seven Hills.” “These hills include the famous seven hills on which ancient Rome was built—the Aventine, Caelian, Capitoline, Esquiline, Palatine, Quirinal, and Viminal hills.”²⁹⁷ Since there is a double meaning here the Lord alerted us to it beforehand so that we would not miss it, by saying, “*here is the mind which hath wisdom.*”

²⁹⁶ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #684.”

²⁹⁷ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Rome.”

17:10 And there are seven kings: five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space.

The reference to seven kings here is not referring to seven individuals, but to seven thrones, which were each occupied by numerous men. These kings stand for the seven kingdoms shown as mountains in the previous verse. The Bible has often used the term king when actually referring to a kingdom. A good example is found in Daniel chapter two. There Daniel is interpreting Nebuchadnezzar's dream about a great image. The image is divided up into four parts which represent the four kingdoms of Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. In describing the image to Nebuchadnezzar Daniel says this. *"Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold. And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth"* (Daniel 2:37-39). He refers to king Nebuchadnezzar as the head of the image. The other three parts are all referred to as kingdoms. Here he is addressing Nebuchadnezzar but says *"after thee shall arise another kingdom."* Since Nebuchadnezzar was not the last king of the Babylonian Empire, Daniel has to be referring to the Empire and not Nebuchadnezzar personally. This is what the Bible so often does, and is doing here in Revelation.

The seven kingdoms which are under consideration here are Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and the papacy. *"Five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come."* At the time of John's writing Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece had already fallen. Rome was then in power and the papacy was yet to come. The last of the seven, the papacy, is supposed to *"continue a short space"* when it comes. The term *"short space"* is from the Greek word *"oligos."* Strong's definition includes *"a season, short, small, a while."*²⁹⁸ This definition shows that the word can be interpreted as a season or a while. This eliminates any possible difficulties over calling the duration of the papacy a *"short"* space. The context of the verse indicates to us that we are not looking at the length of the time period, but simply the fact that this seventh kingdom is to have a period during which it is to enjoy great power.

17:11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

Again we see the idea of a resurrected kingdom. A kingdom *"that was, and is not, even he is the eighth."* How can there be an eighth when there are only seven heads? Notice that it says the eighth *"is of the seven."* This refers us back to chapter thirteen where we saw the seven-headed beast and another beast that *"had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon."* We identified this second beast as the Holy Roman Empire. The Holy Roman Empire is the eighth, but as can easily be seen it is of the seven. It is the carnal resurrection of the old Roman Empire. We also find that a similar fate awaits this eighth head as was promised the seven-headed beast. It too will be destroyed by God's vengeance. It ended, interestingly enough, at the same time the papacy was receiving its death blows.

*"The later emperors, all rulers of Austria and concerned mainly with aggrandizement of their personal dominions, were mere figureheads. Futile armed intervention against the French Revolution constituted the last important venture of the empire in European politics. Because of well-founded fears that Napoleon I, Emperor of France, intended to annex the imperial title, Francis II, the last of the emperors, formally dissolved the empire on Aug. 6, 1806, and established the Empire of Austria."*²⁹⁹

17:12 And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.

²⁹⁸ Strong, 1982, s.v. "Greek #3641."

²⁹⁹ Funk & Wagnall's, 1973, s.v. "Holy Roman Empire."

We are now told the meaning of the ten horns of the beast. The horns represent ten kings. As we saw in verse ten, the term king is used to refer to a kingdom and not to individual rulers. Therefore, the horns are actually ten kingdoms. We see here that these kingdoms have not come into being as yet, but will receive power and work with the beast at some time in the future. They will have *“power as kings one hour with the beast.”* Here hour comes from the Greek word “hora,” which Strong’s defines as “an ‘hour’ (literally or figuratively):-day, hour, instant, season, X short, [even-] tide, (high) time.”³⁰⁰ This definition indicates that the meaning of this word does not have to be specific. One meaning that is given is “season.” This implies an indefinite period of time. Therefore, we are not looking for a definite period of time for these kingdoms to have power with the beast. Also, since the 1,260 year period is not mentioned here we can assume that these ten kingdoms will not exist throughout this entire period. If they were to exist throughout that whole era we would almost certainly be told of this.

Back in chapter thirteen we introduced some related prophesies of Daniel. One part of that prophesy in particular is very relevant to our discussion here. *“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings”* (Daniel 7:24). The fourth of the beasts which Daniel saw was a representation of Rome. It had ten horns just as the seventh head of the seven-headed beast does. The question now is this, are these ten horns the same in both cases? In principle they are, but in practice they aren’t. In both cases, the ten horns are ten kingdoms which support the papacy. In Daniel we are looking at the beginning of the papacy, but here in Revelation we are looking at its end.

Notice how in Daniel’s prophesy the little horn is seen rising AFTER the first ten. This shows us that these ten kingdoms were in existence in A.D. 533 when the papacy officially began. Later in this chapter we will see that the ten horns we are currently dealing with are present at the end of the papacy’s power. The problem is that not one single kingdom extant at the origin of the papacy survived until her demise. Obviously, then, we must be looking at two different groups of ten. They serve the same purpose; they support the papacy. However, the names will be different for the two sets.

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The task of identifying the ten kingdoms spoken of here is not a particularly easy task. The map of Europe has undergone tremendous changes over the last 1,500 years. Kingdoms have appeared and then disappeared, some to reappear later, others gone forever. Our task is to find ten kingdoms that existed and supported the papacy throughout some part of the 1,260 years of her power, and then remained to turn against the papacy in the end. The best way I know to approach this is to make a list of all the possible candidates and then look into each one and see if it fits what we are looking for. There are six criteria which a kingdom must satisfy to be what we are looking for. The criteria are as follows:

1. It must be an independent or sovereign kingdom. In other words it is not simply a province or colony of some greater power.
2. It must possess at least a moderate measure of power. Verse thirteen tells us that these nations *“shall give their power and strength unto the beast.”* A kingdom which was extremely weak would have no power to give to the papacy.
3. It must be a Catholic nation, that is, a nation which has Catholicism as its national religion and supports the papacy.
4. The first three criteria must have all been met simultaneously during some part of the 1,260 year period of the papacy’s power.
5. All ten nations must have existed at the same time.
6. All of the nations must have remained in existence up to the time of the Reformation. Verse sixteen tells us that *“these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and*

³⁰⁰ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #5610.”

burn her with fire.” These ten nations will eventually begin to turn away from the papacy, and this did not happen until the Reformation.

One method of searching for kingdoms which meet these criteria is to examine the histories of present-day European nations. We will restrict our search to Europe because after the eighth century Catholic power no longer existed in Asia or Africa for any extended periods of time due to the advance of the Arabs. How will looking at present-day Europe give us the information we desire about nations which existed hundreds of years ago? The histories given in any encyclopedia will provide for us, among other things, the past history of the area of land which is presently occupied by that particular country. This way we will find information about the past of every inch of the European continent. Even if a nation is of recent origin we will know who controlled the land in the past centuries. This way we can discover what nations existed in Europe in the past. As of 1991 there were thirty-three sovereign nations in Europe. They are Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Vatican City, and Yugoslavia.³⁰¹

Many of the nations on our list only came into existence in the last 200 years, which is too late for our purposes. Others were not Catholic nations, but belonged to the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christendom and thus do not fit our criteria. The following countries can therefore be removed from consideration because of one or both of these reasons: Albania, Andorra, Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Switzerland, Turkey, Vatican City, and Yugoslavia. This leaves Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden to be considered. We will now examine the history of each of these countries in turn.

Austria

“During the 8th century, after fratricidal strife among the Germans, the Franks secured the throne of Bavaria. Fighting continued during that century between the Avars and the Bavarians in the Danube R. valley. At the end of the century the Frankish emperor Charlemagne devastated the territory of the Avars and established a series of outposts (military districts) of the empire in the country between the Enns and Raab rivers to serve as buffer territories against future encroachment from the east. One of these outposts was the Ostmark (Eastern March), which later became known as the Ost Reich (Eastern Country) or Österreich (Austria).

The Magyars, a nomadic people migrating slowly from the east, advanced easily along the Danube R. valley until they were finally defeated by the German king Otto I at Augsburg in 955 in the Battle of the Lechfeld. Otto I revived the Eastern March and gave the more influential title of margrave to its administrator; these moves marked the emergence of Austria as a political entity. The boundary of the Eastern March was slowly extended eastward until in the early 11th century it reached what is now called Moravia. The margrave of Austria was subordinate to the duke of Bavaria, whose domain included this march. The main function of the margrave was the defense of the march and the outlying areas, and for that purpose the margraves enjoyed exceptional power. Between 976 and 1230 the Babenberg rulers of Austria contributed much to the growth of the march. They built cities and roads, encouraged trade, and enhanced their prestige by participation in the Crusades.

The death of the last Babenberg was followed by a period of trial and unrest. King Ottokar II (1230?-78) of Bohemia occupied Austria, Styria, and Carniola. His power was opposed by Rudolph von Hapsburg, who was crowned Holy Roman emperor in 1273. In 1278 Ottokar was defeated in battle by Rudolf’s forces and slain. By 1283 most of the former domain of Ottokar had come under the rule of Rudolf’s son Albert I (1250?-1308).

³⁰¹ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Europe.”

The rise of the house of Hapsburg is closely linked to the rise of Austria. During the 14th and 15th centuries the Hapsburgs steadily increased their holdings in the eastern part of the Holy Roman Empire. With acquisition of the region surrounding the Brenner Pass, the Hapsburg holdings extended from the upper Danube to the upper Rhine and to the edge of the eastern Alps. Between 1438 and 1806 the rulers of Austria, with one exception, also held the title of Holy Roman emperor.

The Austrian rulers enlarged their holdings by political agreements and by marriage. It was said that while other states made war, it was the good fortune of Austria to make marriages. Flanders, Burgundy, Spain, Trieste, Styria, southern Tirol, and all the present Austrian provinces (with the exception of Salzburg which was governed by an archbishop) became Hapsburg possessions through marriage. With the acquisition of the Netherlands through marriage in 1477, of the crown of Bohemia in 1526, and the crown of Hungary in 1527, The Hapsburgs made Austria the center of a vast empire.”³⁰²

From this we can see that Austria seems to be exactly what we are looking for. It was a very strong independent nation, and definitely supported Catholicism. Therefore, Austria is the first horn.

Denmark

“About A.D. 950, all Denmark was united by King Harald Bluetooth. Harald introduced Christianity in Denmark. About 800, Danish seamen began raiding European coastal towns and sailing away with slaves and treasure. The Danish Vikings spread terror throughout much of Western Europe for about 300 years. They conquered England in 1013, and Danish kings ruled that country until 1042.

During the late 1100’s and early 1200’s, Danish power expanded along the southern coast of the Baltic sea to Estonia, which Denmark conquered in 1219. But a long period of civil wars and struggles with north German cities, beginning in the 1240’s, greatly weakened the country.

Denmark regained its power under Queen Margrete, who became ruler in 1375. Margrete was also the wife of King Haakon VI of Norway. After he died in 1380, Margrete became ruler of Norway as well as Denmark. In 1388, during political confusion in Sweden, Swedish noblemen elected her ruler of Sweden, too. In 1397, Margrete united Denmark, Norway, and Sweden in the union of Kalmar, with power centered in Denmark. Sweden broke away from the union in 1523.

In 1536, during the Reformation, King Christian III established Lutheranism as the official religion of Denmark. That same year Christian made Norway a province of Denmark.”³⁰³

Denmark also meets our requirements. It was a powerful nation which practiced Catholicism up until the Reformation. Therefore Denmark is our second horn.

Finland

“In the 1000’s, Sweden and Russia began a struggle for control of Finland. Both nations wanted to extend their boundaries. In addition, Sweden wanted to convert the Finns to Roman Catholicism, and Russia wanted to convert them to Eastern Orthodoxy.

During the 1100’s and 1200’s, Sweden gradually conquered all Finland and established Roman Catholicism as the official religion. Many Swedes settled in Finland, and Swedish became the official

³⁰² *Funk & Wagnall’s*, 1973, s.v. “Austria.”

³⁰³ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. “Denmark.”

language. However, Finns shared equal rights with Swedes. About 1540, the Swedish king made Lutheranism the official religion.”³⁰⁴

From this we can see that Finland does not meet our criteria. Although Catholicism was the predominant religion, Finland never really existed as an independent sovereign nation after it was converted to Catholicism. It was a pawn in the struggle between Sweden and Russia. Therefore Finland is not one of our horns.

France

“By the mid-600’s, the Merovingian kings had become weak rulers, interested chiefly in personal pleasures. Pepin the Herstal, the chief royal advisor, gradually took over most of the royal powers. His son, Charles Martel, extended the family’s power. Charles received the title Martel (the Hammer) after defeating an invading Arab army in 732. The battle began near Tours and ended near Poitiers. He became king of the Franks in all but title.

Charles Martel’s son, Pepin the Short, overthrew the last Merovingian ruler and became king of the Franks in 751. He founded the Carolingian dynasty, and enlarged the Frankish kingdom. He also helped develop the political power of the pope by giving Pope Stephen II a large gift of land north of Rome.

Pepin’s son, Charlemagne, was one of the mightiest conquerors of all time. After Charlemagne became king of the Franks, he went on over fifty military campaigns and expanded his kingdom far beyond the borders of what is now France. He also extended the pope’s lands. In 800 Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne Emperor of the Romans.

Charlemagne died in 814, and his three grandsons later fought among themselves for control of his huge empire. They divided it into three kingdoms in 843. In the Treaty of Verdun, one grandson, Charles the Bald, received most of what is now France. The second kingdom consisted of much that is now Germany. The third kingdom lay between the other two. It consisted of a strip of land extending from the North Sea to central Italy.

By the late 900’s, the Carolingian kings had lost much power, and the strength of the nobles had increased. The kings became little more than feudal lords chosen by the other feudal nobles to lead them in war. But in peacetime, most of their authority extended only over their personal estates. In 987, the nobles ended the Carolingian line of kings and chose Hugh Capet as their king. He started the Capetian dynasty. Many historians mark the beginning of the French nation from the coronation of Hugh Capet.”³⁰⁵

This shows the beginnings of the French nation. France remained an independent and Catholic nation until the French Revolution in 1789. From this we see that France does meet our criteria. Therefore France is our third horn.

Germany

“In 843, the Treaty of Verdun divided Charlemagne’s empire into three kingdoms, one for each of his grandsons. Louis II (called the German) received lands east of the Rhine River. His kingdom became what is now Germany. The western part, later called France, went to Charles I (the Bald). Lothair I received the middle kingdom, a narrow strip that extended from the North Sea to central Italy. He also kept the title of emperor.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., s.v. “Finland.”

³⁰⁵ Ibid., s.v. “France.”

In 911, The German branch of the Frankish royal family died out. By then, the German kingdom consisted of five powerful duchies (territories ruled by a duke)-Bavaria, Lorraine, Franconia, Saxony, and Swabia. The German dukes elected Conrad I of Franconia as king. In 919, Conrad was followed by Henry I (the Fowler) of Saxony, whose family ruled until 1024. With the founding of the Saxon dynasty, Germany became permanently separated from France.

Henry's son, Otto I (the Great), drove invading Hungarians out of southern Germany in 955, and extended the German frontier in the North. Otto also won control over the old middle Frankish kingdom, which gave him the right to claim the title of emperor. In 962, Otto was crowned emperor of Rome. This marked the beginning of what later was called the Holy Roman Empire."³⁰⁶

Germany remained part of the Holy Roman Empire until Napoleon seized most of its territory in the early nineteenth century. His conquests brought about the official end of the Empire in 1806. As a result, from 962 to 1806 Germany was not an independent nation. It was part of the Holy Roman Empire and, in reality, part of Austria. Catholicism was the dominant religion of this region, but since Germany was not an independent nation it fails to meet our criteria. Therefore, Germany is not one of our horns.

Great Britain

Great Britain as a nation did not actually exist until 1707. That is when England, Scotland, and Wales united to form Great Britain. In 1801 Northern Ireland joined Great Britain to form the United Kingdom. Before all of this came about the area was generally referred to as England. We will now examine the history of England in the centuries before it became Great Britain.

Groups known as the Angles and Saxons invaded England in the fifth century as soon as Rome had withdrawn its last legions. They subdued most of the Britons and were able to fend off the Scots and Danes for the most part. They formed a strong central government which helped to unify the country. For several centuries England was ruled as a monarchy by Saxon kings. In 1066, after Edward the Confessor died without leaving a direct heir, a French nobleman, William, Duke of Normandy, claimed the throne and invaded England. William's conquest was successful and he became the king of England. As time passed, the Normans and Anglo-Saxons assimilated into one culture. Christianity had been introduced to England by Roman soldiers long before the Angles and Saxons ever arrived. But Christianity did not become the predominant religion of England until missionary efforts were undertaken by the Catholic Church in the sixth century. England remained a Catholic nation until 1534.³⁰⁷

From this we can see that England was indeed a strong and sovereign nation which practiced Catholicism. Thus it fits our criteria, and is horn number four.

Hungary

"The history of the Hungarian state began in the late 800's. At that time tribes of Magyars swept from the east into the middle Danube basin—the great lowland region bordering the Danube River that comprises most of present-day Hungary. The tribes were led by a chief named Árpád. As the Magyars advanced into the area, they began to establish settlements.

During the early 900's, Magyar armies looted towns throughout much of Europe. But in 955, the German king Otto I defeated the invading Magyars. The Magyars then ended their raids.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., s.v. "Germany."

³⁰⁷ Ibid., s.v. "England."

About 970, Árpád's great-grandson Géza became leader of the Magyars. Géza began to organize the various Magyar tribes into a united nation. After Géza died, his son, Stephen, carried on the work. Stephen, who was a Roman Catholic, asked Pope Sylvester II to give him the title king of Hungary. The pope agreed, and Stephen I, Hungary's first king, was crowned in 1000. As king, Stephen made Roman Catholicism the country's official religion. For this work, the Catholic Church declared him a saint in 1083, 45 years after his death. As a result of Stephen's reign, Hungary became closely identified with the culture and politics of Western Europe.

Árpád's descendants ruled Hungary until 1301, when the last Árpád king died without an heir. During the 300 years of the Árpáds' reign, Hungary became firmly established as a Christian state. After the death of the last Árpád king in 1301, Hungary remained an independent kingdom for 225 more years.³⁰⁸

In 1526 Hungary was defeated by the Ottoman Turks, and the eastern and southern parts of the country were occupied by the Turks. In the 1600's Austria pushed the Turks out of Hungary and took control of the country. Austria retained the land until 1918 when, after the defeat of Austria-Hungary in WWI, the two were separated and the Republic of Hungary was established.

This shows us that Hungary was a strong independent nation for centuries. It was the easternmost nation which adopted Catholicism as its official religion. Therefore, Hungary meets our criteria, and is our fifth horn.

Italy

"In 476, Odoacer seized power in Italy. He ruled well for 13 years. Then he was attacked and defeated by Theodoric, the king of another Germanic tribe, the Ostrogoths. Theodoric and Odoacer ruled jointly until 493, when Theodoric murdered Odoacer. Theodoric continued to rule Italy with an army of Ostrogoths and a government that was mostly Italian. He brought peace to the country, but after his death in 526, the kingdom began to grow weak. By 533, Justinian, the Byzantine emperor who ruled the eastern part of the Roman Empire, expelled the Ostrogoths. The old Roman Empire was united again. But Byzantine rule in Italy collapsed by 572 as a result of invasions by another Germanic tribe, the Lombards.

During the 400's and 500's, the popes increased their influence in both religious and political matters in Italy. It was usually the popes who led attempts to protect Italy from invasion or to soften foreign rule. For about 200 years the popes opposed attempts by the Lombards, a Germanic tribe which had captured most of Italy, to take over Rome as well. The popes finally defeated the Lombards with the aid of two Frankish kings, Pepin the Short and Charlemagne. In 800 Charlemagne was crowned emperor of the Romans by Pope Leo III. The popes established their own political rule in what were called the Papal States in central Italy.

After Charlemagne's death in 814, his son Louis I succeeded him. Louis divided the empire among his sons, who fought each other for control of more territory. Battles for control of Italy continued until Otto the Great, the king of Germany, became Holy Roman Emperor in 962.

From the 1000's on, Italian cities began to grow rapidly in independence and importance. They became centers of political life, banking, and foreign trade. Some cities became wealthy, and many including Florence, Genoa, Milan, Pisa, and Venice, grew into almost independent city-states. Each had its own foreign policy and developed its own political life. They all resisted the efforts of noblemen and emperors to control them. During the 1300's and 1400's, some Italian city-states ranked among the most important powers of Europe.

In 1519, King Charles I of Spain, a member of the Habsburg family, became Emperor Charles V of the

³⁰⁸ Ibid., s.v. "Hungary."

Holy Roman Empire. The power of Charles V lay chiefly in the riches of the lands under Spanish control. In 1521, a war over rival claims of territory broke out between Spain and France. Spanish troops looted Rome in 1527, and later took Milan and Sicily from France. By 1559, almost all of Italy was under the influence of Spain. Ferdinand I, Charles's brother succeeded Charles in 1556, and the title of emperor passed from the Spanish Habsburgs to the Austrian Habsburgs. Spain gradually lost power in Europe and, by the early 1700's control of Italy had passed from Spain to Austria. During the 1700's Austria governed Milan and controlled most of the rest of Italy through local rulers who were loyal to the Austrian king."³⁰⁹

From this we can see that the territory which is today known as Italy never contained an independent nation. The central third was more or less controlled by the popes. The northern third was controlled by France, Spain, and then Austria. The southern third was composed of independent city-states for several centuries, but eventually fell under the sway of France, Spain, and Austria successively. Although this region contained the seat of Roman Catholicism, there was never an independent kingdom located there. Thus Italy fails to meet our criteria, and is not one of our horns.

The Netherlands

“During the 400's, Germanic peoples called the Franks drove the Romans out of the Low Countries. The Frankish kingdom expanded, but broke apart during the 800's. In 870, the Low Countries were divided between the East and West Frankish kingdoms (later Germany and France). The northern part, including what is now The Netherlands, became part of the East Frankish kingdom.

At first, the French and German rulers of the Low Countries paid little attention to the region. Local dukes, counts, and bishops became increasingly powerful. But during the 1100's, trade and industry began to expand rapidly in the Low Countries. Fishing, shipbuilding, shipping, and textile manufacturing became especially important. The French and German kings became interested in the Low Countries after the thriving trade developed. The towns, which wanted to stay free, supported the local nobles in struggles against the foreign rulers.

Beginning in the 1300's, the French dukes of Burgundy won control of most of the Low Countries through inheritance, marriage, purchase, and war. They promoted central government in the Low Countries, and political and national unity began to develop.

In 1516, Duke Charles of Burgundy also became king of Spain. In this way, the Low Countries came under Spanish control. Charles became archduke of Austria and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire in 1519. Beginning in 1520, Charles further strengthened the central government of the Low Countries.

During the early 1500's, the Protestant movement called the Reformation spread through the Low Countries. Charles tried to stop this threat to Roman Catholicism by persecuting Protestants. His son, Philip II of Spain, inherited the Low Countries in 1555. Philip stepped up the struggle against Protestants, and tried to take complete power over the Low Countries. In 1568, the nobles there revolted against his harsh rule. They were led by William I (called the Silent), prince of Orange.

The Spanish troops were generally successful in land battles, but the rebels' ships controlled the sea. The Spaniards attacked Leiden in 1573, but the city held out bravely. In 1574, the people opened dikes that held back the sea, and a Dutch fleet sailed over the flood waters to rescue Leiden from the Spaniards.

By 1579, the revolt had started to break apart. Roman Catholic nobles in the southern provinces of the Low Countries (now Belgium) had become dissatisfied and returned to Spanish control. Protestantism was strongest in the northern provinces (now The Netherlands). In 1579, most of the provinces formed the Union of Utrecht and pledged to continue the revolt.

³⁰⁹ Ibid., s.v. "Italy."

On July 26, 1581, the northern provinces declared their independence from Spain, beginning what later became known as the Dutch Republic or The Netherlands. The Dutch fought for their freedom until 1648, except for a temporary peace from 1609 to 1621. Spain finally recognized Dutch independence in 1648.”³¹⁰

From this we can see that by the time The Netherlands finally achieved their independence from Spain, they had already revolted against Catholicism and adopted Protestantism. Therefore The Netherlands do not meet our requirements, and are not one of our horns.

Norway

“Viking sea raiders from the Norwegian communities spread terror through much of western Europe for about 300 years. Beginning with the British Isles about A.D. 800, they attacked coastal towns and sailed away with slaves and treasure. The Vikings also sailed west and established colonies in the Faero Islands and other North Atlantic islands. About 870, they explored further west and colonized Iceland. Eric the Red brought the first group of settlers to Greenland about 985. About 1000, his son, Leif Ericson, led what is believed to have been the first voyage of Europeans to the mainland of America.

About 900, much of present-day Norway was united under Norway’s first king, Harold I (called Fairhair), or Harald I. He defeated many local chieftains and kings, and others recognized his leadership. King Olav I introduced Christianity to Norway during the 990’s. During the early 1000’s, Olav II achieved full Norwegian unity and firmly established Christianity. He became Norway’s patron saint in 1031.

The Viking period ended during the late 1000’s. The church grew in power, foreign trade expanded, and religious and trading centers became important cities. Political confusion and struggles for royal power also developed. Beginning in 1130, many regional leaders claimed the throne. They were defeated in a series of civil wars that lasted until 1240. Peace was restored under Haakon IV. By 1300, Norway’s economy was largely controlled by north German merchants. Norway had become dependent on them for grain imports. The country was weakened further in 1349 and 1350, when about half the Norwegian people died in an epidemic of bubonic plague.

Margrete, the wife of King Haakon VI of Norway, was also the daughter of the king of Denmark. After her father died in 1375, she became the Danish ruler. Haakon died in 1380, and Margrete became ruler of Norway as well. In 1388, during political confusion in Sweden, Swedish noblemen elected her to rule that country, too. In 1397, in the Union of Kalmar, Margrete united Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, with power centered in Denmark. Sweden revolted against the Danish rule several times, and broke away from the union in 1523.

Under the Danish-controlled union, Norway grew weaker and Denmark grew stronger. In 1536 Denmark declared Norway a Danish province and made Lutheranism the official Norwegian religion.”³¹¹

From this we can see that Norway was a strong Catholic nation until the time of the Reformation. In the first half of the sixteenth century all three Scandinavian countries, Denmark, Norway, and Sweden switched from Catholicism to Protestantism. Norway was an independent nation until this time, although it was part of a union with Denmark and Sweden. Thus Norway does meet our criteria, and is our sixth horn.

Poland

³¹⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Netherlands.”

³¹¹ Ibid., s.v. “Norway.”

“Members of the Piast family became the first rulers of Poland. By the mid-900’s, Prince Mieszko I ruled over most of the land along the Vistula and Oder rivers. His son, Bolesław I, conquered parts of what are now Czechoslovakia, East Germany, and Russia. In 1025, Bolesław was crowned the first king of Poland. After his death later that year, Poland went through periods of warfare and disunity. By the mid-1100’s, it had broken up, into several sections, each ruled by a different noble.

During the 1200’s, various peoples invaded and conquered parts of Poland. Most of the country was finally reunified in the 1300’s. Casimir the Great, the last Piast monarch, ruled Poland from 1333 to 1370. Casimir formed a strong central government, strengthened the economy of the country and encouraged cultural development.

In 1386, Queen Jadwiga of Poland married Władysław Jagiełło, the Grand Duke of Lithuania. Jagiełło ruled both Poland and Lithuania as king, but each country remained largely self-governing.

Jagiellonian kings ruled Poland for nearly 200 years. Under their leadership, Poland expanded its territory and made important advances in its cultural, economic, and political development. The Polish Empire reached its height during the 1500’s, when it covered a large part of central Europe, including the Ukraine and other Russian lands.

In spite of the advances of the Jagiellonian period, signs of strain developed after the mid-1500’s. The monarchy began to lose power to the nobles, who dominated the parliament. After the death of the last Jagiellonian monarch in 1572, Polish kings were elected by the nobles. Some of the elected kings were foreigners, who proved to be ineffective rulers. Rivalries among the nobles weakened the parliament, and costly wars ruined the economy.

Poland lost much of its territory in the Ukraine as a result of a rebellion there in 1648. In 1655, Sweden won control over most of Poland’s Baltic provinces. A series of wars with Turkey finally ended with a Polish victory at the Battle of Vienna in 1683.”³¹²

“The Poles adopted Christianity in A.D. 966. Throughout their history, they remained loyal to the Roman Catholic Church, though people in neighboring countries practiced Protestant or Eastern Orthodox religions.”³¹³

From this we can easily see that Poland meets our requirements. It was a very strong power for many centuries, and was an adamant supporter of Catholicism. Thus Poland is our seventh horn.

Portugal

“Germanic tribes swept across the West Roman Empire in the A.D. 400’s, and helped bring about its collapse in 476. The Visigoths, one of the tribes, conquered the Iberian Peninsula. The Visigoths were Christians, and Portugal remained a Christian land under their rule.

In the early 700’s, North African Muslims conquered most of what are now Portugal and Spain. They influenced Portuguese civilization in many ways. They constructed Arab-style buildings, introduced new crops, and improved education and the system of roads.

Many Christians of the Iberian Peninsula opposed Muslim rule. Christian opposition was especially strong in the north. The Christians struggled to retake their lands for hundreds of years. In the 1000’s, they gained

³¹² Ibid., s.v. “Poland.”

³¹³ Ibid., s.v. “Poland.”

the upper hand. By the mid-1200's, the Christians had driven the Muslims from Portugal and from most of Spain.

Henry of Burgundy, a French nobleman, had joined the Iberian Christians in their fight against the Muslims. In 1094, Alfonso VI, a Christian king of Spain, rewarded Henry with the counties of Porto and Coimbra, in what is now northern Portugal. Alfonso named Henry the Count of Portugal. Portugal was then considered a part of Spain.

Henry of Burgundy's son, Alfonso Henriques, won many victories over the Muslims. In 1143, he took the title king of Portugal, and established Portugal as a kingdom independent from Spain.

In 1385, a new royal line, the House of Aviz, came to the Portuguese throne. King John I became the first Aviz king. His armies defeated Spanish forces and helped guarantee the future independence of Portugal from its powerful neighbor to the east. King John also made an alliance with England. This alliance, still in force, is the oldest existing political alliance in Europe.³¹⁴

From this we see that once Portugal broke away from Spain in 1143 it was an independent nation. Since Catholicism was the national religion of Portugal it fulfills our requirements. Thus Portugal is our eighth horn.

Spain

“During the 400's, invading Germanic tribes swept across the West Roman Empire and helped bring about its collapse in 476. One tribe, the Visigoths, invaded Spain and conquered the entire peninsula by 573. The Visigoths set up a monarchy in Spain that was the first separate and independent government to rule the entire peninsula. The Visigoths, who were Christians, tried to establish a civilization like that of the Romans. But continued fighting among the Visigoth nobles and repeated revolts of the nobles against the kings weakened the nation.

The Visigoths ruled Spain until the early 700's, when Moors from northern Africa invaded the country. The invasion began in 711, and the Moors conquered almost all the Visigoth kingdom by 718. Only the narrow mountainous region across far northern Spain remained free of Moorish rule.

The Moorish government of Spain collapsed during the early 1000's because of fighting among groups of Moors. The country then split into many small Moorish states and independent cities.

Groups of Visigoths and other Christians in far northern Spain remained independent following the Moorish conquest. These groups formed a series of kingdoms that extended from Spain's northwest coast to the Mediterranean Sea. During the 1000's, these kingdoms began to expand and push the Moors southward.

By the late 1200's, the Muslim territory in Spain had been reduced to the Kingdom of Granada in the south. The Christian kingdoms of Aragon, Navarre, and Castille controlled the rest of what is now Spain. In 1469, Prince Ferdinand of Aragon married Princess Isabella of Castile. Isabella became queen of Castile in 1474, and Ferdinand became king of Aragon in 1479. Almost all of what is now Spain thus came under their rule.

In 1516, a grandson of Ferdinand and Isabella became King Charles I of Spain. Charles had ruled the Low Countries (what are now Belgium, Luxembourg, and The Netherlands), and he brought these lands into the Spanish kingdom. The Spanish Empire reached its height during the reign of Charles's son, Philip II, who became king in 1556.³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Ibid., s.v. “Portugal.”

³¹⁵ Ibid., s.v. “Spain”

This shows that Spain was a very important Catholic power for centuries. Therefore Spain also meets our criteria and is our ninth horn.

Sweden

“Beginning about A.D. 800, Scandinavian adventurers called Vikings sailed to many parts of the world. They acquired wealth by trade and conquest. Most of the Norwegian and Danish Vikings sailed Westward. The Swedish Vikings went eastward across Russia, as far as the Black and Caspian seas. The Swedes traded slaves and furs for gold, silver, and luxury goods. The Viking expeditions lasted until the 1000’s. Much of Sweden’s trade with the east then came into the hands of German merchants, who settled in the town of Visby on the island of Gotland.

Christianity was first preached in Sweden in A.D. 829 by Saint Anskar, a Frankish monk. His missionary work began a struggle between Christianity and paganism that lasted about 200 years. The first Christian king of Sweden was Olof Skotkonung, who ruled from the late 900’s until the early 1000’s. Christianity brought about great changes in Sweden. The clergy founded schools, encouraged the arts, and set down Sweden’s laws in writing.

By the 1000’s, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway had become separate kingdoms. Sweden began to develop along partly feudal lines. There were three social classes—the clergy, the nobles, and the peasants. Above them was the king, who was elected by the provincial lawmaking assemblies. In 1249, Sweden conquered much of Finland.

During the 1200’s and 1300’s, constant struggles took place between the rulers of Sweden and the nobles. In 1388, to oppose the growing German influence in Sweden’s affairs, the nobles turned for help to Queen Margrete of Denmark and Norway. The Germans were defeated in 1389, and the three Scandinavian countries were united under Margrete in 1397. A treaty called the Union of Kalmar laid down the conditions of the union between the three countries. This treaty provided for a common foreign policy, but separate national councils and the continuation of existing laws in each country. Except for a few short periods of separation, the union lasted over 100 years.

Under the influence of German merchants, Sweden’s economy developed considerably during the 1200’s and 1300’s. These merchants developed Sweden’s mineral resources and controlled Swedish trade. Plague wiped out a large part of Sweden’s population in 1350, and caused an economic decline. The German merchants, with their powerful association called the Hanseatic League, increased their control of Swedish trade.

During the late 1400’s, the Riksdag (parliament) developed into a lawmaking and tax-raising body. Members of a new social class, the merchants, joined the other three classes as members of the Riksdag.

The union with Norway and Denmark continued throughout most of the 1400’s. But many struggles took place between supporters and opponents of the union. Gustavus Vasa, A Swedish noble, finally broke away from the union in 1523 after defeating the Danes. He became king Gustavus I of independent Sweden that year. Norway remained under Danish rule.

Gustavus encouraged the followers of Martin Luther, the German religious reformer, to spread their ideas. About 1540, the Lutheran religion became the state religion of Sweden. Gustavus also increased the power of the throne and laid the foundations of the modern Swedish state. He centralized the administration, dealt harshly with revolts, built an efficient army, and encouraged trade and industry.”³¹⁶

³¹⁶ Ibid., s.v. “Sweden.”

From this we can see that Sweden was a powerful nation for centuries. Even during the time when it was part of the union with Denmark and Norway it retained its individuality as a nation. Until 1540 it was a Catholic nation. So, like the other two Scandinavian countries, Denmark and Norway, Sweden meets our criteria, and is our tenth and final horn.

We have just examined the histories of the following countries: Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Italy, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden. There were four which failed to meet our criteria and were rejected. They were Finland, Germany, Italy, and The Netherlands. This leaves us with Austria, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden, which did meet our criteria. This is exactly ten nations as the Bible told us there would be.

We can now determine from the histories we have just seen the exact period covered by these ten kingdoms. Table XI is a list of the ten kingdoms with the dates that they became important Catholic nations, and the dates when they either ceased to exist or denounced Catholicism.

The Ten Horns of Revelation		
Country	Begins	Ends
Austria	955	1806
Denmark	950	1536
England	843	1534
France	1066	1789
Hungary	1000	1526
Norway	1000	1536
Poland	1025	1795
Portugal	1143	1795
Spain	1050	1978
Sweden	1000	1540

Table XI

This shows a period of 383 years (1143-1526) when all ten of the kingdoms existed simultaneously at catholic powers. As is to be expected the highest point of the papacy occurred during this period of time.

“Innocent III became pope in 1198. Under Innocent, papal influence over public life in Christian Europe reached its peak. He was feudal lord over much of Europe, and he was a great administrator and jurist.”³¹⁷

“During the pontificate of Innocent III, from 1198 to 1216, nearly every European ruler submitted to the power and authority of the Church.”³¹⁸

We can clearly see the fulfillment of this prophesy in these ten nations. They upheld the papacy and lifted her to her greatest heights.

17:13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast.

These ten kingdoms are said to “*have one mind*” which means they will be in agreement. All ten of the nations we found had Roman Catholicism as their national religions. They all gave “*their power and strength unto the beast.*” These ten nations aligned themselves with the papacy and gave their economic, political, and military strength to her. The primary reason why so many kings chose to go along with the papacy is that it bolstered their own

³¹⁷ Ibid., s.v. “Roman Catholic Church.”

³¹⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Pope.”

positions. The papacy supported the idea of monarchical government, which is not surprising since it is one itself. The kings could, and often did, claim that their position was ordained of God. The popes would sustain their claims and in turn the kings would support the popes. Obviously there was more to it than this, but the whole situation revolved around the fact that both sides were profiting from the arrangement.

17:14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

During the time when all of these nations were Catholic they joined the papacy in persecuting Christians. Whether or not the kings really wanted to join the pope in his efforts to stamp out heresy was immaterial. The pope would force the kings to do his bidding or else seek their overthrow in favor of a more agreeable sovereign. Thus the kings of Europe joined the papacy in making “*war with the lamb.*”

“The Church thus undertook to coerce the sovereign to persecution. It would not listen to mercy, it would not hear of expediency. The monarch held his crown by the tenure of extirpating heresy, of seeing that the laws were sharp and that they were pitilessly enforced. Any hesitation was visited with excommunication, and if this proved inefficacious, his dominions were thrown open to the first hardy adventurer whom the Church would supply with an army for his overthrow.

It was applied from the highest to the lowest, and the Church made every dignitary feel that his station was an office in a universal theocracy wherein all interests were subordinate to the great duty of maintaining the purity of the faith. The hegemony of Europe was vested in the Holy Roman Empire, and its coronation was a solemnly religious ceremony in which the emperor was admitted to the lower orders of the priesthood, and was made to anathematize all heresy raising itself against the holy Catholic Church. In handing him the ring, the pope told him that it was a symbol that he was to destroy heresy; and in girding him with the sword, that with it he was to strike down the enemies of the Church. Frederic II declared that he had received the imperial dignity for the maintenance and propagation of the faith. Every prince and noble was made to understand that his lands would be exposed to the spoiler if, after due notice, he hesitated in trampling out heresy.”³¹⁹

We can see the arrangement that the papacy had for dealing with those who were in opposition to their teachings and practices. It was literally a war with the Lord’s Church. Obviously, many who held false beliefs, yet differed with Rome, were persecuted during this time. In fact, most of those who were persecuted were not following the Bible pattern. Rome could care less what someone’s beliefs were, if they were not in line with official Roman doctrine persecution was swift and merciless. Although Rome didn’t care who they persecuted, their master did. Satan wanted to destroy the remnants of the Lord’s Church. However, this was a war that Rome and their master were destined to lose. The Lord and His Church cannot be defeated. Christ **IS** “*Lord of lords, and King of kings.*”

“*They that are with him,*” refers to Christ’s people. They are “with” him in that they are on his side in this great struggle between Christ and Satan. They are referred to as “*called, and chosen, and faithful.*” God has called everyone to respond to His love and mercy and to become part of His family. Many people do actually respond to this call. Unfortunately, most of those who do respond are not worthy, and are therefore not chosen of God. “*For many are called, but few are chosen*” (Matthew 22:14). Of those who are chosen many become unfaithful. The Lord requires faithfulness to the ultimate end, death. “*be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life*” (Revelation 2:10). As a result, those who are with the Lord can correctly be referred to as “*called, and chosen, and faithful.*” These people cannot be defeated by Satan because they have yielded themselves to God, and therefore are protected by His power.

17:15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.

³¹⁹ Lea, 1955, pp. 225-6.

When the woman was first introduced in verse one of this chapter she was referred to as “*the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.*” The “*many waters*” are now explained to be a great multitude of people. This has reference to the papacy’s involvement with and power over many different nations throughout Europe. By the year 1200 nearly all of Europe was Catholic and willingly submitted to the power of the pope. There were tens of millions of people in Europe at that time and the vast majority freely accepted Catholicism, and most of the rest pretended to accept it in order to escape persecution. This is where the true power of the popes lay. As long as most of the people in a nation wanted Catholicism as the official religion, only a foolhardy king would try to rock the boat. To struggle against the Church was to struggle against deeply held beliefs of the people. This would only destabilize his kingdom. No wise ruler wanted this, so consequently the popes had a much easier time of controlling the kings since the general populous was Catholic. This is why we are now given the illustration of the great whore sitting upon many waters. The papacy sat upon the multitudes of Europe. They were the true strength and foundation of this evil and ungodly force.

17:16 And the ten horns which thou sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.

The ten kingdoms which we identified in verse twelve are here seen to turn against the papacy. “*These shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire.*” This indicates not only an abandonment of the papacy, but also an active campaign against Catholicism. To say that they will “*hate the whore*” shows that their actions will not simply be what they feel to be expedient, but will be the result of genuine hatred toward the papacy. Since the papacy continually tried to meddle in the political affairs of other nations it is no wonder that bad feelings would have developed.

They will also “*make her desolate and naked.*” This shows that they will strip the papacy of much of her power, prestige, and wealth. They will “*eat her flesh*” shows that their attitude will be like that of a vicious predator attacking its prey. These nations will turn against the papacy and attempt to ferociously destroy her. “*Burn her with fire*” reiterates the desire of these nations to utterly and completely destroy the papacy; nothing destroys as completely as fire.

We are told that they will hate the papacy, but we are not told why. However, this can easily be deduced. The Reformation marked the time when the multitudes which we saw in the previous verse began to slowly turn away from Catholicism. As this happened the kings had less incentive to remain loyal to the pope. By 1550 half of the ten kingdoms which had supported the papacy in the past were gone. Four had converted to Protestantism and one had been swallowed up by an invading army. Denmark, England, Norway, and Sweden all rejected Catholicism and fell from the ranks of the pope’s supporters, and Hungary was overrun by the Ottoman Turks. These five had all left within a short period of fourteen years. This was a swift and decisive blow against the papacy. It was a great erosion of the foundation of the power of the papacy. It would still be some 250 years before the actual death-blow would be struck, but this period was definitely the beginning of the end of the papacy’s power. By the early nineteenth century the pope had lost nearly all of his political and military support. One by one each of the ten kingdoms deserted the papacy. We will now examine each of these in detail.

Austria

“In 1517, Martin Luther, a German monk, began to attack many teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Nobles, peasants, and townspeople joined this protestant movement, called the Reformation, and it spread quickly. Some princes were sincere reformers, but others became Protestants only to gain church property. Many peasants hoped the movement would free them from their lord’s control. They revolted against the lords in the Peasant’s War of 1524-1525, but were brutally crushed.

Neither the pope nor Emperor Charles V could stop the Protestant movement. In 1555, Protestant princes forced Charles to accept the peace of Augsburg. This treaty gave each Lutheran and Roman Catholic prince the right to force those under him to accept his religion. It also established a division of church lands between the two religions.

During the mid-1500's, the Roman Catholic Church began the Counter Reformation. In this movement, the church won back many Protestants by peaceful means or by force. By 1600, relatively few Protestants were left in Austria, Bavaria, and parts of Bohemia and the Rhineland. The rest of Germany remained chiefly Lutheran."³²⁰

"In 1618, Protestants in Bohemia revolted against their Hapsburg ruler, who was a Roman Catholic. But they were defeated in 1620. The revolt became the start of the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648). This series of religious and political wars eventually involved most European nations. The Peace of Westphalia, which ended the Thirty Years' War, declared that each German ruler could determine the official religion of the state."³²¹

While this was by far not the end of Catholicism in Austria it marked the breaking of the papacy's grip on this country. To the Catholics, tolerance of any other faiths was totally unacceptable. Many of the local Austrian rulers continued to force Catholicism on their subjects until the nineteenth century, but the damage had been done. As a nation, Austria had failed the Catholic Church.

Denmark

"In 1536, during the Reformation, King Christian III established Lutheranism as the official religion of Denmark."³²²

The Reformation was most successful in Northern Europe, and during the first half of the 1500's all three of the Scandinavian countries abandoned the papacy.

England

"Henry VIII inherited great wealth when he became king in 1509. His father, Henry VII, had been a thrifty ruler. Henry VIII was talented and popular, but he was also selfish and wasteful. He enjoyed luxury, sports, good food, and music.

For about 20 years, Henry VIII let Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, archbishop of York, manage the country. But then, Henry wanted to divorce Catherine of Aragon, the first of his six wives. The pope refused to give permission. In 1529, Henry took away Wolsey's authority and turned much power over to Thomas Cromwell, one of his advisers. In 1534, Henry had Parliament pass a law declaring that the king, not the pope, was supreme head of the church in England.

Following Henry's actions, English church leaders made changes in Roman Catholic services that gradually led to the formation of the Church of England. A number of Henry's subjects who opposed him were imprisoned or executed for treason."³²³

From the time that the Church of England was established England found itself constantly at war with the Catholic powers, especially France. The loss of England, which was a very powerful nation, was especially hurtful to the papacy.

³²⁰ *World Book*, 1985, s.v. "Germany."

³²¹ *Ibid.*, s.v. "Austria."

³²² *Ibid.*, s.v. "Denmark."

³²³ *Ibid.*, s.v. "England."

France

We saw in great detail in chapter eleven how France violently turned against the Catholic Church. Christianity was replaced by the worship of the goddess of Reason. Two popes were imprisoned, with the first dying in captivity. Italy was invaded by the French Emperor Napoleon, and the Papal States were seized. Of all the Catholic nations, France's turn was the most violent and the most damaging to the papacy. At that time France was the most powerful nation in the world, and to lose their support was devastating to the papacy.

Hungary

“The Protestant Reformation had begun in Germany in the 1500's and gained many followers in Hungary. Transylvania, in particular, had developed a tradition of religious freedom, which allowed Protestants and Unitarians as well as Catholics to establish churches.”³²⁴

Even before Hungary was swallowed up by the Ottoman Turks in 1526, the reformation had greatly weakened the hold of Catholicism on the country. The simple fact that other faiths were allowed to operate unmolested shows that the government of Hungary was no longer in step with Rome.

Norway

“In 1536, Denmark declared Norway a Danish province and made Lutheranism the official Norwegian religion.”³²⁵

At the same time Norway lost its independence, it was also made a Lutheran nation. Even prior to this, the spirit of reform had been working in the whole area. If Denmark had not done it, then it would have happened on its own before too much longer. The Reformation had found huge followings in that part of Europe and its conquest of Norway was already a foregone conclusion.

Poland

“Poland's decline continued into the 1700's. In 1772, Austria, Prussia, and Russia took advantage of Poland's weakness and partitioned Polish territory among themselves. Austria seized land in southern Poland; Prussia took land in the west; and Russia took land in the east. As a result, Poland lost about a third of its territory and half its population.

After the first partition, the Polish government adopted a series of reform measures to stop the country's decay. In 1791, a new constitution restored the hereditary monarchy. But the reforms came too late. In 1793, Prussia and Russia seized additional territory in eastern and western Poland. This second partition led to an uprising among Poles in 1794. Polish forces under Thadeus Kosciusko fought Russian and Prussian troops, but were defeated. Austria, Russia, and Prussia carried out the third partition of Poland in 1795, dividing the rest of the country among themselves. After the third partition, Poland no longer existed as a nation.”³²⁶

³²⁴ Ibid., s.v. “Hungary.”

³²⁵ Ibid., s.v. “Norway.”

³²⁶ Ibid., s.v. “Poland.”

Poland was not voluntarily removed from its support of the papacy, but as its territory was gobbled up by its neighbors, the people became part of nations which did not support the papacy. Therefore, it was more or less by default that Poland ceased to support the papacy.

Portugal

“Until the early 1900’s, the Roman Catholic Church was, in effect, part of Portugal’s national government. The church and state were separated in 1911.”³²⁷

Portugal is one of two nations which did not officially break with the papacy until the twentieth century. Although Portugal remained a Catholic nation until 1911, it had tolerated other faiths for decades. Besides this, Portugal had long before ceased to be a powerful nation which could offer much political or military support to the papacy.

Spain

“Napoleon Bonaparte seized control of France in 1799. At first, Napoleon allied France with Spain. But in 1808, French forces invaded Spain and quickly won control of the government. Napoleon forced Ferdinand VII to give up the Spanish throne and named Joseph Bonaparte, his brother, king of Spain.

The Spanish people bitterly resisted the French occupation. They struck back with a hit-and-run method of fighting called the guerrilla (little war), a word used ever since to describe such fighting. This opposition led to the start of the Peninsular War later in 1808, when Great Britain joined Spain and Portugal against France. The French were driven from the Peninsula in 1813.

During the Peninsular War, Spain’s Cortes—which had fled from Madrid to southern Spain—drew up a democratic constitution for the country. The new constitution reduced the power of the Roman Catholic Church and increased individual rights and freedoms.”³²⁸

This marked a temporary end to the papacy’s power in Spain. However, in 1851 Catholicism began another period of prominence in Spain which lasted more than a century.

“During most of the period from 1851 to 1978, Roman Catholicism was the state religion of Spain. During that time, the government restricted the rights of non-Catholics in some ways. For example, non-Catholics were not allowed to try to win new followers for their religions, and only marriage ceremonies performed by the Catholic Church were legal. Spain adopted a new constitution in 1978. Under provisions of the Constitution, Spain has no state religion, and people of all faiths are allowed complete freedom in religious matters.”³²⁹

In reality, the support of the papacy by Spain ended in 1808. After that time, Spain was in no position to offer much political or military strength to the papacy. Therefore, the real power ended in 1808, but the official end did not come until 1978.

Sweden

³²⁷ Ibid., s.v. “Portugal.”

³²⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Spain.”

³²⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Spain.”

“Gustavus encouraged the followers of Martin Luther, the German religious reformer, to spread their ideas. About 1540, the Lutheran religion became the state religion of Sweden. Gustavus also increased the power of the throne and laid the foundations of the modern Swedish state. He centralized the administration, dealt harshly with revolts, built an efficient army, and encouraged trade and industry.”³³⁰

Like Denmark and Norway, the Reformation took its toll on Catholicism in Sweden. Sweden joined its Scandinavian counterparts in breaking away from Rome and establishing Protestantism as the official religion.

We should not get the impression that everything was rosy up to the point that each of the nations broke with Rome. The Reformation had thrown the entire continent into turmoil. Several wars were fought between the supporters of Catholicism and Protestantism. Cracks could be seen in the Catholic Empire long before it actually collapsed.

“The period from the end of the Thirty Years’ War in 1648 to the outbreak of the French Revolution (1789-1799) has been called the Revolt of the Catholic Kings. The period was marked by quarrels between church and state, especially over an issue called Gallicanism. At the same time, the church was disrupted from within by theological disputes, the most serious of which was over a religious movement known as Jansenism. During this period, much of the hostility toward the church centered in France.

Quarrels between church and state affected the papacy’s relations with almost every Catholic country. One of the major disputes involved Gallicanism—the idea that the authority of national churches should be increased at the expense of papal authority.

Gallicanism developed in France, and the dispute over it became most critical there. King Louis XIV and Pope Innocent XI quarreled over Louis’s attempts to increase his influence in French religious affairs. The quarrel led many French clergymen to adopt doctrines that the papacy could not in conscience accept. For example, some French clergymen believed that a general church council was superior to the pope. Although the controversy died down in the 1690’s, the French clergy remained anti-Roman for many years.

Gallicanism, with its emphasis on nationalism, became popular in every European country ruled by a Catholic monarch. During the late 1700’s, the Holy Roman emperor, Joseph II, tried to separate the Catholic church in Austria from Rome. Joseph considered the church a department of state whose task was to promote morality. He controlled all levels of the clergy and even interfered with the liturgy. Rulers in Naples, Sardinia, Spain, and Venice followed Joseph’s example.

Jansenism arose in France in the mid-1600’s. This religious movement was based on the writings of Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres, Belgium. Jansen developed doctrines on divine grace that played down human freedom and denied that Christ died for all men. The church attacked some Jansenist doctrines as heresy.

The movement tore Catholic France apart. It divided many French bishops from Rome and even attracted the attention of Kings Louis XIV and Louis XV. The Catholic philosopher and mathematician Blaise Pascal became a leading spokesman for Jansenism. Three popes condemned Jansenism—Innocent X in 1653, Alexander VII in 1656, and Clement XI in 1713. But their condemnation only increased the controversy. Jansenism finally began to lose influence in the 1730’s. But its harsh idea of God and emphasis on damnation still influence some Catholics today.

The Age of Reason was a period during which philosophers emphasized reason as the best method of learning truth. The Age of Reason lasted from the late 1600’s to the late 1700’s. During this time, many people attacked religion in general, and the Catholic Church in particular, which they claimed was unreasonable and filled with superstition. They also believed that the Catholic clergy’s obedience to Rome

³³⁰ Ibid., s.v. “Sweden.”

violated France's sovereignty. The leaders of the period included such brilliant French intellectuals as Denis Diderot, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Voltaire.

During the mid and late 1700's, several nations banned the Jesuit order from their country and colonies. Portugal banned the Jesuits in 1759, France in 1764, and Spain in 1767. In 1773, pressure from Catholic rulers helped force Pope Clement XIV to suppress the Jesuits in all countries.

The Jesuits were banned for several reasons. Some Catholic rulers and churchmen were jealous of the order's influence. Some accused the Jesuits of accumulating too much power and wealth. Gallicans opposed the order's complete devotion to the pope and the church."³³¹

This passage shows us that in reality the Catholic kings had turned against the papacy long before Catholicism was officially renounced as the official religion of their respective countries. For all practical purposes the ten nations had turned against the papacy by the time the French Revolution occurred. This passage also sheds additional light on what we saw in chapter eleven concerning the French Revolution. We can now see some of the underlying causes of the violent repression of Catholicism during that period. This next passage brings the papacy's loss of support into even clearer focus.

"The widespread hostility to religious organizations in the last half of the 18th century found virulent expression in the attitude of Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor and culminated in the sweeping anticlerical decrees of the French Revolutionary assembly. Thenceforth, the governments of even traditionally Catholic countries displayed in their diplomacy an almost total lack of the deference to ecclesiastical authority that for centuries had characterized their conduct."³³²

Here we clearly see pointed out to us the reversal in attitude of the European nations. By the late eighteenth century they had all lost respect for the papacy. Or to perhaps put it better, they had lost their fear of the papacy. The Reformation had loosened the iron grip that Catholicism had on the European continent. Kings could now oppose the pope without fearing for their political survival. There was once a time when open opposition to the pope would probably lead to a sovereign's overthrow. But now, even though the pope would still vehemently protest any dissension, there was little he could actually do about it. Neither the general population nor other kings were very likely to attempt to intervene on the pope's behalf. Thus his real power, which was coercion through fear, was gone even before the French Revolution. In fact, the astonishing events of the Revolution were the product of the pope's demise not the cause of it.

17:17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled.

God has always had a practice of using unrighteous men or nations to accomplish His goals. At first this might seem to be improper, but a closer examination will show otherwise. God is not forcing anyone to become evil or to do anything against their will. He is simply directing their evil intents in a direction which will accomplish good. God used the Assyrians and Babylonians to punish Israel and Judah respectively. He allowed His people to be carried out of their homes by these Gentile nations. These nations were intent on conquest anyway, God simply decided how and when they would be allowed to accomplish their desires. God was the orchestrator, but not the instigator, of their evil actions. God simply uses the evil which is already present in someone's heart to His advantage.

Here it says God "*put in their hearts to fulfil his will.*" Certainly, many of the things these men and their nations did were evil, but God did not put the evil in their hearts. He put the desire to accomplish certain things in their hearts. The fact that they chose evil methods to accomplish these things was their own decision. In this case God allowed these ten nations to join themselves to the papacy. It was usually politically advantageous for a king to be in good

³³¹ Ibid., s.v. "Roman Catholic Church."

³³² Funk & Wagnall's, 1973, s.v. "Roman Catholic Church."

favor with the pope. Certainly these kings desired stability and security for themselves. God simply showed them that this could be accomplished by aligning themselves with the papacy, and allowed this relationship to continue until such time as He desired to destroy the papacy.

“Give their kingdom unto the beast” does not mean that these kings literally turned their thrones over to the papacy, but that they used the military, political, and economic muscle of their kingdoms to support the papacy. They allowed the papacy to take advantage of their resources and power.

This arrangement was to continue *“until the words of God shall be fulfilled.”* Here in Revelation we see the prediction of the breakup of this evil alliance. God had long ago decided when all of this should come to an end. Consequently, at the proper time, he caused the circumstances to be such that the Catholic kings would find it desirable to turn against the papacy. Again He merely used the greed and lust for power that these kings already possessed to accomplish this.

17:18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

This chapter closes with one more hint as to the identity of the woman. She is none other than the Roman Empire—carnal and spiritual. From the city of Rome the great Empire ruled over the entire Western world for over two-thousand years in one form or another. Nothing else can possibly fit this description. From His headquarters in Rome, the pope—just like the emperors before him—enjoyed enormous power and influence over the Western world for over a millennium. For a good part of that time it could literally be said that he *“reigneth over the kings of the earth.”*

Chapter Eighteen

God's Judgment of Rome: Judgment of Babylon

18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.

John has now finished talking with the angel that we saw in the last chapter. Now John sees another angel come down from Heaven. This angel is said to possess “*great power*.” Furthermore, we are also told that “*the earth was lightened with his glory*.” These things suggest that he is an important angel, and this would lead us to believe that his message will correspond to his importance. The glory would not really be the angel’s per se, but would be the glory of God the angel had absorbed while in His presence.

18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.

The angel now makes a proclamation with “*a strong voice*” which shows his power and the emphasis he is placing on his message. It is something that he is undoubtedly elated over, and therefore he is going about “shouting it from the rooftops.” His message is that Babylon has fallen. We have seen previously that Babylon is just another name used to refer to spiritual Rome, the papacy. The wonderful message that the angel wishes to proclaim is that the wicked city of Rome has fallen. It appeared in 476 as if Rome had fallen when Odoacer seized power. However, little more than half a century later the glory of Rome was rekindled by the growing power of the papacy which was centered in the Eternal City. The “*deadly wound*” was healed, and Rome lived again. But now, well over a thousand years later, God has dealt the true death blow to Rome. This time there will be no sudden resurrection. The great whore is gone forever. This is cause for great celebration by all the servants of God.

Rome is pictured as an empty and desolate place, as though it lay in ruins. When compared to its former glory it might just as well be in ruins. Rome can no longer even hold a candle to the glory and power it once held. It may still exist, but it is little more than just another city. Its sad condition is illustrated by saying that it “*is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird*.” A deserted city will return to the wild animals that lived there before the city was built. The same thing is said about the destruction of the real Babylon. “*And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall the shepherds make their fold there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and owls shall dwell there, and satyrs shall dance there. And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged*” (Isaiah 13:19-22).

A city requires constant attention and work to keep it fit for habitation by men. If the city is not maintained it will soon be fit only for wild animals. Then people who pass through the area would see everything overgrown with vegetation and over run with wild beasts. Symbolically, Rome is in this condition. Rome has fallen from its pinnacle of glory and has been humbled before all nations.

In reality, Rome today is a thriving city of over two-million people. However, when compared to what it once was, the ruler of the greatest Empire the world has ever seen, the seat of power which dominated the world for over two-thousand years, you could say that it is a boom town gone bust. It has lost the luster and allure that it held for seemingly endless centuries. For over two-thousand years, that's one-third of the entire time the earth has been in existence, Rome, the Eternal City, was the most powerful and influential city on earth. The balloon, however, finally burst, leaving her desolate and empty. One man could have \$100 in his pocket and feel rich. Another could have one-thousand dollars in his pocket and feel poor. It's all what you are accustomed to. And Rome is accustomed to being on top, anything less is unbearable. To them, being just another large city seems like utter desolation.

18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.

“*The wine of the wrath of her fornication*” was first mentioned in the previous chapter. There it said the inhabitants of the earth had been made drunk with it. The general population had been deceived as though they were drunk and did not have full control of their faculties. Here we find further that “*all nations have drunk*” of it. Every kingdom has become entangled in the evil web which the papacy has spun. “*The kings of the earth committed fornication with her.*” This shows corruption on the highest levels. The kings were willing pawns in Satan's evil games, and led their subjects with them. They consented and gave their power unto the beast for a time as chapter seventeen pointed out.

“*The merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.*” People were drawn to Rome from all parts of Europe during the Renaissance. Rome was a leading center of the arts and of economic activity in Europe during this time.

“The entry of Pope Martin V (a member of the Colonna family) into Rome in 1420 marked the beginning of the papacy's absolute rule over Rome, which lasted until 1870. Martin also laid the political foundations for the conversion of Rome into the capital of a Renaissance state. The commune was transformed into a unit of authoritarian papal rule, and the Papal States, which covered much of central Italy, came increasingly under the control of church officials. The apostolic vice chamberlain, as governor of Rome, controlled municipal offices, communal finances, and the statutes of the city.

During the 15th century pontificates of the humanist Nicholas V and Sixtus IV, the narrow, squalid streets of medieval Rome were widened and paved. Buildings in the new style of the Renaissance replaced crumbling structures.

The popes attracted scholars and artists from Florence and across Italy, so that by the end of the 15th century Rome was the principal center of Renaissance culture. The high point was reached under the Medici Pope Leo X (reigned 1513-1521), with his plans for a new St. Peter's and his patronage of such artists as Michelangelo and Raphael. Rome also flourished economically. Banking and the exploitation of alum deposits near Civitavecchia by the popes (with the help of the Medici family of Florence) stimulated the flow of capital into the city. Rome had again become a great consumer of imported luxuries.

By 1600, Rome was again a prosperous cosmopolitan city. Drawn by employment opportunities in the papal bureaucracy and in related service industries, people flocked to Rome, swelling its population to about 110,000. Much of the big business of the city was carried on by foreigners,

however, for the Roman nobility preferred to base their wealth and status on land and ecclesiastical officeholding.”³³³

A very large portion of medieval Rome’s economy was either directly or indirectly related to the papacy. The papacy was a large complicated bureaucratic machine. It required many people and a lot of money to make it run. Vast sums of money flowed from the local churches around Europe into Rome which supplied the necessary funds. As the above article pointed out much of the business in Rome was run by outsiders. Many people were flocking into Rome seeking employment. There was a lot of money to go around in Rome and many people came to seek their share. People all over Europe were benefiting from the luxurious living of the papacy.

“*Delicacies*” is from the Greek “*strenos*,” which Strong’s defines as “(figuratively) luxury (voluptuousness):- delicacy.”³³⁴ Thayer adds “wantonness” to this definition.³³⁵ The intended meaning here is luxury or wasteful living. The above article mentioned that “Rome had again become a great consumer of imported luxuries.” Because of the luxurious and extravagant way in which the papacy operated, many businessmen in Rome, and elsewhere in Europe for that matter, were quite successful. The Catholics are renowned for their charitable ways, but considering how much more money they waste, they could do so much more in the way of charity. They spend exorbitant sums of money building and decorating huge and very unnecessary cathedrals. They always buy the best and most expensive for themselves, with no thought to those who are in need who could be helped with the money. Verses twelve and thirteen of this chapter list many of the delicacies on which Rome spent untold fortunes.

18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.

John now hears another voice which appears to be that of either God or Christ. The reason for saying this is that the voice speaks of “*my people*.” Angels would not make a statement like this since we have previously seen that they are considered the brethren of men. The Lord directs His people to separate themselves from the Catholic Church and not to take part in its evil deeds, lest they also suffer the wrath of God. How could they be God’s people if they were joined to the whore? Certainly, the strong would never allow themselves to become mixed up with the abominations of the papacy, but the weak, because of fear of persecution, could easily become entangled with the Catholics. God is exhorting these people to repent and separate themselves from the papacy so that they will not have to suffer the things to come. “*Her plagues*” refers to the judgments God is about to bring against Rome.

18:5 For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.

Although we are not told who is speaking here, it is obviously not still the Lord. If God said this, then He did so in the third person, and He usually uses the first person. Therefore, this is likely the voice of an angel speaking here and in the following verses.

“*Her sins have reached unto heaven*.” Earlier we saw that the prayers of the saints are like sweet odors which ascend up to the Lord and are very pleasing to Him. Here we are looking at something quite different. The stench of Rome’s sin and unrighteousness has reached all the way to Heaven, and God is going to do something about it. It’s just like a dead rat behind your refrigerator. After a couple of days you will begin to detect a faint, but very unpleasant odor. At first you might wish you could just ignore it and it would go away. Eventually, however, the smell will begin to fill the house and you will be forced to take action and remove the source of the awful stench, regardless of how

³³³ *Americana*, 1989, s.v. “Rome.”

³³⁴ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #4764.”

³³⁵ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “στρνῆος.”

much work is required. Likewise, God had put up with the vile odors of the Catholic's abominations as long as He could stand it. Now He is going to remove the source of the stink which has defiled the entire earth.

18:6 Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works: in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double.

Here the angel, or whoever is speaking, continues his comments which began in the previous verse. The stench of the sins of Rome have reached God and now he is asked by the speaker to take great vengeance upon her. *"Reward her even as she rewarded you."* The papacy seemingly did everything in its power to fight against God. They perverted and polluted the simplicity of Christianity. The papacy has usurped for itself the power and authority of God Himself. She has mercilessly persecuted His people, and has even attempted to exterminate them as heretics. Here God is asked to give Rome a "dose of her own medicine." To treat her as she treated God and His people. *"Double unto her double according to her works."* God is exhorted to give Rome twice as much misery and contempt as she has given Him. Certainly she deserves every bit of it. She has blasphemed and attacked the God of Heaven. Anything He chooses to do to her in return will be warranted.

"In the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." The cup referred to here is the one first seen in chapter seventeen. *"And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication."* This cup is filled with the sins and evil deeds that the papacy has committed. These things have not harmed the papacy but have often been devastating to others. The idea expressed in this verse is that God should take this cup, double its contents, and then pour it upon her head. He will be doing unto her as she has done unto Him.

18:7 How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow.

"How much she hath glorified herself." The papacy has definitely glorified and exalted herself. *"Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God"* (II Thessalonians 2:4). Throughout history the papacy has claimed for itself the right to rule over the kings of the earth, and that it possesses a higher source of authority than anyone else.

Deliciously is from the Greek word "streniao," which Thayer defines as "to be wanton, to live luxuriously."³³⁶ *"Lived deliciously"* describes the way in which the popes and other high ranking officials lived. They lived very wicked lives which revolved entirely around wealth, power, and sensual pleasure, as the following passage shows quite vividly.

"Corruption in the medieval Catholic hierarchy was infamous. Pope John XII openly had love affairs, gave church treasure to a mistress, castrated one opponent, blinded another, and donned armor to lead an army. Benedict IX sold the papacy to a successor for 1,500 pounds of gold. Urban VI tortured and murdered his cardinals. Innocent VIII proudly acknowledged his illegitimate children and loaded them with church riches. Pope Boniface VII, whose name is omitted from official church listings, murdered two rival popes in the 10th century. Sergius III likewise killed two rivals for the papal throne. Benedict V dishonored a young girl and fled with the Vatican treasury. Clement VI sported his mistresses on ermine bed-linens. Boniface VIII sent troops to kill every resident of Palestrina and raze the city. Clement VII, while a papal legate, similarly ordered the slaughter of Cesena's 8,000 people, including the children. A previous pope John XXIII (not the reformer of the 1950s) was deposed by a council in 1414—and Edward Gibbon drily recorded in *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*: "The most serious charges were suppressed; the Vicar of Christ was accused only of piracy, murder, rape, sodomy, and

³³⁶ Thayer, 1989, s.v. "στρηνιάω."

incest.’ Alexander VI bought the papacy by bribing cardinals to elect him—then hosted sex orgies attended by his illegitimate children, Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia.

Regarding Alexander, scholar Barbara Tuchman recounted in *The March of Folly*: ‘The pope presided over a banquet given by Cesare in the Vatican, famous in the annals of pornography as the Ballet of the Chestnuts. Soberly recorded by Buchard, 50 courtesans danced after dinner with the guests, “at first clothed, then naked.” Chestnuts were then scattered among candelabra placed on the floor, “which the courtesans, crawling on hands and knees among the candelabra, picked up, while the Pope, Cesare, and his sister Lucrezia looked on.” Coupling of guests and courtesans followed, with prizes in the form of fine silken tunics and cloaks offered “for those who could perform the act most often with the courtesans.”’

Cardinals, archbishops, abbots, bishops, priests, and monks kept concubines, pocketed church wealth, waged armed vendettas, and grew rich through simony, the selling of church offices and acts. Pope Innocent III ranted against his clergy: ‘All of them, from the highest to the lowest, do as it is said in the prophets: They are enthralled to avarice, love presents, and seek rewards; for the sake of bribes they pronounce the godless righteous....’³³⁷

“The influence of two sister prostitutes, Marozia and Theodora, was founded on their wealth and beauty, their political and amorous intrigues: the most strenuous of their lovers were rewarded with the Roman mitre, and their reign may have suggested to the darker ages the fable of a female pope. The bastard son, the grandson, and the great-grandson of Marozia, a rare genealogy, were seated in the chair of St. Peter, and it was at the age of nineteen years that the second of these became the head of the Latin church. His youth and manhood were of a suitable complexion; and the nations of pilgrims could bear testimony to the charges that were urged against him in a Roman synod, and in the presence of Otho the Great. As John XII had renounced the dress and decencies of his profession, the soldier may not perhaps be dishonored by the wine which he drank, the blood that he spilt, the flames that he kindled, or the licentious pursuits of gaming and hunting. His open simony might be the consequence of distress; and his blasphemous invocation of Jupiter and Venus, if it be true, could not possibly be serious. But we read, with some surprise, that the worthy grandson of Marozia lived in public adultery with the matrons of Rome; that the Lateran palace was turned into a school for prostitution, and that his rapes of virgins and widows had deterred the female pilgrims from visiting the tomb of St. Peter, lest, in the devout act, they should be violated by his successor.’³³⁸

We can now clearly see how many of the medieval popes and clergymen lived “*deliciously*.” Because of the wicked way in which these people have lived, while at the same time brutally persecuting true Christians, the speaker asks God to give them “*much torment and sorrow*.”

The papacy is said here to see herself as a queen. A queen would have no worries or anxieties about a single thing. She would sit in wealth and authority, all of her needs would be taken care of. A widow, on the other hand, would worry about how she would take care of herself. The idea is that to Rome everything seemed to be in wonderful shape, she was well taken care of. She did not think that she would ever see any sorrow.

18:8 Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her.

“*Therefore*” lets us know that what is about to happen is a direct result of what we have just learned. The plagues that are about to befall Rome will be brought about by God because of her “*delicious*” lifestyle. “*Plague*” is from the

³³⁷ Haught, 1990, pp. 81-4.

³³⁸ Gibbon, 1963, pp. 45-6.

Greek word “plege,” which Thayer defines as “a public calamity, heavy affliction (now tormenting now destroying the bodies of men, and sent by God as a punishment.)”³³⁹

The papacy is to be wounded by a great calamity which will come upon her “*in one day*.” This does not mean that it will literally begin and end in a twenty-four hour period of time. The idea is that it will occur in a very short period of time. While the storm could be seen on the horizon for several decades, no one could have anticipated its ferocity. It took only a couple of years from the first overtones of dissent during the French Revolution, until Catholicism had been exterminated in France. From that time forward the papacy continued to suffer a very sharp decline. All of this was an amazingly quick and unexpected occurrence even to the enemies of the papacy. Considering the papacy’s attitude, she sat as a queen with no fears or worries, the coming of her destruction must have seemed to come from nowhere. It probably did seem as if they came “*in one day*.”

“*Death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire*” indicates the position of the papacy when the Lord’s judgment begins to descend upon her. These circumstances are both literal and figurative. From the many religious wars fought all across Europe, to the French Revolution and beyond, many Catholics were harmed or killed.

Certainly there was much “*mourning*” on the part of the Catholics throughout all of this. There is little doubt that the circumstance often caused some to suffer from hunger and deprivation of other necessities. Many homes, businesses, and churches of Catholics were burned at various times throughout the several centuries of revolt against Catholicism. But this especially refers to the overall situation of Catholicism by the early 1800’s. It was as if a voracious fire had been started and was now out of control, rapidly devouring the Catholic Empire.

The reason that these punishments were so severe and devastating is because of who they came from. “*For strong is the Lord God who judgeth her*.” There is always a chance to escape punishment except when it comes from the great God of Heaven, who has the ability to crush and destroy any wicked opponent at the drop of a hat.

18:9 And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning,

Rome was not the only one to benefit from the union between the Church and state. The reason that so many kings willing “went to bed” with her is that they too were able to profit from the immoral relationship. The papacy supported the monarch’s claims to absolute power. This seemingly gave divine approval to the kings and made it much easier for them to retain their positions by softening public discontent. Having a national religion was a great unifying force which also worked to the monarch’s advantage. So, although the two often fought and quarreled, the papacy and secular governments had a lot to offer each other, and therefore formed their alliance at the expense of the average citizen. The relationship of the two is here referred to as fornication, because of its illicit and immoral nature. Even though the kings had their differences with Rome, they certainly did not desire her utter destruction. After her demise they will miss the things she had to offer them. It is because of these things which the monarchs will lose that they will bewail and lament the downfall of the papacy.

18:10 Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour is thy judgment come.

The kings will see Rome, here referred to as Babylon, burning but will be unable to lend a helping hand. Although most desired a vast reduction of the papacy’s power, it is probable that few wanted it to go as far as it did. The papacy was reduced to the point where she would no longer be of any use to these kings.

³³⁹ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “πληγή.”

The kings will be resigned to “*standing afar off*” and watching her burn to the ground. This is referring to the time of the French Revolution and subsequent rise of Napoleon. Napoleon invaded and seized the Papal States, imprisoned two popes, one of them dying in his custody. He made a mockery of the once mighty whore. All of Europe was embroiled in war, and for a time Napoleon held the upper hand, and was poised to take control of the entire continent. It was the most dire times the papacy had seen since her unlawful assumption of power. The whore’s immoral partners, the Catholic kings, although often at odds with the papacy, were very sorrowful to see her perish. They realized that her passing signaled the end of an era in Europe. The days of the monarchy were numbered, and they knew it. They greatly lamented Rome’s demise, but were powerless to do anything to stop it. On top of all this, the plague of Protestantism, which, instead of dying, was becoming more prevalent all the time, also threatened the kings by removing the best unifying force they possessed—a national religion that taught allegiance to the king.

18:11 And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more:

It has been previously pointed out that the papacy enjoyed a very luxurious lifestyle. The enormous amount of wealth pouring into Rome from all over Europe allowed for the buying of items that were beyond the means of all but the richest of men. With the fall of Rome, those merchants who provided these luxury items would suffer a severe loss of business. Most would probably be forced to abandon their businesses altogether. Besides this, the bureaucracy of the papacy employed tens of thousands. As the papacy lost power and finances, many of these people would lose their positions. This would then result in a smaller work force within the city of Rome. This would mean less people to buy consumer goods, and would force many ordinary merchants out of business. This scenario is common even today. Any time a major employer in a city closes up, the effect on the local economy can be devastating. Many times effects of the closing will be felt over a very large area. Because of the size and extent of the Roman Catholic Church, its demise was felt throughout the entire European continent. These circumstances caused the merchants to mourn because of their losses.

18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble,

18:13 And cinnamon, and odors, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.

These two verses are merely an expansion of the thought given in verse eleven. This list contains some of the luxury items which Rome had purchased in great quantity in the past, but now they will not be bought any more. This will cause the merchants to weep and mourn over the loss of their business. By looking at these things it is obvious that most are not necessities of life. Rather they are items which could be purchased only by the rich and powerful. The fall of the papacy will mean that there will be less people around to buy these things. Certainly there will still be people who possess the wealth to obtain them, but the Catholics, who purchased a good portion of this merchandise, will be almost completely removed from the market. Most of the items in the list need no explanation but I will comment on a few of them.

Purple was much more expensive than most other colors. The following passage explains why.

“Purple raiment was costly, and consequently its use was the privilege of the rich exclusively. It was worn by persons of wealth and high official position, and especially by kings. Indeed, it was a sign of royalty, and was put on Jesus in mockery of his claims. Purple dye was obtained from various kinds of shellfish, and was yielded by a thin liquor, called the flower, secreted by a gland in the neck. The amount yielded by each fish was very small, much labor was required to collect it in quantity, and the price was correspondingly great.”³⁴⁰

³⁴⁰ Davis, 1983, s.v. “purple.”

What reason did Rome have for buying such extravagant colors? They clothed themselves in finery with money donated by their subjects, many of whom probably had little better than rags to wear themselves.

The source and work involved in obtaining scarlet also made it a very expensive color.

“The coloring matter was obtained by the Israelites from an insect (*Coccus ilicis*), called *kermez* by the Arabs, whence the English word crimson is derived. The insect abounds in Palestine on the holm oak. The female alone yields the coloring matter. She attains the form and size of an ordinary pea, is violet-black in color, covered with a whitish powder, and wingless. Filled with eggs containing red matter, she adheres to the leaves and twigs of the oak, and feeds on its juices. The color and the method of obtaining it were early known.”³⁴¹

Thyine wood “is that of the *Thuya articulata*, Desfont., the *Callitris quadrivalvis* of present botanists. It is a cone-bearing tree and allied to the pine. This tree was much prized by the ancient Greeks and Romans on account of the beauty of its wood for various ornamental purposes. By the Romans the tree was called *citris*, the wood *citrum*. It is a native of Barbary, and grows to a height of 15 to 25 feet.”³⁴²

The cinnamon referred to here is not simply the spice we are accustomed to today. It is “a fragrant wood. It was an ingredient in the sacred anointing oil used in the consecration of Aaron and his successors. It was used in after times to perfume beds. It is the aromatic bark of a tree, *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*, belonging to the laurel order, and cultivated in Ceylon, of which it is a native. The bark of the tree yields an essential oil, which is obtained from it by distillation. It is of golden-yellow color, has an agreeable smell, and is used in perfumery. The tree has been grown in Arabia.”³⁴³

Frankincense is “a vegetable resin, brittle, glittering, and of a bitter taste, used for the purpose of sacrificial fumigation. It was called frank because of the freeness with which, when burned, it gives forth its odor. It burns for a long time, with a steady flame. It is obtained by successive incisions in the bark of a tree called *Arbor thuris*. The first incision yields the purest and whitest resin, while the product of the after incisions is spotted with yellow, and loses its whiteness altogether as it becomes old.”³⁴⁴

“*Slaves, and souls of men*” has reference to the physical bodies and immortal souls of men respectively. From its earliest days the papacy had not only condoned slavery, but had also owned slaves. The following passage serves to illustrate this point.

“When, early in the sixteenth century, African slavery was adopted as a system of labor in the New World the Catholic Church had a long established tradition on the subject of human bondage. An integral part of the economic organization of the Roman Empire at the dawn of Christianity, slavery continued as an accepted institution under the Christian order, and the Church through its agents held property in slaves.”³⁴⁵

³⁴¹ Ibid., s.v. “scarlet.”

³⁴² Smith, 1986, s.v. “thyine wood.”

³⁴³ Davis, 1983, s.v. “cinnamon.”

³⁴⁴ Smith, 1986, s.v. “frankincense.”

³⁴⁵ Madeline H. Rice, *American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy*, (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1944), p. 11.

The buying and selling of souls was also conducted by the papacy. It is just as the Apostle Peter prophesied, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”* (II Peter 2:1-3). *“Make merchandise”* is from the Greek word *“emporeuomai,”* which Strong’s defines as *“to travel in (a country as a peddler), i.e. (by implication) to trade:-buy and sell, make merchandise.”*³⁴⁶ For the sake of monetary gain the papacy was willing to sell out the truth for the doctrine of devils. At the same time she sold out the souls of all men who followed her and trusted that she was teaching and practicing the will of God.

As it turns out, the sale of souls was a very big and profitable business for the papacy. This was done through the sale of indulgences and paying the soul of a dead person out of purgatory. Both of these practices are completely unscriptural, and were nothing more than schemes devised to rip off the unlearned masses. The following passage shows this in very clear and often harsh words.

“‘And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand.’ John 10:28. Thus spoke the Shepherd to his sheep as he looked upon them in love, and opened to them the gates of hope. That there might be no mistaking his intent or promise he added the words, ‘My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my father’s hand.’ Notwithstanding this, Leo XIII had the effrontery, the brazen presumption, the ineffable audacity to oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, and then assumes the power that he can pluck God’s redeemed out of his hand, shut them up in purgatory, keep them there at his will, let them out when he chooses, and the press prints it as if it were truth, and Christian people refuse to oppose him, as if he had claim to respect. Purgatory is the bottom of the bucket of popery’s hellish intent. Take it away and the Church would be bankrupt. Once, I described purgatory as the cap sheaf of popery. A cap sheaf is the crown of a company of sheaves. It covers all, touches each one and holds all together. This the doctrine of purgatory does for Romanism. Give to a company of bandits the rule of the town, let them have the ability to rob, to kill and destroy, and you strike terror into the very soul of the community and take out courage from the heart and strength from the arm. Popery goes one better. It not only robs and destroys here, but it claims to hold the keys to death and hell, and to be able to damn beyond the grave. It comes to the bedside of the dying, kindles its candles, sprinkles its holy water, burns its incense, pours out its oil, mumbles in Latin, stretches out its hand for money and leaves the soul in purgatory, which is ten times hotter than hell. Was there ever presumption like it?

Let us on the wings of faith, like eagles cleaving through the clouds that cap the mountains, shout out today, so that all may hear, Jesus Christ is the author and finisher of our faith. He gives eternal life to those that welcome him as King, as Saviour and Ruler, and no pope machine called a church can pluck them out of his hand. Purgatory is the masterpiece of presumption, because as a human invention it challenges the might of Almighty God. The Lord Jesus Christ declares, ‘I give you eternal life.’ Rome boldly says, You do not, until we get our money for masses and consent to the deliverance of the soul from purgatory.

Rome claims the right to hold millions of saints in the flames of purgatory, and God can only get them out through her agency. This blasphemous lie is believed in. Newspapers print it without dissent and become aids in the deception. Here then is a human invention, unsupported by a line of scripture, unknown to the primitive church, a money-making, consciousnessless scheme, designed and worked to take money from the pockets of the deluded and ensnared, endorsed—at least not opposed, ridiculed and caricatured as it deserves to be. Be not deceived. There is no shame in the

³⁴⁶ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #1710.”

harlot of the Tiber, with her pomp of outward show, her gorgeous rites, symbols and forms manipulated by priests and nuns; with her confessional and penance, her mariolatry and canonization of saints, her superstition and error, her willful perversion of truth, her lasciviousness and lewdness enthroning her in the hearts of the vile, so that she may glorify herself and live deliciously, saying in her heart, 'I sit a queen and am no widow and shall see no sorrow.' Rome presents a terrible theme for contemplation. She holds her subjects with a grasp of iron.

Rome claims our Savior Jesus Christ cannot deliver the soul from punishment except by the help of the Roman Catholic Church. If this be so, then no one is safe, not even Romanists. If no one is safe except those delivered through the intercession of priests, then the priest is enthroned in the place of God and God is dethroned and becomes dependent on the help of man.

Purgatory, or the intermediate state, is said by Faber to be on the brink of hell. Said Tetzels, 'The very moment that the money clinks against the bottom of the chest, the soul escapes from purgatory and flies to heaven.' Can imposition go farther?

The pope has established in many churches and monasteries altars on which whoever causes a mass to be said on a certain day, draws such a soul as he chooses from purgatory. To bulls, by which these indulgences are granted, a clause is ordinarily added: 'These indulgences are for those who will pay for them.' Can any presumption be more astounding? Christ says, I give eternal life. Rome claims that it can only be obtained through money and through price.

The most dreadful descriptions of the tortures endured in these imaginary regions, founded upon dreams, visions or supernatural revelations, were given by fanatical or designing priests and monks, being calculated to awaken the terror of the superstitious and to induce them to leave no means untried which might shorten their own period of suffering, or, by a better fortune, enable them to avoid altogether the necessity of making a visit to purgatory on their way to heaven.

A single instance of these descriptions will be sufficient to give an idea of the general character of the whole: 'Behold a valley of vast dimensions. To the left is a vast region covered with roasting furnaces, and to the right icy cold, hail and snow. The whole valley is filled with human souls which a tempest tosses in all directions. The unhappy spirits, unable to bear the violent heat, leap into the shivering cold, which again drives them back to the scorching flames which cannot be extinguished. A numberless multitude of deformed souls are in this manner whirled about and tormented without intermission in the extremes of heat and cold. This, according to Bellarmine, is the place of chastisement for such as defer confession and amendment till the hour of death. All these will, however, at the last day be admitted to heaven; while many through alms, vigils, prayers and especially mass, will be liberated even before judgment.

With such horrible material to work upon the fears of the superstitious multitude, ever ready in this as in the dark ages to swallow the grossest absurdities of monkish imposture, and cherishing implicit faith in the almost unbounded power of their spiritual guides, it is no difficult thing to base upon the fiction of purgatory the doctrine of indulgences; first by exciting the fears of the multitude by portraying in vivid colors the torments of one, and then by working upon those fears and inculcating the unlimited power of the pope and the priesthood over these terrible regions, to lay a foundation for the establishment of the other. Purgatory is a scheme devised to get money.

Romanists admit that when the fear of purgatory dies out there is no sale for indulgences. No purgatory, no indulgences. Millions of money left as legacies have been received by the Church in payment for masses for the comfort and release of souls in purgatory. Leo X was bankrupt. The Church of Rome was in dire need. He resorted to indulgences. Millions of money poured into the treasury. St. Peter's church in Rome was built out of money thus obtained. Vast sums are obtained at the present time in this way. Boxes in churches and monasteries and in the hands of the votaries of the church are accompanied with invitations to give money for the relief and delivery of souls in purgatory.

This is in line with what was done in the past. Said the commissioners of the Archbishop of Mayence, 'The first benefit we announce is the complete pardon of all sins, and it is not possible to speak of any greater benefit than this, since man who lives in sin is deprived of the divine favor and by this complete pardon he recovers the grace of God.' This is not, by the pardon of sins through the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ, but to obtain this, said the commissioners, 'it is only necessary to purchase an indulgence.' 'And to those who desire to deliver souls from purgatory and to procure for them forgiveness of their sins, let them put their money in the chest; but it is not needful that they should feel sorrow of heart or make confession with their lips. Let them only hasten to bring their money, for they will thus do a work most profitable to departed souls and to the building of the Church of St. Peter.'

It was Tetzel who became the exponent of the abhorrent doctrine and excited the ire of Luther. Hear him; 'Indulgences,' said he, 'are the most precious and sublime of God's gifts. This cross (pointing to the red cross) has as much efficacy as the cross of Jesus Christ. Draw near and I will give you letters duly sealed, by which even the sins you shall hereafter desire to commit shall all be forgiven you. I would not exchange my privileges for those of St. Peter in heaven, for I have saved more souls with my indulgences than he with his sermons. There is no sin so great that the indulgence cannot reach it. Let him only pay largely and it shall be forgiven him. Even repentance is not indispensable.' What excuse is there for the false statement made on the authority of high officials 'that an indulgence is not a pardon for sin,' and that it is not a permission to commit sin?

Look at a Roman Catholic cemetery on an All Saints day. See the women and children lying on the ground, crying and wailing, in hopes of bringing the dead out of the fire, and priests working up the excitement, adding to the misery, the dread forebodings, the pitiless sufferings, that money may be taken from the poor and the deluded for masses. Can there not be punishment for such barbarity?

The fathers of the council "(The council of Aix La Chapelle in 836)" knew nothing of purgatory and left no room for its expiation. But the ages grew dark. The word of God was banished. The people were given up to ignorance and crime. Rome needed money. Then came purgatory and indulgences. These went hand in hand. They go hand in hand now as much as in the days of Tetzel. Every mission held by Romanists is conducted with this end in view. They preach the doctrine of hell for all outside the church and purgatory for all inside, and then appeal to all who love departed friends to give money that they may be delivered.

But for purgatory there is no scripture, no reason, nothing but one wild hunt for money through the aid of a brazen lie, coined in hell, and circulated by the aid of sycophants and time servers of the devil, throughout the world."³⁴⁷

I quoted a very long passage here, but I felt compelled to do so. A couple of paragraphs would have certainly sufficed to illustrate the point at hand, but we saw so much more here. We now have a much clearer understanding of the character of the beast and the whore, which is the papacy.

Rome was a true harlot, willing to do anything for money. She would quickly sell the truth if there was a dollar to be made from it. She wrung her subjects mercilessly for every cent she could get from them, then used the money to live more extravagantly than most kings. There is no excuse or justification for such behavior from any person. Let alone the one who is supposed to be the embodiment and spirit of Christ here on the earth. Was this the kind of example the Lord left for His followers?

18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all.

³⁴⁷ Justin D. Fulton, *The Fight With Rome*, (Marlboro, MA, Pratt Brothers, 1889), pp. 33-47.

“*The fruits that thy soul lusted after*” refers to the luxury items which were listed in the two previous verses. The appetite of the papacy for these things was voracious. Now, because of God’s judgment, they have lost the ability to obtain these things in the quantities which they were accustomed to. “*And thou shalt find them no more at all,*” shows that this is not just a temporary setback, but one from which they will never recover. In short, “the party is over.” Rome will never again enjoy the power and splendor that it once had. All of this is about like walking up to a rich man and taking away his bank account, his Mercedes, his diamond ring, his \$500,000 a year job, and anything else of value he has, and telling him he will have to live on \$40,000 a year. Not being accustomed to living as an ordinary man, he would feel devastated. Likewise, Rome, having lived in the very lap of luxury for centuries, now finds itself brought back down to earth. It was for them a very humbling and bitter experience.

18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing,

This verse basically repeats the thought of verse eleven, with only one slight addition. The fall of Rome meant a severe loss of business for those who supplied these luxury goods. Certainly Rome was not their only customer, but was undoubtedly their largest. Many of these merchants would probably be forced to abandon their businesses altogether. As the verse points out, they “*were made rich by her,*” now as she falls so will they. In this verse we are told that the merchants “*stand afar off for the fear of her torment,*” just as the kings did. They too were powerless to intervene against Napoleon and France on behalf of the papacy.

18:16 And saying, Alas, alas, that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls!

The merchants lament the loss of their best customer. They fondly remember her in her splendor, “*clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls.*” It was through them that Rome acquired all of these things. It was through their transactions with Rome that so many of these merchants became wealthy. Now they stand by and watch all of it go up in smoke, knowing that their fortunes are going up with her.

18:17 For in one hour so great riches is come to nought. And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off,

Here we see evidence of the far reaching effects of Rome’s demise. Many of the goods that she purchased were imported from various places around the world and were brought in by way of the sea. Thus when her appetite for these delicacies was forcibly quenched, many seamen also suffered a great loss. We notice again that, like the kings and merchants, they too “*stood afar off.*” There was nothing they could do about the situation, but join the kings and merchants in mourning their losses. Mention is again made in this verse of the swiftness of these events. The whole situation exploded so rapidly that no one could have anticipated the turn of events.

18:18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city!

The seamen were very dismayed to see the demise of Rome, because it meant a significant loss of revenue for them. “*The smoke of her burning*” is figurative, and simply represents the desperate condition of the city. It was as if it was on fire and no one was able to put it out. They could only stand by and watch it go up in flames.

“*What city is like unto this great city!*” Indeed, what city can compare to the vice, the filth, the corruption, and the wickedness which so characterized the great whore. Certainly no city could match the physical splendor of Rome, but neither could they rival the spiritual abominations that were so rampant. I must say, thank God there was no other city like Rome. The world could not have withstood that much evil!

18:19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas, that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! For in one hour is she made desolate.

Casting dust on the head was a sign of mourning in ancient times just as was the wearing of sackcloth and ashes, rending one's garment, shaving the head, etc. An example of this practice is found in I Samuel 4:12. "*And there ran a man of Benjamin out of the army, and came to Shiloh the same day with his clothes rent, and with earth upon his head.*" The seamen were in mourning over their personal losses which came about as a consequence of God's judgment of Rome. "*Wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness!*" The trade with Rome was so lucrative due to the value of the cargo which was bought. This meant high profits for all who were involved. This enabled a large number of seamen to get a slice of the pie and become wealthy.

"*Her costliness*" refers to the great value of all the treasure located within Rome. All of these things had to be brought there, most of them by ship, and this was how the fortunes were made for the seamen. In a very short time, however, the prosperity of both sides came to a screeching halt. God intervened and severely cut the purse strings of the papacy. The wasteful extravagance of the past was no longer an option for Rome.

18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.

After observing the bitter wailings of the kings, merchants, and seamen, we now turn to a much more joyful situation. We are still viewing the same turn of events, but from an entirely different perspective, the perspective of the righteous. The destruction of Satan's most effective tool, and Christianity's worst enemy, brings elation and joy to the inhabitants of Heaven. It is truly a time for all who are righteous to stand up and shout in victory. Vengeance has been taken. Rome's evils have been turned back upon her. The once mighty and evil beast, the abominable whore, the enemy of everyone and everything righteous, has been defeated.

18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.

A millstone is either of two stones which form a mill in which grain is crushed. "In Palestine and neighboring lands the mill was a simple machine, consisting of two round millstones. In the mill in use among the people today, the stones are generally made of basalt, about a foot and a half in diameter and from two to four inches thick. The nether stone is slightly convex on top. It has a peg in the center, about which the upper stone revolves. This upper stone is slightly concave on the under side in order to fit on the nether stone, and is pierced by a hole in the center which receives the peg and into which the grain is dropped by hand. A larger mill, constructed on the same principle, but turned by an ass, was also in use."³⁴⁸ The stones from mills that were powered by animals could be quite large. This is certainly the intended meaning in this verse. If one of these very large millstones were to be dropped into the sea a great splash would be made. John says that he sees a mighty angel do this very thing. This action signifies the way in which Babylon, which is Rome, is to be overthrown. Rome's fall will be similar to the commotion created when a great millstone is thrown into the sea. As one might suspect, the damage that will be wrought will be irreversible. After this Rome will "*be found no more at all*, which shows her removal from the mainstream of the political and economic affairs of Europe."

18:22 And the voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee; and no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee; and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee;

18:23 And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.

³⁴⁸ Davis, 1983, s.v. "mill."

These verses signify the condition of utter desolation that will overtake Rome. *“The voice of harpers, and musicians, and of pipers, and trumpeters, shall be heard no more at all in thee.”* Music would be prevalent in a city in times of happiness and celebration. Their absence would suggest a time of sorrow and trouble.

“And no craftsman, of whatsoever craft he be, shall be found any more in thee.” Industry and construction are also signs of good times. Their absence suggests hardship and economic despair. *“And the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee.”* Millstones were extremely important to the Children of Israel in Old Testament times. *“No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge”* (Deuteronomy 24:6). Without a mill the family would be forced to go without bread. Since bread is such a staple food, this would seriously threaten the well being of the entire family. Consequently it could not be used as collateral in any deal. The significance of the statement *“and the sound of a millstone shall be heard no more at all in thee,”* is that this would signify a great dearth in all the land. If the millstone is not grinding, then no one is eating.

“And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee.” The fact that no light is to be seen in the city any longer shows the utter desolation and doom which will overtake Rome. The darkness is representative of the gloom and sorrow which will prevail. *“And the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee.”* In normal times marriage is a very common thing, and a reason to celebrate. It takes extreme circumstances to put a stop to such a natural and frequent event as marriage. This further emphasizes the grave conditions to be found in Rome. All of these items, when considered together, show a condition of total desolation and disaster. Such was to be the fate of Rome.

“For thy merchants were the great men of the earth.” The reason that the merchants who traded with Rome were *“great men of the earth”* is that the business brought them all great wealth. Rome did not mind paying handsomely to acquire the fineries which she so hungrily lusted after. *“For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived.”* Through lies and false doctrines the papacy persuaded the majority of men to follow her pernicious ways. This is why the desolate conditions illustrated above are to be brought upon Rome. She has lived as a harlot, and is now going to get a taste of her just desserts.

18:24 And in her was found the blood of prophets, and of saints, and of all that were slain upon the earth.

Verse twenty-three spoke of Rome's deceptions which affected all nations, but much worse than this was the murder of God's true servants. The papacy set herself up as God's Church, but in reality was nothing more than a pawn of Satan. While the world had its back turned, thinking Rome was a spiritual guardian appointed by God, the papacy tried her best to annihilate God's people. She outlawed the Bible for the common people, keeping them in ignorance, and dared anyone to differ with her teachings under pains of death. The blood of countless righteous souls is upon the hands of the popes. They have authorized the murders of untold numbers of God's own children. The very one who claims to be the *“vicar of Christ”* is in reality the *“vicar of Satan.”*

When I think of all the fine Christian people I know today, and contemplate living in the time when the pope had the power to sentence all of them to death, I must frankly admit it makes me mad. There are so many people that I might never have had the chance to know in this life, that would have been senselessly and brutally tortured and murdered by a two-bit despot who thinks he possesses the God-given right to rule the entire world.

The pope claims to be THE one who can speak for God. Well God has spoken, and He said Rome was an impostor, a liar and a fraud. He also said Rome was worthy of destruction. There is only one comment I am able to make when I read of God's judgment of Rome. Amen!

Chapter Nineteen

The Triumph of Christ: Victory Over the Beast

19:1 And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God:

John now hears a great multitude of people praising God for His actions against Rome. Many people have been persecuted and murdered at the hands of the great whore, now God evens the score. He avenges His people and they are very thankful to see it. Alleluia is from the Greek word “allelouia,” which Thayer defines as “praise ye the Lord, Hallelujah.”³⁴⁹ The intent of all these terms is to glorify and praise God for what he has done to Rome. Certainly if anyone is qualified to have “*glory, and honor, and power*” it is almighty God.

19:2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.

“*True and righteous are his judgments.*” God did not unjustly punish Rome. The measures He used against her were harsh, but certainly not as harsh as what she had done to His people. She deserved everything she got, and then some.

“*Which did corrupt the earth with her fornication.*” The papacy’s evil influence spread over the entire Western world. Every nation was seduced into an immoral relationship with the great whore. Catholicism was an integral part of Western culture at that time—it permeated all aspects of society. The earth had truly been corrupted by the wicked influence of Rome.

“*And hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand.*” Rome was responsible for literally spilling the blood of untold numbers of Christians, now God has turned the tables, and is spilling the blood of many Catholics, and destroying their position among the nations. For this, His servants are very thankful.

19:3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her smoke rose up for ever and ever.

³⁴⁹ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “ἀλληλούεα.”

The inhabitants of Heaven continue to praise God for His avenging the blood of the saints. “*Her smoke*” has reference to the fact that she was set afire by the wrath of God. She continues to burn and no man can extinguish the flames. The smoke from her burning carcass rises so high that it appears to go on forever. This does not have reference to eternal punishment in Hell, although in the end the great whore is certain to be banished to that awful place.

19:4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; alleluia.

This is the last time we will see the twenty-four elders and the four beasts mentioned in Revelation. They first appeared back in chapter four, and have appeared several times since. Each time we see them they are always surrounding the throne of God praising Him; this instance is no exception. They fall down before Almighty God to praise and worship Him for His righteous judgment on the great whore. Being righteous, the elders and the beasts, were certainly glad to see the great evil beast judged by God, and her power and influence destroyed. While they had not been directly affected by her evil, they still had a great desire to see her destroyed. Any righteous person will always wish to see evil brought to a quick and decisive end.

19:5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

In the first three verses we saw a great multitude of God’s people praising Him for avenging them of Rome. Now we see a new voice speaking. This voice comes “*out of the throne*.” God is the one who sits upon the throne, but the words spoken by the voice do not sound as if they were spoken by God. The voice said, “*praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him*.” This seems to be someone else eliciting praise for God. It could perhaps be Christ who is at this time reigning in His kingdom. Revelation has already told us that Christ is also seated on the throne with God. “*To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne*” (Revelation 3:21). Therefore, this is likely Christ exhorting all of God’s servants to praise Him.

Fear is from the Greek word “phobeo,” which Strong’s defines as: “to frighten, i.e. to be alarmed; by analogy to be in awe of, i.e. revere: -be (+ sore) afraid, fear (exceedingly), reverence.”³⁵⁰ Clearly the intended meaning here is reverence. Everyone who has reverence for God should praise Him because of what He has just done. “*Small and great*” is included to reinforce the idea that ALL of God’s servants are expected to praise Him for His righteous actions against Rome. No one is too lowly or too lofty to be excluded from the praise of God.

19:6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

Now it seems as if the great multitude of the saved, the twenty-four elders, the four beasts, and possibly even Christ, all unite their voices in a very loud and powerful celebration of God’s greatness. They are filled with praise and adoration for the Almighty One.

Omnipotent is from the Greek word “pantokrator,” which Strong’s defines as “the all-ruling, that is God (as absolute and universal sovereign):-Almighty, Omnipotent.”³⁵¹ God possesses absolute power over everything and everyone. He is all powerful, and the great host praises Him, and rejoices that it is He who possesses this great power, because He also has the wisdom to wield the power properly.

³⁵⁰ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #5399”

³⁵¹ Ibid, s.v. “Greek #3841”

19:7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

The great host also finds occasion to rejoice and celebrate because the time has come for the marriage of the Lamb. The Lamb has previously been clearly identified as Christ. He is to be married, and we are told that His wife has made herself ready, but she is not identified. By looking elsewhere in the New Testament we are able to discover the identity of Christ's bride. It is the Church. On at least two occasions the Apostle Paul clearly referred to the relationship between Christ and the Church as a marriage. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God" (Romans 7:4). "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Corinthians 11:2). The Church made itself ready for the marriage to Christ by, as the Apostle Paul said, being a "chaste virgin" in Christ. The Church was washed in the blood of the Lamb and thereby became worthy to become His bride.

19:8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

The bride was adorned in fine white linen for the marriage. The white color of the linen denotes her state of purity and innocence. The linen that she is clothed with is said to be "the righteousness of saints." The Church is made up of the saints, so the righteousness of the saints is the righteousness of the Church. This righteousness comes about through obedience to God. "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Ephesians 4:24). Therefore, the bride of Christ has made herself ready for the marriage by submitting herself to God.

19:9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

The "he" which spoke to John here is an angel. He will identify himself as an angel in the next verse. This angel instructs John to write down a message. This message proclaims that those who are called to the marriage of the Lamb are very blessed. The reason that it is such a great blessing to be at this marriage is that if you are there it means you are a member of the Lord's Church and have been redeemed by Christ. If you are not invited then it means you are not a member of His Church. Therefore an invitation to the marriage supper is the same as saying those who have been saved. Then the angel tells John that the things which he has said are "the true sayings of God." It is not as though there was any doubt about this, but the angel just wishes to reaffirm that God is the author of these words.

19:10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

Apparently without thinking about what he was doing, John fell down at the feet of the angel who was talking to him with the intent of worshipping him. The angel quickly rebuked John for his actions, informing him that, as an angel, he is also a servant of God, and should not be worshipped. The Apostle Paul clearly taught that angels were not to be worshipped. "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Colossians 2:18). God is the only one to be worshipped. Back in chapter nine we discussed the subject of who and what may be worshipped. The conclusion was that only God and Christ can scripturally be worshipped. Man is not allowed to worship angels, images, idols, saints, or anything of the kind.

The angel told John he was his fellowservant. Although man is different than angels, he, like the angels, is expected to worship God. When the angel told John he was his fellowservant he also included "thy brethren that have the

testimony of Jesus.” Thus we see that the angels consider themselves as the brethren of all men who submit themselves to and obey God.

“*For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*” The spirit of something is what gives it life or substance. Therefore, to speak of the “*spirit of prophesy*” we are talking about what gives prophesy meaning and validity. This is, of course, the “*testimony of Jesus.*” We are certain that these prophecies will come true because they are the “*testimony of Jesus.*” Since He affirms that these things are true we should have no doubts about them whatsoever.

19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

Looking into Heaven, John sees a white horse. We will find that this is not the same white horse we saw in chapter six. That horse, and its rider, represented the period of great success and expansion for the Roman Empire. The so-called Pax Romana. The white horse we see here is ridden by one called “*Faithful and True.*” The next few verses will make it very apparent that this is Christ. The names faithful and true certainly do apply to Christ. He is the epitome of truth and faithfulness. He was faithful to His Father when He came to this earth and allowed Himself to suffer many things, including crucifixion, for the sake of man. He has always been truthful, even when the truth hurt.

“*In righteousness he doth judge and make war.*” Christ does not judge as a man, but as God. Therefore His judgments are not subject to the human faults of pride, jealousy, greed, ignorance, and the many other things that cloud our perception of truth and reality. Christ is able to clearly see things as they are. He spoke of how judgment is to be carried out. “*Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment*” (John 7:24).

Christ is said here to “*make war.*” This does not mean that He will lead a literal army on the field of battle. This is certain because of a statement He once made during His life here on earth. “*Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence’*” (John 18:36). Jesus’ warfare is not carnal but spiritual. He leads His angels, and those men who follow him, into battle against Satan and his forces. As we have just seen He judges with righteous judgment, therefore He knows exactly who He should fight against.

19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

Christ’s eyes are here said to be like a flame of fire. This shows His ability to see through anything. He can burn away all barriers, and even see into the hearts of men. It illustrates the fact that nothing can be hidden from God. It is as the Hebrew letter says, “*For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do*” (Hebrews 4:12-3). Christ is often spoken of as the Word of God, and here we see the penetrating power of the Word.

“*On his head were many crowns.*” These symbolize conquest and victory. He has conquered death, sin, and Satan along with all things which are evil. The fact that He wears MANY crowns, and not just one, shows His supremacy over all other kings and rulers. He is “*King of kings and Lord of lords*” (I Timothy 6:15).

“*And he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.*” At the time Jesus came to the earth the Jews were steadfastly looking toward Heaven in anticipation of the arrival of their promised Messiah. Everyone was expecting a king who would restore the greatness of the nation of Israel. They were not at all expecting the Messiah to be who and what He was. Therefore they rejected Him.

Even Jesus’ own apostles did not fully understand His purpose. Peter made it clear that he understood who Jesus was. “*And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father*

which is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16-17). Unfortunately, none of them understood what He was. They too were expecting Him to become a carnal king of Israel and lead the nation to great heights. Even after His crucifixion, as He was preparing to ascend back into Heaven, they still did not understand. “*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*” (Acts 1:6). Instead of restoring fleshly Israel, a few days after His ascension, Christ established spiritual Israel, the Church. At the time, no one knew Jesus’ name as a spiritual king.

19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

Vesture is from the Greek word “himation,” which Strong’s defines as “a dress (inner or outer):-apparel, cloke, clothes, garment, raiment, robe, vesture.”³⁵² This does not indicate any particular garment, thus we see that the article of clothing is not important. What is significant is the fact that the garment has been dipped in blood. It is representative of His having shed His blood for mankind. He went to the cross and bled and died to atone for the sins of man.

“*His name is called The Word of God.*” Christ is often spoken of as the Word of God in the Bible. One good example is from the Apostle John. “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God*” (John 1:1). One view of the Godhead is to say that the Holy Spirit is the thoughts of God, and Christ is the words of God. This would imply that Christ is a kind of spokesman for God. He clearly identified Himself as such during His earthly ministry. “*For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak*” (John 12:49). In a sense then, Christ was the spokesman for God while on the earth. He communicated the love which God had for man throughout His life and especially in His death, love that ordinary words could not convey. Christ demonstrated the love, mercy, and grace of God, which He perfectly embodied.

19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.

In verse eleven we saw that Christ makes war, now we see the army which He leads into battle. His army is said to be in Heaven. This does not, however, imply that His army is made up of angels, although they certainly do battle for the cause of righteousness. We must keep in mind that John is seeing all of these visions in Heaven. He saw Christ in Heaven riding a white horse, certainly His army would be right behind Him, which would also place them in Heaven, even if they are not heavenly beings. The Bible often speaks of the Christian life in terms of a battle, but the distinction is clearly made that the battle is not a carnal one. “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds)*” (II Corinthians 10:3-4). The enemy that Christians must fight is the Devil and those corrupt men who have allied themselves with him. “*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Ephesians 6:11-12). Therefore, Christ’s army, which He leads into battle, is the redeemed from the earth, the Church, along with the angels. They also ride on white horses as Christ does. This shows that they also have been victorious in battle. They have conquered Satan and his evil forces by joining the army of God. Again, just as Christ was described, these people are dressed in clean white clothing. This shows their purity and innocence as the children of God. They have been washed clean by the blood of the Lamb, and are now worthy to ride with Him into battle.

19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

³⁵² Ibid., s.v. “Greek #2440.”

Back in chapter one where Christ was described at length, He was said to have a sharp two-edged sword coming from His mouth. His sword is His speech. His words are the words of God. *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Hebrews 4:12). The weapon of the righteous in their battle against evil is also the word of God.

“That with it he should smite the nations.” Christ will use His sword to fight against the evil heathen nations. With it He brought an end to paganism in Rome and Christianity began to overspread Europe. When it was delivered back to the common people it shook up the entire Western world by sparking the Reformation. Through this He eventually brought about the end of papal Rome. Certainly it has had significant effects on many nations throughout history which would be a little more difficult to document. Christ even warned the early apostate Roman Church, in His letter to Pergamos (313-533), that He would use this weapon against them if they did not repent. *“Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth”* (Revelation 2:16).

“He shall rule them with a rod of iron.” This was prophesied concerning Christ by David (Psalms 2:9), and we have already seen it mentioned in chapters two and twelve here in Revelation. It means that Christ’s rule will be strict and unyielding. He will not make any concessions to the forces of evil, nor will He permit His people to be involved with evil things. He will demand strict adherence to His teachings and will reject all who disobey Him. *“He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:48).

“And he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.” The authority to judge has been given to Christ. *“For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man”* (John 5:22, 27). In chapter fourteen we saw that the wicked of the earth, who were compared to grapes, were to be reaped and cast into *“the great winepress of the wrath of God.”* To obtain the juice from grapes it is required that someone walks on them to squeeze out all of the juice. Here we are told that Christ is to be the one who treads out these grapes. In other words, He will be the one who brings about the judgment against Rome, which we have already read about, as well as all other evil men.

19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

The vesture was mentioned in verse thirteen to be an unspecified article of clothing. On this vesture as well as on His thigh the title *“KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS”* is written. This name shows his supremacy above all other kings and leaders. His power is absolute, He shares it with no one. He is the head of the Church, despite the contradictory claims of the pope. *“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence”* (Colossians 1:18). The pope seeks to exalt himself and claims that he, not Christ, is the head of the Church. This claim is clearly a direct contradiction of the Bible. Christ is indeed Lord and King of all.

When Jesus was crucified, He was derisively given a title. *“And the superscription of his accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS”* (Mark 15:26). Notice that this title was His *“accusation.”* He was accused of being something, a king, that He really was not. Here in Revelation we see that He really was a king after all. However, He allowed Himself to be crucified unjustly so that He might redeem the unjust.

19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;

We have now seen the sun used numerous times to represent a great power. In chapter sixteen, the fourth vial was poured out upon the sun, which was the pope himself. I believe that here again we see the sun representing the papacy. The angel is symbolically standing in the midst of Rome and inviting all the birds of the air to come to the *“supper of the great God.”* This supper is not to be a joyous event for Rome, as the next verse will show. The idea is that Rome and her immoral partners are about to be destroyed, and the angel is giving the vultures a heads up. They

can begin circling overhead now, because very soon there will be an abundance of food for them, because of the terrible death and destruction which will soon begin.

19:18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

The vultures and other scavengers will have a wide menu to choose from. They can devour the flesh of the rich and powerful or the poor and destitute. Death will prevail over all who serve the beast, and the vultures can eat at their leisure. This verse points out that no one will be immune from the slaughter. God will not play favorites, “*both free and bond, both small and great,*” will fall victim to His wrath. Of course all of this is symbolic. Certainly many people did die, and no doubt some were even devoured by vultures. The intended meaning of this passage is to show the devastation which is to be wrought against the beast. It shows the desolation and destruction brought upon the great whore and her lovers by Christ because of their sins against Him and His people. After any great battle dead bodies would be a common sight, and this battle is no exception. Typically the bodies will be gathered together and buried or burned. In this case, however, no one cares enough to properly dispose of the carcasses. This really shows that Rome’s evil partners had no real love for her, the kings and merchants were simply parasites who owed much of their wealth and power to the beast.

19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army.

The great beast and all the kings of the earth, who were his allies, gathered themselves together to battle against Christ and His army of Christians. This is not a literal battle, but a spiritual battle between Satan and Christ, and the men who follow each of them. This war is actually not confined to a short period of time, but has really extended over the entire Christian age. We are just seeing the culmination of it here in this last great battle of the war. The two sides continue to battle back and forth until Christ eventually emerges victorious.

19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.

We know that the beast is the Roman Catholic Church. The false prophet was also seen in chapter sixteen, where we said it was the Holy Roman Empire. The beast was the organization, the papacy, while the false prophet was the “front man” for this corrupt organization. It definitely qualified itself to be called a false prophet by the way it urged all men to bow down to and worship the papacy. Just as any good prophet of God exhorts men to bow down and worship God.

The way we can identify the Holy Roman Empire as being the false prophet referred to in this verse is to examine this false prophet’s relationship with the beast. The verse tells us that the false prophet wrought miracles before the beast. We have said previously that real miracles were not performed, but this represents the exercise of great power. We saw where this exact thing was done in chapter thirteen by the second of the two beasts. The beast which “*had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon*” (Revelation 13:11). We identified this beast as the Holy Roman Empire back in chapter thirteen when we first saw him. There, just like here in our present verse, he is said to have wrought miracles before the first beast, the papacy. “*And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live*” (Revelation 13:12-14).

The mark of the beast represents those who recognize the pope as the supreme head of the universal Church. The image of the beast is the appearance that the old Roman Empire had been revived with the coming of the Holy

Roman Empire. The fate of the beast and the false prophet is the lake of fire. The papacy and her secular arm, the Holy Roman Empire, are destined to be defeated and cast into the lake filled with fire and brimstone, which is eternal Hell.

19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

“*The remnant*” are those who have received the mark of the beast and who worship his image. The organization and its secular agency were cast into the lake of fire in the last verse, but all those who submitted to this evil power have yet to be judged. Christ then leads His army against them and kills them with the sword. This is not literal of course, but refers to the eventual fate of all those who reject God in favor of the papacy. They will be overcome by Christ’s sword, which is His word, which will judge them in the last day, and condemn them to the lake of fire also.

“*The fowls of the air were filled with their flesh.*” This continues the analogy to an actual battle. After a real battle bodies are scattered all over the battlefield. The birds would then make a feast of the carcasses of the fallen. This pictures the utter and complete defeat of the beast and his forces. There will not even be anyone left to bury the bodies. They will simply be left for the vultures to gorge themselves. What the vultures cannot eat will be left to rot. This is certainly a gruesome scene and would doubtless produce a horrible stench. However, it is nothing to be compared to the sickening odors of sin and abomination that Rome polluted the world with for far too long.

Chapter Twenty

The Triumph of Christ: Victory Over Satan

20:1 And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

The bottomless pit is nothing more than the symbolic home of Satan. It is the symbolic source of all things that are evil, especially Satan and his demons. We have already seen it mentioned on three separate occasions in Revelation. In chapter nine it was spoken of as the place of origin of the great swarm of locusts, which was the Islamic hordes that ravaged the eastern and southern thirds of the old Roman Empire. These people followed a false religion and were therefore the workers of Satan. This is why they are pictured as coming from the place where he lives. In verse eleven of that chapter, he is even spoken of as the “*angel of the bottomless pit,*” this shows that it is his dominion.

In chapter eleven Satan is pictured as coming out of the bottomless pit to try to destroy the Bible. In chapter seventeen the beast, which was Satan’s tool, is seen to ascend out of the bottomless pit, showing that it also originated from where Satan is. Now in chapter twenty we find the bottomless pit to be the place where Satan is to be incarcerated. It is not as though he will be taken somewhere and locked up, he will in essence be locked up at home.

When Satan rebelled against God and was cast out of Heaven, he, along with the angels who sided with him, were cast down to the earth (Luke 10:18). Another passage says God “*spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*” (II Peter 2:4). To angels, who once inhabited Heaven, this earth must certainly be a very terrible place to live. After all, if Heaven is supposed to be such a great step up from the earth for man, likewise it must be just as large a step downward for the angels. When Satan was cast to the earth, he was free for a time to move about and do what he chose to do.

Ultimately, there is to be a time in history when Satan will be chained and locked up in the bottomless pit. Obviously, this is not meant literally. First of all, Satan is a spirit and cannot be bound by a literal chain. The term chain has often been used in the Bible to denote symbolic bondage. “*Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment*” (Psalm 73:6). This usage was even applied to the fallen angels by two different writers, Peter and Jude. “*For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment*” (II Peter 2:4). “*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day*” (Jude 1:6). Here in Revelation we see another symbolic use of the term showing bondage, albeit not in a physical way.

Secondly, what is a bottomless pit? If it has no bottom then we would not call it a pit. We talk of a piece of metal which had been eaten by rust as pitted. We talk of dirt pits and other kinds of pits. When something has a hole all the way through it, however, we no longer call it a pit. Do donuts have pits? Or what about beads? If someone dug a deep hole in the ground you could call it a pit. What if that person was able to dig the hole so deep it went all the way through the earth? What would you call it? A hole perhaps, or even a tunnel. When you looked through it and saw the sky or stars on the other side you certainly would not call it a pit. The bottomless pit is just a symbolic term used to describe Satan's imprisonment.

Obviously the deeper a pit is the more difficult it would be to escape from. As a result, if anyone became very closely associated with Satan, and since he lives in a bottomless pit, they would have a very difficult, if not impossible, time getting away from him if they chose to try to do so. Perhaps this is what Christ had in mind when He said "*But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden*" (Revelation 2:24). Anyone who is as intimate with Satan as the great whore of Rome will never escape the enormous depths of Satan's bottomless pit.

If Satan cannot be bound by the items mentioned in this verse, then what can bind him? The answer is actually quite simple. The only way someone can escape from Satan is to submit to God. One submits to God by obeying His word. Thus it is the Bible which binds or restricts Satan. When someone respects and follows the Bible, Satan is powerless to fight against him. This was illustrated very well when Satan tempted Christ. Three times Satan tempted Christ to do something wrong, and three times Christ answered him with scripture (Mark 4). Satan was powerless to do anything to Christ because He followed the word of God. The key to the bottomless pit then, is the Bible. When the Bible is respected by the world, Satan will be restricted and unable to operate freely. He will be "chained up" in his bottomless pit and unable to have the effect on the world he would desire to have.

We also find here that an angel came "*down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit.*" I believe we have already seen this very same thing occur earlier in Revelation. Back in chapter ten we saw an angel come down from heaven to deliver the Bible to the people. "*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth.*" This started the Reformation and ultimately broke the papacy's power. The papacy was the most powerful weapon Satan has ever had against God's people. As the Bible began to have more influence, Satan began to be restricted or bound. He was not actually locked up, far from it; he was just as active as ever, if not more so. It is just that during this time many people respected God's word and would no longer yield to Satan's temptations.

20:2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

"*The dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan*" are all terms that refer to the same being, the fallen cherub Lucifer. We see that Satan is to be bound for a period of one-thousand years. There is absolutely no basis for assuming that this is meant to be a period of exactly one-thousand years. First of all, everything else in this chapter seems to be figurative, so how could we rationalize taking this one item as literal? Nowhere in Revelation have we thus far seen a time period given literally. Everywhere else in Revelation where a specific time period was intended we have always seen it given in terms of a day for a year. If that were used here we would have a period of 360,000 years! Obviously this cannot be right. Then what is intended here?

As we have seen previously, the Bible often uses a nice "round" number like this as a general term of indefiniteness. In other words, it is a ballpark figure used to refer to a large quantity. This "ballpark" figure will not be exactly the same as the actual number, but is just intended to convey the magnitude of that number. There are literally dozens of examples in the Bible where one-thousand is used as an indefinite number. It is used where the true value of something is large but difficult or impossible to determine exactly.

One good example of this is found in the book of Psalms. God said, "*every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills*" (Psalm 50:10). Obviously there are more than one-thousand hills in the world that have cattle upon them. Are we to believe that the cattle on hill one-thousand one are not the Lord's? What about hill number one-thousand two? Certainly this verse does not intend to restrict the Lord's ownership to just one-thousand hills.

What happens as cattle move off a hill onto level ground, or elsewhere a herd moves onto a hill? This number would be constantly changing. Here the number one-thousand is merely given to indicate a very large number, the exact value of which we do not know, and do not need to know for that matter.

Another example can also be found in the book of Psalms. *“He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations”* (Psalms 105:8). Considering that a generation is conservatively taken to be twenty years, one-thousand generations would be twenty-thousand years. Quite clearly this did not literally happen.

In the first example the number one-thousand was used to indicate a large number which happened to be greater than one-thousand but whose exact value is unknown and constantly changes. In the second example the number one-thousand was used to represent a large number which happened to be smaller than one-thousand. We see then that it can be used for large numbers whose actual values are larger or smaller than one-thousand.

Here are a few other examples where thousand is used and is almost certainly meant to simply convey magnitude and not an exact number. *“And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword”* (Leviticus 26:8). *“(The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you, as he hath promised you!)”* (Deuteronomy 1:11). *“One man of you shall chase a thousand: for the Lord your God, he it is that fighteth for you, as he hath promised you”* (Joshua 23:10). *“And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children”* (Matthew 15:38). There are, of course, many other passages where the term is used in exactly the same way.

The meaning of the number here in Revelation is that there is to be a long period of time throughout which Satan will be bound. This period may be longer or shorter than one-thousand years, but will be of the same general magnitude.

20:3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

Here we are given a key to determining when this thousand year period is to be. When Satan is shut up he will no longer be able to deceive the nations. We also find that he is to be released from his captivity in the bottomless pit for a little while after the thousand years is over. In verse one, we said the Bible is the key to the bottomless pit, it is what will restrict and bind Satan. We now have a problem. If the Bible is the thing that binds Satan, then how is it that while the Bible exists Satan is to be loosed? Will the Bible disappear? Certainly that will not happen.

Then how can Satan be loosed with the Bible still present if it is really what binds him? The fact that the Bible exists means nothing. The Bible's existence is not what binds Satan, but its people's use of and respect for it that restricts him. Simply owning a copy of the Bible does not make a person a Christian, nor does it hinder Satan. In the case of someone who is following the Bible, Satan is restricted in what he can do to that person. That person, knowing the righteousness of God, will not easily fall prey to Satan's enticements. Consequently, Satan will be bound in the world as long as the world respects and heeds the Bible, and will be loosed when men lose respect for the Bible and cease to heed it.

For Satan to be bound it is not required that every person in the world actually become Christians. You could have the same percentage of Christians in the world regardless of whether Satan is bound or not. The difference is in the attitudes of those who aren't Christians. Satan will be bound when most people respect the principles of morality and godliness found in the Bible. They may not be Christians, but they do not allow themselves to run wild with sin. In short, Christian values prevail even among those who are not truly Christians. Satan is restricted by the people's morality and respect for the Bible. When people lose respect for the Bible, however, and become immoral and ungodly, Satan is loosed on the world, and has a much easier time of enticing them to follow his sinful ways.

We now need to examine history and see when this period of time was, if it has already occurred. If we go back to the first century we find that, first of all, the Bible was yet to be canonized. Secondly, the world was far from accepting Christian values to any degree. By the late second century, the books of the New Testament had

essentially been collected and were in use in a few places. Once again, the world was still far from accepting Christian values.

In the early fourth century, Christianity was made the official religion of the Roman Empire. But as Christian values began to spread, so too did the apostasy of the Church. Copies of the New Testament were very hard to come by, which left most of the average people in ignorance, except for what they were taught by the clergy. As Christian values began to spread, so did Satan's deception. The hierarchy of the Catholic Church began to take shape, and through this evil institution Satan deceived the nations of the world for centuries. In chapter thirteen we were given a description of two beasts, the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Satan used these tools to deceive the world. "*And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live*" (Revelation 13:14). Just as the Bible was beginning to enlighten the world Satan managed to deceive them through his trickery. A statement in chapter eighteen also serves to reinforce this point. "*For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived*" (Revelation 18:23). This obviously shows us that Satan was not bound during this period of time. He was free and working hard to destroy true Christianity. Satan's church was the master of the Western world. God's Church was in hiding in the wilderness for 1,260 years. Who then was reigning on the earth during this time?

The nations remained deceived until the time of the Reformation. Back in chapter ten we saw an angel come down from Heaven to deliver the Bible to the common people. The invention of the printing press made possible for the first time the printing of large quantities of Bibles at relatively cheap prices. As people gained access to the Bible, many began to see through Satan's deceitful scam. This lit the fires of religious discontent that eventually embroiled all of Europe in war and revolution. In the first half of the sixteenth century, during a six year period, four nations that had previously been devoutly Catholic, turned against the papacy. England in 1534, Norway and Denmark in 1536, and Sweden in 1540. This is clear evidence that the nations were beginning to see through Satan's deception. It is not just that a few kings became angry with the pope and decided to break away from Rome. If there had not already been a good deal of discontent with the papacy among the citizens only a very foolhardy monarch would have dared to disturb such a unifying force among his people.

During this time many men throughout Europe preached strict adherence to the Bible. Several of these men died as convicted heretics at the hands of the Catholics because of their teachings. Teachings that opposed the official position of the Catholic Church. By the nineteenth century the Bible was held in high esteem by the majority of men. Morality was something to be practiced, not just talked about. Honor meant something, and a man's word or his handshake were as good or better than a signed contract today. Certainly there was sin in the world, the vast majority still refused to submit to God and live as Christians. Nevertheless, that majority now lived, for the most part, by Bible principles. Satan no longer had the nations deceived. His alliance between the papacy and the nations of the world had been shattered. He lost a very powerful and important tool that he had used to dupe the nations for centuries. He was now bound in the bottomless pit because the key to that pit, the Bible, had been loosed.

"*And set a seal upon him.*" The Bible acted as a seal upon Satan. As long as the seal was intact Satan was bound. In other words, as long as the world respected the Bible, Satan would be severely limited in the success of his operations. We will give the year 1400 as a starting point for this thousand year period. This choice is somewhat arbitrary, because there is no specific event from which to date this period. Certainly the roots of the Reformation reach back long before 1400, but it was about this time that the movement began to pick up a little steam. You might say this was when the chain was slipped around Satan, and as the decades passed it was tightened up until he was firmly bound by the nineteenth century.

When did, or will, this period end? The end of this period will be when Satan is loosed and allowed to once again go out and deceive the nations. His deception will not be the same this time, however, since the papacy had been rendered useless to him. This time he must find another way. The seven-headed beast we have seen throughout Revelation is a depiction of the seven world powers Satan has used against God's people for a period of nearly four-thousand years. Since there are no more heads I think it is safe to assume that this time Satan will not use some great nation or power to oppress God's people. Satan was very persistent in using this tactic, but I think he has finally realized that it simply will not work. He can afflict, but never destroy God's people with this approach. What will he use then? I think it will be something very simple but effective. Satan will not use some great power to try to annihilate God's power and influence over men, but rather he will use widespread sin and iniquity.

From examining the world around us today, it appears that Satan has already been loosed. It is quite apparent that the Bible no longer has the respect of the average person. Premarital sex, divorce, abortion, homosexuality, and many other sinful practices are either condoned or openly embraced by most “civilized” societies today. There are also many very evil but popular movements in the world today which seem to gain momentum every day. Abortion, feminism, gay rights, evolution and many other ideas are reshaping the way the average person is oriented. All of these ideas, and their corresponding movements, have caused the world to move away from God and the teachings of the Bible. These ideas are accepted by most governments and most “intelligent” or “educated” men. Someone is considered backward, old-fashioned or just plain stupid if he does not go along with these modern trends. With these tools Satan has once again deceived the nations. The Dark Ages had the papacy, the twentieth century had evolution, feminism, gay rights and abortion.

No longer do people respect the values of the Bible, but the values of so-called “equality” where everyone is considered equal regardless of how immoral their lives may be. What used to be considered shameful and sinful is now just an “alternative lifestyle.” Satan has managed to warp the minds of the general populous thereby causing great hardship for those who would live godly. It is very clear that the world no longer pays any attention to the Bible. Most so-called “Christian” denominations have also lost their respect for the Bible, if they ever had any. The Bible has been replaced by creed books, manuals, councils, and conventions as the source of highest spiritual authority. The seal has been broken, and Satan is once again free to roam about deceiving the nations at his leisure.

Back in the eighteenth century when the United States was founded, the framers of the constitution insured that the citizens of the new country would have freedom of religion. They made what has turned out to be a very large mistake in their wording, however. We saw that as the French Revolution began even the most vehement opponents of the papacy accepted the certainty of France remaining a Roman Catholic state. Their goal was to lessen the power of the papacy in the internal affairs of France. It seems everyone was fooled by what really happened. Likewise, our founding fathers were fooled with what has happened with religion in this country. Having come from a Europe still embroiled with religious persecution and controversy, their intent was to insure that whatever form of Christianity a person professed he could follow it to his heart’s desire without fear of government intervention. The one thing they did take for granted, however, was a Christian state. They desperately wanted to avoid any form of national religion as had been the case in the countries they came from. That is, they did not want Catholicism, Lutheranism or any other –ism to be favored by the government. However, they did expect the country and the government to be Christian in every aspect. Today, unfortunately, prayer has been banned in schools, the pledge of allegiance is under attack for the phrase “One nation, under God,” even the phrase “in God we trust” on our money is being challenged. Our founding fathers would certainly cringe to see the state of affairs today. The phrase “separation of church and state” is not found in the constitution, nor was it ever implied. Freedom of religion has, much to our disgrace, become freedom FROM religion.

Since it appears obvious that the “little season” has begun, the next question is when did the thousand year period end and the “little season” begin? Just by looking at the way the world has changed in its respect for the Bible and in its concept of morality, we can establish a period of time when Satan was loosed. Prior to World War II, the world seemed to still be in descent spiritual shape. World War I and the Great Depression had left their marks on the world, and had actually caused many people to turn to God for help. Sometime after World War II, however, when the world began to prosper economically as never before, something changed. The material blessings that people enjoyed seemed to turn them away from God. It is exactly the situation which God warned Israel about in the long ago. *“For the Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day: lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage”* (Deuteronomy 8:7-14).

By the 1960's things had changed drastically. Drugs were very prevalent among the youth. It was the age of "free love," which meant nothing more than widespread fornication. Feminism and evolution were beginning to have great impacts on society. Abortion was soon to be legalized in America. During a few short years Western civilization collapsed morally. And I believe without a doubt, that we see Satan being loosed during this period. As morality declined, so did respect for the Bible. This allowed Satan to operate much more freely and have a much greater impact on the world.

I also believe we can tie this in with another prophesy which concerns this time period. For over 1,500 years the Jews were God's people. He cared for and protected them for centuries. After they had accomplished their mission, bringing the Savior into the world, God once again punished them for their sins. After allowing forty years for those who would, to become Christians, in A.D. 70 He allowed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem and scatter the Jews across most of the known world.

In Acts chapter ten we find a record of the first Gentile converts. The Jews as a whole had rejected Christ and the Gentiles soon became the dominant group within the Church. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the age of the Gentiles had truly begun. From this point on, God blessed the Gentile world as He once had done for the Jews. This is why the Western world prospered above everyone else. The Apostle Paul, however, spoke of a time to come when the Jew's fortunes would change. *"For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in"* (Romans 11:25). Fullness is from the Greek word "pleroma," which Strong's defines as "repletion or completion, i.e. (subjectively) what fills (as contents, supplement, copiousness, multitude), or (objectively) what is filled (as container, performance, period):-which is put in to fill up, piece that filled up, fulfilling, full, fullness."³⁵³ The phrase "come in" is from the Greek word "eiserchomai," which Strong's defines as "to enter (literally or figuratively):-X arise, come (in, into), enter in (-to), go in (through)."³⁵⁴ This is to be a period when the Gentiles are to dominate and the Jews will turn a blind eye to their Savior. Eventually, this period will be completed and the Jews will return to an equal footing with the Gentiles.

In a warning to Gentiles Paul also said, *"Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee"* (Romans 11:20-21). This is exactly what we see in the twentieth century. The Gentiles as a whole have turned away from God, and the Jews have been allowed to reform into a nation in Palestine. All of this does not mean that the Jews will rise to supremacy over the Gentile nations. They have yet to turn to God, so they do not deserve such an exaltation. The only real change is that the Jews, which had been scattered for nearly 1,900 years have been allowed to return home. The time when Gentiles would be blessed above the Jews has come to an end. When the Church first began, most Jews rejected Christ, despite the many prophesies which foretold of His coming. Many Gentiles, not having the benefit of these prophesies, accepted Christ. Because the Gentiles demonstrated more faith than God's own people, He rejected them and scattered them among the Gentile nations. Now the Gentiles have fallen to such a low state there is no longer a significant difference between them and the Jews. Therefore, there is no rationale for continuing to bless the Gentiles above the Jews. Both are ungodly and have a need to repent.

Christ gave us an indication as to when this age of the Gentiles was to come to an end. *"And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled"* (Luke 21:24). Times is from the Greek word "kairos," which Strong's defines as "an occasion, i.e. set or proper time:-X always, opportunity, (convenient, due) season, (due, short, while) time, a while."³⁵⁵ Fulfilled is from the Greek word "pleroo," which Strong's defines as "to make replete, i.e. (literally) to cram (a net), level up (a hollow), or (figuratively) to furnish (or imbue, diffuse, influence), satisfy, execute (an office), finish (a period or task), verify (or coincide with a prediction), etc.: -accomplish, X after,

³⁵³ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #4138."

³⁵⁴ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #1525."

³⁵⁵ Ibid., s.v. "Greek #2540."

(be) complete, end, expire, fill (up), fulfil, (be, make) full (come), fully preach, perfect, supply.”³⁵⁶ From these definitions we get the idea that the opportunities of the Gentiles will eventually expire. This is what we are looking for to identify the beginning of the little season. It appears the two are synonymous. As the Gentiles, for the most part, turn away from God, He will turn back to the Jews, and Satan will be loosed.

Christ dated the end of the time of the Gentiles by linking it with the return of the Jews to Jerusalem. During the late 1800's many Jews began to return to Palestine in the hopes of establishing a homeland there. In 1948 they were strong enough to declare an independent Jewish state. The next day after declaring independence, they were attacked by Arab forces whom they defeated. When Israel was formed in 1948 only the western half of Jerusalem was controlled by the Jews. There were subsequent wars with the Arabs in 1956, 1967, and 1973. In the 1967 war, Israel captured East Jerusalem along with other territory. This marked the end of Gentile control of Jerusalem. Thus the age of the Gentiles has come to an end, and this is because they have turned away from God. The reason I believe these two prophecies coincide, is because the cause which brings both of them about, is the same thing, the Gentiles turning away from God. When the Gentiles turn away from God, this signifies the end of the thousand year period, and the beginning of the “*little season*.” At the same time, the Gentile's turn from God marks the end of the age of the Gentiles. This allows us to get a fairly precise end point for the thousand year period. We have it extending from 1400 to 1948, from the beginning of the Reformation to the establishment of the Jewish state of Israel in Palestine.

It is easy to see why an indefinite period of time was used to describe Satan's binding. The beginning point was somewhat ambiguous, and could vary several decades from where we have placed it, depending on the person looking at it. The Reformation began slowly and there is no defining event to mark its official start. Satan was not completely bound in a day, but literally over a period of several decades, and the chains continued to be tightened for centuries. Fortunately, the end point was not as difficult to pin down. There was a clear cut event that marked the time when Satan was loosed.

There is another item we can look at that will reinforce what we have already said. We have already found that the Bible is the key to the bottomless pit. It is what has the power to hinder and impede Satan's work. We also saw previously that the Bible had basically been taken from the earth. It was still in existence, but the Catholic Church made sure that no one but the clergy had access to it. That way they could keep the people in ignorance and teach them whatever they chose without fear of dissension. We saw in chapter ten that the Bible was brought back to the earth; this was what started the Reformation. “*And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: and he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth*” (Revelation 10:1-2). This reaffirms the idea that the thousand year period began around the year 1400. It was about this time that the Bible began to have an effect on the world, and Satan began to be bound. The angel that John saw deliver the Bible in chapter ten is the same angel who bound Satan. In fact the two events are synonymous. Chapters ten and twenty describe the exact same events, they just show their impact on two different things. Chapter ten showed the impact on the papacy, whereas chapter twenty shows the impact on Satan himself.

The period from 1789 to 1948 is represented by the letter written to the Church at Philadelphia. There is a part of that letter which fits very appropriately into our present discussion. Christ speaks of the Jews in this letter, which I believe, further justifies the tying together of the two prophecies we just discussed. “*Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth*” (Revelation 3:9-10).

“*Them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie,*” refers to the Jews. The reason the statement is made this way, is that although they claimed to be Jews, and ethnically they actually were Jews, they denied both by the way they lived. They did not follow the Law of Moses as a Jew should. Thus they were actually of the “*synagogue of Satan*.” They were not God's people, but were servants of Satan. Christ says He will make the Jews “*come and worship before thy feet*.” In other words the Jews are to “*worship*” before the feet of the

³⁵⁶ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #4137.”

Gentiles. Worship is from the Greek word “proskuneo,” which Strong’s defines as “(meaning to kiss, like a dog licking his master’s hand); to fawn or crouch to, i.e. (literally or figuratively) prostrate oneself in homage (do reverence to, adore):-worship.”³⁵⁷ The period of Philadelphia was one of the two which had nothing bad said about it. God was very pleased with His people, and the Gentile world as a whole, during this time. He caused the Jews to be put into a position which forced them to “worship” the gentile nations. Had it not been for the United Nations, and Great Britain in particular, the Arabs would have certainly destroyed Israel as soon as it was formed in 1948. Throughout this period, Israel owed its very survival to the Western world. Soon after the end of this period, however, when the age of the Gentiles was over, Israel had become strong enough to protect itself from its enemies without direct intervention from the West.

Another important question that needs to be addressed is how long is this “*little season*” of Satan’s loosing supposed to last? I do not believe the Bible answers this question for us, and probably for good reason. Satan will no doubt be loose until the end of the world. Consequently, if we knew how long this period of time was to be, then we would know approximately when the world was to end, and that is something we are not meant to know. “*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only*” (Matthew 24:36). In this case, the lack of information actually tells us a lot. It tells us that Satan will be loose, and that sin and evil will prevail, until the end of the world.

20:4 And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

“*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them.*” It is not readily apparent who “they” are who are to occupy these thrones of judgment. It is the wording of the King James translation which makes this appear so unclear. The Revised Standard Version renders this sentence as, “*Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed.*” This still does not identify the occupants of the thrones, but the sentence does make more sense.

Those on the thrones were likely the twenty-four elders seen several times before in Revelation. In speaking to His apostles Christ once said, “*Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*” (Matthew 19:28). If we know the twelve apostles are to be here, then it is safe to assume that the twelve patriarchs are with them, sine they have been seen together several times now, but never separate.

John also saw those who had been martyred for Christ, as well as those who had managed to escape the evil influence of the beast and his image, and had never received his mark. These people were righteous and fit to reign with Christ for a thousand years.

When it speaks of these people reigning with Christ it obviously does not refer to people physically reigning with Christ on the earth. First of all, we know that those who were beheaded are no longer alive. Secondly, no person could live through the 500 plus year period under consideration. This should be no surprise to us anyway, since Christ’s kingdom is spiritual and not physical. “*Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence*” (John 18:36). Those who are to reign with Christ are to do so spiritually. Although they will all die physically they will live on with Christ and continue to reign with Him in His Kingdom.

Christ spoke of men who had died, and although having never been resurrected, were alive. “*But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living*” (Matthew

³⁵⁷ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #4352.”

22:31-32). These three men had all died, but yet were still alive. Likewise, those who died in the Lord after the establishment of the Church, continue to live even after their physical deaths.

Christ said, *“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life”* (John 5:24). Thus showing that someone is made alive, or is resurrected, when he becomes a Christian. Physically nothing changes, but the spirit of a man, which was previously dead in sin, comes alive in Christ.

Jesus further said, *“He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me”* (John 6:56-57). A Christian dwells in Christ and Christ dwells in that person. Of course this does not happen physically, but speaks of the communion of man’s spirit with Christ’s Spirit. This is not affected when a person dies physically. Thus a person can continue to live and reign with Christ even after they die physically. Much more could be said, but it should be quite apparent by now that a person need not be alive physically to “live and reign” with Christ.

We now need to discuss what it means for Christ to “reign” in his Kingdom. The Kingdom is the Church and has been in existence since A.D. 30, and it will continue in existence for ever. After the end of the world it will not end, but will simply be transplanted to Heaven. From its inception Christ has reigned supreme in His Kingdom. No one can threaten His position of superiority over His Church.

In chapter twelve, we found that Christ was to *“rule all nations with a rod of iron.”* It is normally assumed that this is just another reference to His reign over his Kingdom. Allow me, however, to suggest that Christ’s reign over His Kingdom and His reign over the nations are two completely separate things.

Then what is His rule over the nations? It certainly does not refer to a literal earthly rule but rather implies a domination of the nations by Christ. This is done throughout the influence of the Bible and the Church. They both spread Christian ideals and principles among all nations and thereby have a tremendous impact on them. This causes Christ’s influence to be greater than anyone else’s. By this He is said to rule all nations. For a long span of time during the Dark Ages, the Church was in hiding and the Bible prophesied in sackcloth. Christ’s influence was therefore very minimal. He cannot truly be said to have been ruling the nations at that time. If anyone was ruling the nations at that time it was the *“god of this world,”* Satan (II Corinthians 4:4). At that time his influence was greater. He had deceived the nations with the papacy and had a strangle hold on the entire world.

This period of time when Christ ruled was alluded to in chapter fourteen. *“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). As we said back in chapter fourteen this period of time is unparalleled in the history of the Church. After the fall of the papacy the Church experienced a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity, particularly in America. In this sense also, those who live after the fall of spiritual Rome are blessed. They are privileged to live in the golden age of the Lord’s Church.

It was not until the Reformation began that Christ’s influence started to spread and Satan’s to diminish. There cannot be two different sovereigns at the same time; one or the other will have the true power. From the beginning of the Church until the Reformation, Satan enjoyed the upper hand. However, from the Reformation, until the loosing of Satan, Christ had the upper hand. Now Satan has been able to reassert himself, and will remain dominant until he is finally cast down into the lake of fire. A very succinct way of summing it all up is this. Christ rules when the Bible rules. Christ is the Word of God, when it is respected, He is respected, when it is rejected He is rejected. Thus Christ’s reign over the nations coincides with the period of time when the Bible had Satan bound in the bottomless pit.

There is another point we can examine that also supports this conclusion. We have seen that Satan is to be bound for a thousand years and *“after that he must be loosed a little season.”* The wording clearly shows that the little season will be AFTER the one-thousand years and not a part of it. Verse seven confirms this idea. It tells us that *“when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.”* This leaves no possible way for the little season to be part of the thousand years. Since it is only during the one-thousand years that Christ is to reign this allows us to see that there will be a part of the Christian era in which Christ will not reign. This is only speaking of His reigning over the nations, however. He will always reign over His own Kingdom. Thus we know that the Church being in

existence is not the only criterion which must be met before it can be said that Christ is reigning over the nations. The fact is Christ is not reigning over the nations now and has not done so since 1948. If He is not currently reigning over the nations then it should not be hard for us to believe that there was also another period when He did not reign. That period was from the establishment of the Church until the Reformation.

Now let us look back to chapter two where we read the letter to the Church at Thyatira. We said it represented the period of time from 533 to 1400. Let us now take a closer look at part of it in the light of what we have just learned. *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star”* (Revelation 2:26-28). Here Christ clearly indicates that those who make it through this period without being corrupted, will rule or reign over the nations with a rod of iron. It is said that Christ would rule with a rod of iron in Psalm 2:9. Therefore, these people will be ruling or reigning with Christ. This agrees with what we have just said. Although Christ was reigning over His kingdom from its origin, He did not begin to really reign over the nations until the Reformation. This reinforces the idea that the thousand year period will begin around the year 1400, as Satan will beginning to be bound.

This brings us to the most interesting part of this passage. Look very closely at verse twenty-eight, *“I will give him the morning star.”* The question is, what is the morning star? It turns out to be very interesting indeed. In the book of Isaiah we find the following passage: *“How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations!”* (Isaiah 14:12). Lucifer, is of course the name of Satan when he was an angel of God. The name Lucifer is from the Hebrew word “heylel,” which Strong’s defines as, *“(in the sense of brightness); the morning-star:—lucifer.”*³⁵⁸ In reality, when Christ says he will give them the morning star, He is saying He will give them Satan. Obviously He will not literally give them Satan as a present. “Give” is from the Greek word “didomi,” which Strong’s defines as *“to give (used in a very wide application, properly or by implication, literally or figuratively; greatly modified by the connection):-adventure, bestow, bring forth, commit, deliver (up), give, grant, hinder, make, minister, number, offer, have power, put, receive, set, shew, smite (+ with the hand), strike (+ with the palm of the hand), suffer, take, utter, yield.”*³⁵⁹ We see one of the meanings of this word is “hinder.” This is exactly what was done to Satan when the Bible began to have an impact on the world during the Reformation.

We see in this passage Christ promising to hinder Satan, which was done through the Bible, and also to reign with His people over the nations, which was also done by virtue of the Bible. Everything here is tied to what we saw in chapter ten. When the Bible was delivered back to the common man it truly shook up the world. It hindered Satan and bound him for a thousand years. It increased Christ’s influence tremendously. It was during this period of time, as our present verse points out, that Christians *“lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”*

20:5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

“The rest of the dead.” We have already talked extensively in the previous verse about those who died in the Lord. They died physically, but continued to live and reign with Christ in His Kingdom. Now John turns to consider the *“rest of the dead,”* those who died and were not Christians. Since they were never “resurrected” spiritually, by becoming Christians, they had no spiritual life in them, and as a result, when they died physically, they were considered dead. This does not mean they ceased to exist, because they did not. The story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke chapter sixteen reveals to us that both the righteous and unrighteous are alive and aware beyond the grave. However, they are separated and experience vastly different circumstances. The righteous experiencing pleasure, while the unrighteous are tormented.

³⁵⁸ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #1966.”

³⁵⁹ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #1325.”

Some would argue that this story is simply a parable and can not properly be used to reach the above conclusion. This argument fails on two different and distinct points. Number one, every story or parable Christ ever told at the very least could have been true. That is, it did not involve things or places that do not exist. Even if some of the things in His parables never actually occurred, there is no logical reason why they could not have occurred. The second reason is that Jesus used proper names. In every story that is clearly a parable He never referred to anyone by name. Instead He would say things such as “*a certain man*” (Mathew 21:28; Luke 10:30, 13:6, 14:16, 15:11, 20:9), “*a sower*” (Matthew 13:3), “*a man*” (Matthew 13:24, 13:31), “*a woman*” (Matthew 13:33), “*a certain rich man*” (Luke 12:16), to name just a few. It is always very apparent when He is making up a story as an illustration and when He is relating an actual event. The story of Lazarus and the rich man is a real event.

The rest of the dead “*lived not again until the thousand years were finished.*” This cannot be taken to mean that the unrighteous dead will be resurrected immediately after the end of the thousand years. They will have to wait until the “*little season*” is completed before the resurrection will occur. Regardless of how you interpret the thousand years, the unrighteous dead will not be resurrected until after it is over.

“*This is the first resurrection.*” The obvious question is, what is the first resurrection? At first it is not apparent what he is talking about, but if we remember our discussion from the previous verse it will become clear. The first part of our present verse was interjected to show us that not everyone will “*live and reign with Christ.*” Some will be dead during this period. The “*first*” resurrection which he refers to here is that of the Christians. In our discussion of the previous verse we said that the righteous are made alive when they become Christians. Christ further said, “*He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24). When someone passes from death unto life what is this called? It is a resurrection! This is what he means by the first resurrection. When a person becomes a Christian, they change from being a person laden with sins who has no hope, and who is destined to spend eternity in Hell, to a person who has been forgiven of his sins, and who is alive in Christ.

When John speaks of the “*first resurrection,*” this implies that there must be at least one more resurrection. For if this were the only one, then it would be called “*the*” resurrection, and not the “*first*” resurrection. The second resurrection will be the resurrection of all the dead, righteous and unrighteous alike, at the end of the world. Christ clearly taught that there is to be a general resurrection of all men in the future. “*Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation*” (John 5:28-29). All men, regardless of how or when they lived, will be resurrected at exactly the same time.

The first resurrection is what allows someone to become a Christian and it is symbolized in baptism. A resurrection is a rebirth, which is exactly what a person must go through to become a Christian. “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever*” (I Peter 1:23). The Apostle Paul spoke of the spiritual resurrection in Christ as being baptism. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection*” (Romans 6:3-5). Man’s spiritual resurrection takes place when he symbolically repeats the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ in baptism.

Christ Himself spoke of the need for man to be resurrected, or as he put it, born again. This is accomplished through baptism, which gives someone access to the blood of Christ. “*The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, ‘Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.’ Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’ Nicodemus saith unto him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?’ Jesus answered, ‘Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again’*” (John 3:2-7). It is now quite clear that the first resurrection is baptism, and the second is the general resurrection of the dead at the end of the world.

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

Verse six strengthens the conclusions just reached in verse five. Truly those who have a part in the first resurrection are “*blessed and holy*,” since it makes them Christians. “*On such the second death hath no power.*” What is the second death? What is the first death for that matter? The first death is the death of the physical body. “*The body without the spirit is dead*” (James 2:26). Notice that this death is not a cessation of life but a separation of the body and spirit.

The second death concerns the eternal spirit of man. This is shown by a statement we saw back in chapter two. “*He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death*” (Revelation 2:11). At the close of each of the seven letters Christ listed eternal rewards for those who served Him. In this case it was escape from the second death. This must mean then that the second death concerns the spirit of man.

Since this spirit is eternal it can never actually die. When the Bible speaks of the death of the spirit it is referring to the spirit being separated from God. Just as physical death is a separation, so too is spiritual death. The Apostle Paul spoke of what the Lord will do to those who never become Christians. “*In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power*” (II Thessalonians 1:8-9). Their destruction will be that they will be driven “*from the presence of the Lord.*” They will be separated from the source of all good things.

When Adam sinned he drove a wedge between God and man, that wedge was sin. While man was separated from God he was spiritually dead. Paul clearly taught that men who are sinners are dead, though still alive. “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*” (Ephesians 2:1). Christ came and took away that wedge of separation, by bearing the penalty for man’s sins. “*For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life*” (Romans 5:10). Thus, when men obey the commandments of God, they regain access to God and are made alive spiritually. Those who never become Christians will someday be eternally banished from the presence of God, which is the second death. “*But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death*” (Revelation 21:8).

We can now see that the first death is the death of the physical body, and the second death is the banishment of man’s spirit into eternal Hell. It clearly makes sense to say that those who have part in the first resurrection, which is baptism, will not taste of the second death, which is eternal Hell.

I once heard someone express this situation in a very interesting way. He said, “If you are only born once, then you will die twice. But if you are born twice, then you will only die once.” What he meant by this is very simple. If someone is only born once, that is physically, it means they were never born again to become a Christian. Therefore, they must endure, not only a physical death, but also a spiritual death. On the other hand, if someone is born twice, this means they were reborn and became a Christian. Consequently, they will die physically but not spiritually.

“*But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.*” Those who have become Christians, have been made alive spiritually, and thereby live and reign with Christ during His period of triumph over Satan.

20:7 And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

During the thousand years, Satan was restricted by the influence the Bible had on the world. Unfortunately, in the twentieth century, the Bible began to lose its influence. As a consequence Satan began to enjoy more freedom. He then used this freedom to deceive the nations once more. He did this through widespread sin and moral corruption.

20:8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.

In verse three, we learned that Satan would be largely unable to deceive the nations during the thousand year period. Once that period is over, however, he will again be able to weave his web of deceit and sin. He will ensnare the nations of the world in his web, and cause them to work against God and His Church. “*The four quarters of the earth,*” is simply a way of referring to the entire world. We saw the sixth vial dry up the Euphrates River when it was poured out. This symbolized the uniting of the world; East and West. Therefore, the things we are reading about here, do not just apply to the Western world, as have most of the earlier portions of this book, by involves all of humanity.

“*Gog and Magog*” are a kingdom and its king found in the Old Testament. They are discussed extensively in the thirty-eighth and thirty-ninth chapters of the book of Ezekiel. Here in Revelation they are used as a catch-all to refer to all the heathen nations that Satan will gather to fight against God and His people. This is really the same idea expressed in chapter sixteen. “*For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.*” Both expressions tell us of the great battle between the forces of good and evil. It is an on going battle that will last until the end of the world.

Upon examining the story of Gog and Magog in Ezekiel, it is easy to understand why the Lord chose to use it to illustrate the circumstances surrounding this great spiritual battle. It pictures a great godless horde descending on God’s people, but eventually meeting utter and total defeat. We shall now examine this story and note many of the similarities.

“And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee” (Ezekiel 38:1-6).

Here we see a great force composed of many nations gathering for battle against God’s people. Similarly, Satan will draw many nations into the battle he is fighting against God.

“Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them” (Ezekiel 38:7).

Here God almost taunts Gog telling them to make every preparation possible before they decide to come against His people. It will matter little how they prepare since their defeat is already a forgone conclusion. Similarly, Satan and his forces are destined to lose the final battle regardless of how large their forces are, or how well they are prepared.

“After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. Thus saith the Lord God; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: and thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, to take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? Hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? To carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?” (Ezekiel 38:8-13).

Here we see this great horde of Godless warriors descending from the north upon Israel, God's people. They knew that Israel was dwelling in peace in unwallled cities; that they were not really prepared for a great invasion and would seem to be easy prey for a strong army. Consequently, Gog thought they could come sweeping through looting and destroying without any fear of defeat. Similarly, we see today the majority of the population has become godless and immoral and is fighting against Christian principles. As a consequence of this the majority of men have turned against God. This, in turn, has led the leaders of the nations to also turn against God and accept the deceptions of Satan once again. To the world Christians seem to be a defenseless prey who can be easily trodden upon. This is because Christians are meek and allow themselves to be overrun trusting in God to deliver or avenge them.

“Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord God; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: and thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. Thus saith the Lord God; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; so that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord” (Ezekiel 38:14-23).

The most interesting part of the above passage is the reference to how this great army will ultimately be defeated. *“Every man's sword shall be against his brother.”* When dealing with evil and unrighteous people it is common to see bickering and fighting within the group. The internal strife will be so severe among these people that they will begin to turn their own swords on each other. Sin is like a cancer and will eventually destroy whatever it inhabits. This wicked army was doomed from the start because of its vile and base nature. The same problem is inherent in Satan's army. The character of his followers will prevent any cohesion or unity from developing. As Christ said, *“And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand”* (Mark 3:24).

The above passage also described for us the conditions that will prevail during this time. When all is said and done God's defeat of these heathens will be so astounding that even the fish, and birds, and animals will fear the wrath of God. We also notice a great similarity between this passage and the pouring out of the seventh vial. In both instances we find a time of great turmoil and chaos with the mountains, or kingdoms, being thrown down.

“And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great” (Revelation 16:17-21).

The message given by both of these passages is quite clear. A period of great chaos and upheaval throughout the world will result from God's wrath. Of course the brunt of these things will be borne by the wicked and unrighteous.

In the following verses we will see God proclaim His judgment against Gog.

“Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: and I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel” (Ezekiel 39:1-2).

The decimation of Gog will be so thorough that only one-sixth of the massive army will survive. This is a terrible slaughter. Its common for the losing side to suffer heavy casualties, but this is an unbelievably high percentage. God will grant no mercy to these heathens. Likewise, God will have no mercy in his overthrow of Satan and his accomplices in evil. He will utterly crush and annihilate them without end.

“And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel 39:3-5).

God now tells Gog that they will end up on the menu of the fowls and wild beasts. Their dead bodies will litter the battleground and will make easy pickings for these creatures. This is similar to what we saw in Revelation chapter nineteen. There the fowls were invited to feast upon the bodies of the wicked which were slain in the battle of Armageddon.

“And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the Lord. So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel. Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord God; this is the day whereof I have spoken” (Ezekiel 39:6-8).

Because of the great slaughter that will be inflicted upon Gog the world will take notice. They will see the power and might of God. His name will then be both respected and feared among the heathens of the world. Then He says, *“It is done.”* This is exactly what was said when the seventh vial was poured out. It gives the impression of finality. Just like the seventh vial meant the certain downfall of Satan, this prophesy means the certain downfall of Gog. All God has to do is say that they will be defeated and it is more certain than if it had already happened.

“And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: so that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord God. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamon-gog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord God. And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man’s bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamon-gog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land” (Ezekiel 39:9-16).

This provides the most graphic evidence yet as to the magnitude of the slaughter. It would take over seven months to bury all of the dead bodies which resulted from the battle. The amount of death and destruction here is staggering. Likewise, the overthrow of the wicked in the final battle will be of enormous proportions.

“And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord God; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel 39:17-20).

Once again, mention is made of the fowls and animals which will experience a feast from this battle. This time they are not only mentioned but are actually invited to come and enjoy the plenty which God has provided for them. This is exactly what was seen back in chapter nineteen. God is giving these creatures advanced warning so that they can make plans to be there for the great feast.

“And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the Lord their God from that day and forward. And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; after that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies’ lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God” (Ezekiel 39:21-29).

As a result of all these events the heathen will learn to fear God, and His own people will be reassured at His willingness and ability to protect them. The horrible fate that was predicted so vividly for Gog likewise awaits all who set themselves up in opposition to God. They are destined to be utterly destroyed. Satan knows he cannot win this battle, but it is his intention to do as much damage, and destroy as many souls as he can in the process.

We can certainly see why the Lord chose to use this example to describe for us this great battle. It has many similarities to the things He has already told us about it, and adds some very colorful details to our conception of it. The one message that comes through loud and clear is this: anyone who would seek to oppose God or to hinder His people faces swift and sudden destruction the like of which man is hardly capable of imagining.

This verse closes with the statement *“the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.”* This means nothing more than to tell us that the number of people who will enlist in Satan’s army to fight against God will be very large. The forces of evil will vastly outnumber the forces of good, but since God is on the side of the good, they cannot help but emerge victorious. The size of Satan’s army means only one thing. It means more food for the vultures.

Again we should reiterate the point that all of this talk of struggles and battles is intended in the spiritual sense. Christ will never lead an army onto a literal field of battle against Satan. It is just as the Apostle Paul said. As God’s children *“we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places”* (Ephesians 6:12).

20:9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.

“They” being the nations referred to in the previous verse, encircled the *“camp of the saints.”* The camp of the saints simply refers to the true Christians as though they were arrayed on the battlefield. What this really pictures is the forces of evil prevailing throughout the world, and the world becoming a more and more difficult place for Christians to live. Society will become such that many aspects of it will be contrary to Christian principles. The forces of evil will nearly overwhelm the forces of good by sheer numbers. It also pictures Christianity as being in great danger. The Lord’s Church is surrounded and has no way out. Then, just in the nick of time, *“fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them.”* God will not allow His Church to pass away. He has cared for and nurtured it through very difficult and trying times. Now, facing annihilation at the hands of Satan and his deceptions, God calls an end to it all. He ends the world rather than allow His Church to be overcome.

All of this very closely parallels the story of Gog and Magog we just read. Israel was seemingly overwhelmed by a much larger and superior force. They were literally surrounded by these godless hordes on the field of battle.

However, God would not allow His people to be destroyed. Rather, He brought great destruction against the ungodly heathens who were causing the threat.

20:10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Now that the end of the world has come, it is time for Satan to receive his just desserts for all that he has done. I just do not know, however, if there is enough punishment to make up for all of the damage he has caused. He will be cast into the “*lake of fire and brimstone,*” which is eternal Hell. When he arrives, he will find himself with a lot of company. His old friends, the beast and the false prophet, will be there among many others.

There should be no doubt that Hell is the eventual destiny of the great beast, the Roman Catholic Church, and its secular arm, the Holy Roman Empire, who is referred to here as the false prophet. After all that they have done to harm and injure the Lord’s Church and anything else of virtue, they deserve nothing less than to spend eternity with their master, Satan, in the searing flames of Hell. They shall indeed be “*tormented day and night for ever and ever.*” The phrase “*day and night*” does not mean that there will actually be days and nights in Hell as there presently are on the earth. This is simply said to indicate to us that the punishment for those in Hell will be continual, without any intermission. You could say it will be “around the clock,” except there will be no need for clocks in eternity.

The sun and moon and every other heavenly body will be destroyed at the end of the world, which will eliminate all physical light. In Hell there will be nothing but one long eternal night. In referring to the fate of the unrighteous Christ said, “*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matthew 25:30). Therefore, Hell will be a place of unending darkness and pain from which there is no escape.

20:11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

We have now arrived at the end of time. We see a picture here of God sitting upon His throne to judge the world. Although it is not stated here that this is God, the next verse confirms it for us. The throne is said here to be of a white color. We have seen several things throughout this book that were white, and this color has always denoted holiness and righteousness. These things certainly describe the character of God, and thus His throne is pictured as being this color as He sits in judgment of the world. It is because He is perfect and without fault that He is qualified to sit in judgment of others.

For the Christian the return of the Lord will be a most joyful event, as the Apostle Paul pointed out. “*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing*” (II Timothy 4:8). However, the return of the Lord will have quite a different effect on the unrighteous. They will seek to hide from Him and the condemnation which they know is to be theirs. “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Corinthians 5:10). This is the reason for the statement we find in the verse above, “*from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.*” Those who are not God’s people will desire an escape from His presence because they know what it means for them. To say that the “*earth and the heaven fled away,*” simply means that everyone, regardless of where they were when they saw the Lord return, sought to flee His approach. Of course they found no place where they could hide from the omnipresent One.

20:12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Here at the end of the world the time has come for every man to face the consequences of His deeds. The dead have been resurrected, and the Lord sits upon His throne as judge and king, as He said He would. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear*

shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:25-29).

It is very significant to note that both the “*small and great*” will appear together beside God. To God there is no difference among men. He does not respect material possessions, education, power, knowledge, or any such thing. The only thing the Lord regards is obedience. Notice how the Apostle Paul spoke of Christians. “*There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:28). All of the differences Paul mentioned are part of this physical world which will soon be destroyed. Although men quite often have difficulty in looking beyond the present circumstances, God does not. God sees through the physicality of the present and judges the heart of each individual.

“*The books were opened.*” What books is he talking about here? He mentions the book of life separately as “*another book,*” so it has nothing to do with the “*books.*” We find that men are to be judged from these books. Christ said, “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:48). Since He tells us His word is what will judge men in the last day, we can conclude that the books mentioned here are the Bible. It is spoken of as books because it is composed of two separate Testaments, the Old and New. Some men will be judged from the Old and some from the New, depending upon which dispensation they lived under.

The Bible is the divine guide and road map which has been given for men to follow. Therefore, it is very reasonable to say that men will be judged according to its teachings. Each person will be judged according to the laws in effect at the time they lived. The life of each and every person is to be held side by side with the word of God, which is the pattern for the lives of God’s people. If the life compares favorably with the pattern, then the person will be found faithful and rewarded. However, if the life is found to be inconsistent with the pattern, then the person will be found guilty and condemned. The Apostle Paul summed it all up very well. “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Corinthians 5:10).

John also mentions another book that is present at this occasion, the “*book of life.*” What exactly is this book of life? There are only two other references to this book outside of Revelation. The Hebrew letter speaks of members of the Lord’s Church being “*written in Heaven*” (Hebrews 12:23). This undoubtedly is a reference to the book of life which contains the names of all those who have found life through Jesus Christ. In the Philippian letter, the Apostle Paul names some who have worked with him as having their names written in the book of life (Philippians 4:3). Both of these passages confirm the idea that the book of life is nothing more than a list of those people who have been saved from their sins by becoming members of the Lord’s Church.

20:13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

“*The sea gave up the dead which were in it.*” This does not mean that people who died at sea are literally going to be resurrected and arise out of the sea. The story of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke chapter sixteen shows us where men go when they die. Their physical bodies are destroyed through rot and decay or some other means. The spirits, however, continue to live, although in a different place called Hades. When the resurrection occurs at the end of the world, the spirits of men who have died will come forth from Hades, but their physical bodies will never come back to life. The Apostle Paul clearly taught that the physical body of man will not be what is resurrected. “*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 15:44). When the Lord returns He will not come and physically resurrect the dead, but will bring them with Him from Hades when He comes. “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him*” (I Thessalonians 4:13-14).

“*And death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them.*” Death and Hell (Hades) are mentioned to tell us that every single person that has died will be resurrected. The spirit of every dead person is currently residing in Hades,

so the statement is really redundant. He actually includes every person twice, but this is to make sure no one misinterprets what he is saying.

“And they were judged every man according to their works.” This is the same thought expressed in the previous verse. Every single person who has ever lived a single second on God’s earth, will one day be judged by what he has and has not done with his life. As the Hebrew letter tells us *“And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment”* (Hebrews 9:27).

20:14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Death and Hell, or Hades, obviously are not intelligent feeling beings which can be cast into eternal Hell to be punished. The intent here is to show their utter destruction. Hell is thought of as a place of no return. When someone is sent to Hell they will be there for ever and ever. This is the thought John is trying to convey to us. At this point death will cease to exist. The Apostle Paul pointed this out very clearly. *“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (I Corinthians 15:24-26). When the Lord resurrects all who have ever died, He will have completely overthrown and conquered death.

The *“second death,”* which we discussed at length earlier in this chapter, is not truly a death in the sense that it is a cessation of life, rather, it is a banishment from the presence of God. It is important to notice that this phrase is actually part of a separate sentence. It really has nothing to do with death and Hell, or anyone else who is cast into Hell, but is included merely to tell us that the lake of fire is the second death. That piece of information was invaluable to us in our earlier discussion of the two deaths and resurrections in this chapter.

20:15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The book of life, as mentioned earlier, is nothing more than a book listing the names of all men who have lived faithful lives to God. Those who have fervently sought to please God according to His will. This verse tells us something that really should be very obvious to us. Since those whose names were not written in the Book of life have obviously been unfaithful to God, we should expect that they would be cast into Hell.

SECTION IV

Conclusion

Chapter Twenty-One

Heaven: A Reward for the Faithful

21:1 And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

There is no doubt that the earth and heavens will literally be destroyed at the end of time when the Lord returns, the Apostle Peter clearly teaches this. *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?”* (II Peter 3:10-12). At Christ’s return everything that pertains to this physical universe will cease to exist. Not a single molecule will remain of the vast universe which, from the dawn of creation, has awed man because of its incomprehensible size and complexity.

What is this new heaven and new earth which John sees? Will a new physical universe be created at this time? In the last chapter we discussed the resurrection of the dead which is also to occur at this very same time. In speaking of this event, the Apostle Paul said, *“In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed”* (I Corinthians 15:52). As we saw in the last chapter, and as Paul points out here, man will no longer occupy his physical bodies at this time. The dead will be raised *“incorruptible,”* which certainly cannot mean in a physical body. If man is to shed his physical body at the end of time, then why would God create a new physical heaven and earth? Obviously, this new heaven and earth will not be physical. This interpretation is also consistent with the rest of the book. How could we justify taking this passage as literal when the rest of Revelation has been figurative? Everything points to the new heaven and new earth being figurative. By this I do not mean that what John saw did not exist, but that what he saw was not physical. He merely related it to us in physical terms to aid in our understanding of it.

When we think of the present heaven and earth, we are looking at the whole of man’s existence. Mankind exists only in this physical universe, and is powerless to escape it, except through death. Therefore, when John speaks of a new heaven and earth, he is trying to relate to us a description of where man will live after this world has been destroyed. It is a new realm of existence for mankind. Although it is not literally a new heaven and earth, it really means the same thing in that it is the place where man is to dwell. What John is actually seeing then is what we usually refer to as Heaven.

21:2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

This Holy City that John is now seeing is the same thing which he described as a new heaven and a new earth in the previous verse. New Jerusalem is just another name for Heaven. Christ clearly stated this back in chapter three when He said, *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Revelation 3:12). On the Earth Jerusalem has long been identified as the place where God dwells among men. It is where man interacts with God. When the Earth is destroyed, as the apostle Peter told us it will be (II Peter 3:10-12), there must of necessity be a new place for God to interact with man since Jerusalem will be gone. This place will be “NEW” Jerusalem, which simply means heaven.

There is also another meaning to the name *“Holy City, new Jerusalem.”* In chapter eleven we saw the Church referred to as the Holy City. *“But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months”* (Revelation 11:2). This city is also described as *“a bride adorned for her husband.”* This language also refers to the Church. The question then becomes *“Is new Jerusalem Heaven or the Lord’s Church?”* The answer is both.

Imagine taking all of the residents of Topeka, Kansas, and placing them in a large cornfield somewhere in Nebraska. It would be quite appropriate to refer to this group of people as *“Topeka, Kansas,”* since they in fact collectively make up this city. Even though they are geographically removed from the place which gives them their name, they still bear that name. They are that town. At the same time, you could still refer to the land where the city is located as Topeka. You see, both the people and the place can be referred to by the name of the place. This is basically what we are seeing here in Revelation. Both the place, Heaven, and its residents, the Church, are referred to by the same name, new Jerusalem. Of course this is not limited to just those who lived during the Christian era, but includes all men of all ages who have obeyed the voice of God.

The Bible refers to the Church as the bride of Christ. All men who obey God and are pleasing to Him must enter into an intimate relationship with Him. This relationship is even more intimate than that of an actual husband and wife. They must submit themselves to Him as a wife should to her husband, and He will care for them as a husband does his wife. The Apostle Paul used this analogy in describing the relationship between Christ and His followers. *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband”* (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The Holy City is described as descending *“down from God out of Heaven.”* The Church is comprised of men from this earth, which obviously cannot descend from Heaven. However, Heaven, where redeemed man is soon to dwell, does come from above, and this is what John is seeing. He is seeing the city come down to accept its residents. This does not mean that Heaven will be here on this earth, for the verse never says this in any way. In his vision John is simply seeing Heaven coming down from above to a point where it is presented for his viewing. He will soon begin a long and detailed description of this city, so it had to be brought into close proximity to him so that he could examine it.

This is a good point at which to pause and make a few remarks about Heaven. Thus far throughout this study, Heaven has been described as a “place.” When most people talk about Heaven they describe it as a place. We look into the sky and say Heaven is “up” there somewhere. In reality, there is no up. Our planet, solar system, and galaxy are all moving and rotating continually. The direction which is up now will be down or sideways later. We cannot point in any certain direction and say Heaven is that way.

In fact, Heaven is not even a place. When we speak of it as a place we are simply trying to put it into human terms so we can understand it. A place denotes physicality. Ultimately, everything material and physical will be destroyed at the end of time. Heaven exists in eternity, where there is neither time nor matter. Life and reality as we know it now will not exist there. It is probably best described as a condition rather than a place. It is another realm of existence. It is not defined by physical properties such as time, space, energy, mass, direction or any of the other things that totally define our present state of existence. It is indeed a new world, one that is totally unlike anything we have ever experienced. As a consequence, it is extremely difficult for the Lord to convey a description of Heaven to us. Its similar to trying to describe a rain forest to someone who has lived in the Sahara Desert all of their life. That amount of water and vegetation would be incomprehensible to that person. Or it would be like trying to describe snow to someone who has always lived in a jungle in Panama. This person would never have even seen ice in any form. Imagine trying to make them understand “fluffy” water falling out of the sky. This would be a nearly impossible task.

Trying to convey a description of Heaven to man is even more difficult. At least for our two examples above, the desert dweller has seen rain and plants, and the native of the jungle has seen liquid water fall from the sky. None of us, however, knows exactly what a spirit is or how it lives. As a consequence, God cannot simply describe Heaven for us as it really is. We would not be able to comprehend it. That’s why God uses things that we do understand to describe for us those things which we otherwise could never possibly understand. We will still not have a full understanding, but will at least have the general idea.

For the sake of clarity the term “church” also needs to be more fully defined than we have done thus far. Often time men tend to think of church as a place where you go on Sunday morning. The Lord’s Church, however, is not a building or any other physical structure or location. Neither is the Church an organization, society, association, corporation, league, club, order, fraternity, or any other such thing. The word church is from the Greek word “ekklesia,” which Thayer defines as “a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly. Among the Greeks from Thucydides down, an assembly of the people convened at the public place of council for the purpose of deliberating. Any gathering or throng of men assembled by chance or tumultuously. In the Christian sense, (a) an assembly of Christians gathered for worship. (b) a company of Christians, or of those who, hoping for eternal salvation through Jesus Christ, observe their own religious rites, hold their own religious meetings, and manage their own affairs according to regulations prescribed for the body for order’s sake.”³⁶⁰

In short, the term church carries no religious meaning of its own. The various shades of meaning of the word must be determined based on the context. In general, a church is a group of people who are brought together because of a common purpose. The Lord’s Church is nothing more than the group consisting of all men around the world who are obedient to God. In this sense, the Lord has had a church since the beginning of time. It was not the Christian Church, but it was a church nonetheless. This is the same principle as the woman we saw back in chapter twelve. Here in Revelation we are not just seeing Christians, but all the redeemed from the earth of all ages. Everyone from the creation to the destruction of this world, who has obeyed God, is part of the church or group which is the Lamb’s wife. With this established we are now ready to proceed with our study.

21:3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

John does not identify the speaker here, except to say he has “a great voice.” This voice declares that the “tabernacle of god is with men.” Tabernacle is from the Greek word “skene,” which Strong’s defines as “a tent or cloth hut (literally or figuratively):-habitation, tabernacle.”³⁶¹ The thought expressed in this verse is that redeemed man and God will now dwell together in Heaven. Man will live with God there throughout eternity.

³⁶⁰ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “ἐκκλησία.”

³⁶¹ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #4633.”

“They shall be his people.” Man will be the subjects of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. They will be His people and will serve and worship Him throughout eternity as we saw in chapter seven. *“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes”* (Revelation 7:15-17).

21:4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

This verse shows us some of the wonderful characteristics of life in Heaven. Death, sorrow, and pain are three of the things which can make our current lives so difficult at times. These things often bring sadness to our hearts and tears to our eyes, but in Heaven all of these things will be absent. The key to understanding this is that *“the former things are passed away.”* By the former things he means, not only the death, sorrow, and pain, but all things associated with them. In other words, the entire physical universe will be gone. This conclusion is warranted because it is the physical nature of the universe which leads to death, sorrow, and pain. Here in this life our bodies are subject to aging, disease and decay, injury, and so many other things. The spiritual bodies which Christians will have in Heaven will not be subject to these limitations. This is beautifully expressed by the Apostle Paul. *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It 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. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew 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 trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (I Corinthians 15:42-44, 49-53). How wonderful it will be not to have to worry about sickness, injury or death in Heaven.

The main reason why Heaven will be such a wonderful place to live is that it will be completely free from sin. Their will be no lying, jealousy, hatred, envy, backbiting, or any of the things which at present bring much misery into the lives of men. In Heaven all will be love, harmony, peace, kindness, patience, and the many other wonderful things which can make life so happy and fulfilling. Man will once again live like Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden before they sinned. At that time there was no worry of death or disease or any such thing. They had access to the tree of life and could have lived for ever in the Garden. They had virtually a paradise here on earth. Then sin changed everything. After their sin, God denied mankind further access to the tree of life, which meant all must face physical death. The tree of life now awaits the faithful in heaven, as we will see in the next chapter.

21:5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

“He that sat upon the throne,” could be either God or Christ. We have seen previously that they both occupy the throne together (Revelation 3:21). By examining the statement which is made in the next verse we can determine that it is Christ who is speaking. In the present verse He says, *“behold, I make all things new.”* Indeed this fits exactly with what we have just seen. The physical universe will be destroyed, and those who have proven themselves worthy, will be given eternal life in totally new, and much improved, surroundings. The old things of a physical life on earth will pass away and the pleasures of Heaven will lie before the redeemed.

Next Christ instructs John to write the things He is about to tell him. Perhaps John had become so overwhelmed by the vision of Heaven he was seeing that he had temporarily stopped writing as he had been previously instructed to do. This is the last of the thirteen times John is instructed to write, beginning with the initial charge given him by Christ in chapter one.

Christ also states that the words He is about to speak are “*true and faithful*.” Of course we would never doubt the sincerity and truthfulness of Christ, but He wants there to be no doubt. He assures us that the comments He is about to make are sure and certain. This is just a way of calling attention to what He is about to say.

21:6 And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

“*It is done*.” These three little words carry a very powerful message. At this point everything truly is done as far as man is concerned. All of creation, the entire vastness of the universe, much of which we cannot even behold, has been destroyed. All of the biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. The wicked are now receiving the reward for their works, the eternal and unquenchable fires of Hell, and the righteous are just beginning to enjoy the never ending day of bliss and happiness in the presence of God.

“*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end*.” This is the third of four times that Christ refers to Himself as “*Alpha and Omega*” in Revelation. As we have seen before it simply denotes Christ’s eternal nature. Just as nothing precedes Alpha or supersedes Omega in the Greek alphabet nothing preceded or will supersede Christ in existence. He shares in the eternal nature of his Father, and thus always has been and always will be. One name that Christ used for Himself was “*I am*.” “*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you*” (Exodus 3:14). Contrary to what most people would assume, it was Christ who appeared to Moses out of the burning bush. It was also Christ who walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:8). It was Christ who appeared to Moses on Mount Sinai. In fact every single time God made an appearance in Old Testament times it was actually God the Son who was present. Christ even said that “*No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him*” (John 1:18). He clearly states that no man has seen God (the Father) but that He, the Son, has been the one to declare God’s will.

Jesus also used the name “*I am*” to refer to Himself during His life on earth as a man. “*Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham? Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am. Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by*” (John 8:57-59). You can see from the reaction of the people that heard Him that they understood what He was saying. They, not recognizing Him as the Messiah, thought His speech to be blasphemous. The term “*I am*” relates two things. First it testifies of the self-existent nature of God. He was not created, nor was He born, He simply “*is*.” He needs no one else to survive, whereas man needs God to continue to exist. Secondly, it speaks of the eternal nature of God. Christ clearly claims these things for Himself by the use of the name *I am*.

@insert discussion of trinity

“*I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely*.” This is the statement that lets us know without a doubt that Christ is our speaker here. In His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, He spoke of this very same thing. “*Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life*” (John 4:10-14). This “*water of life*” is not literal water, but merely symbolizes the eternal nature which man will enjoy in Heaven as a gift from God.

21:7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

Satan and all of his evil tricks are what have to be overcome. If a person is able to overcome the evil enticements Satan has placed in the world and remain faithful to the Lord he will inherit “*all things*.” This means he will gain everything that he could ever need or desire. During His ministry on the earth, Christ often spoke of the inheritance

which His people will someday enjoy. *“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 unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also”* (John 14:2-3). *“Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”* (Matthew 25:34). *“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life”* (Matthew 19:29). The Apostle Peter also spoke of the inheritance. *“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you”* (I Peter 1:4).

Of course the Lord said one must *“overcome”* in order to receive this inheritance. The Apostle John taught us that man can overcome only through faith in Jesus Christ. *“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?”* (I John 5:4-5).

In each of the letters to the Seven Churches in chapters two and three of Revelation, Christ mentioned a reward for overcoming. *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”* (Revelation 2:7). *“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death”* (Revelation 2:11). *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it”* (Revelation 2:17). *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations”* (Revelation 2:26). *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels”* (Revelation 3:5). *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name”* (Revelation 3:12). *“To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”* (Revelation 3:21). Clearly He is stressing the need for those who would follow Him to fight against the evils of the world and not to conform to them. The Christian life is one of struggle and conflict, there are many hurdles that a person must overcome before he is worthy to be accepted of God.

“And I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” The greatest benefit which the redeemed will enjoy in Heaven is their fellowship with God. They will enjoy a much closer relationship with Him than was ever possible while living on the earth. He will make them happy for all eternity as a good father should. In return they will worship and praise Him for ever and ever.

The fact that the redeemed will be considered the sons and daughters of God adds to the meaning of the inheritance. All children become heirs and therefore share in their father’s inheritance. While we may not be God’s natural sons’ Paul points out that through Jesus God has adopted us. *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together”* (Romans 8:14-17). We may be, as Paul said joint heirs with Christ, but as the first born He deserves a double portion of the inheritance, following the pattern of the Old Law. *“But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his”* (Deuteronomy 21:17).

There is one other aspect of inheritance that needs to be discussed, however. That is the fact that before the children can inherit their father’s estate that the father must die. In this case it was actually our elder “brother” who died and made possible our inheritance. *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth”* (Hebrews 9:14-17).

21:8 *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.*

The Lord now contrasts the fate of the unrighteous with the wonderful things He has been saying about the righteous. Fearful is from the Greek word “deilos,” which Thayer defines as “timid, fearful. Christians who through cowardice give way under persecutions and apostatize.”³⁶² This is the kind of person Christ described in His parable of the sower. “*But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*” (Matthew 13:20-21).

Unbelieving is from the Greek word “apistos,” which Strong’s defines as “disbelieving, i.e. without Christian faith (specifically a heathen); (passively) untrustworthy (person), or incredible (thing): -that believeth not, faithless, incredible thing, infidel, unbeliever (-ing).”³⁶³ Many people simply never can be convinced of the existence of God or the need to serve Him. Without that belief or faith a person is without hope. “*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*” (Hebrews 11:6).

Abominable is from the Greek word “bdelusso,” which Strong’s defines as “(to stink); to be disgusted, i.e. (by implication) detest (especially of idolatry): -abhor, abominable.”³⁶⁴ A murderer is, of course, someone who purposefully takes another person’s life. Whoremonger is from the Greek word “ pornos,” which Thayer defines as “a man who prostitutes his body to another’s lust for hire, a male prostitute. A man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse, a fornicator.”³⁶⁵ Sorcerer is from the Greek word “pharmakeus,” which Strong’s defines as “(a drug, i.e. spell—giving potion); a druggist (“pharmacist”) or poisoner, i.e. (by extension) a magician: -sorcerer.”³⁶⁶ The meaning is someone who deceives people through the practice of magic and witchcraft.

An idolater is someone who worships a false God or anything other than the true God. It is a person who allows anything whatsoever to come before God in their life. When anything detracts from someone’s service to God, it in essence takes God’s place, and becomes an idol. The Apostle Paul even spoke of covetousness as idolatry (Colossians 3:5). The desire to possess something can consume a person and become an uncontrollable obsession. It can in essence become an idol. Whatever receives the majority of our time, effort and affection is our God.

A liar is anyone who tells something which he knows is not true. His intentions are not the issue. There is no such thing as a “little white lie.” Any lie, regardless of why it was spoken, is still a lie, and is unquestionably sinful.

The fate which awaits the people who practice any of these evil things is without doubt. They “*shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.*” The lake of fire is eternal Hell. It is also described here as “*the second death.*” Death is not truly a cessation of life but a separation. When man dies physically, which is the first death, he does not cease to exist, but rather his body and spirit separate. The physical body ceases to live just as any animal would, but the spirit of man continues to live in Hades. At the end of time the spirits of righteous men will gain even greater access to God, while the unrighteous will be forever separated from Him. It is this separation from God that is the second death.

³⁶² Thayer, 1989, s.v. “δειλός.”

³⁶³ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #571.”

³⁶⁴ Ibid., s.v. “Greek #948.”

³⁶⁵ Thayer, 1989, s.v. “πόρνος.”

³⁶⁶ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #5332.”

@insert discussion of Hell

21:9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.

There is no great significance in the fact that it was one of the angels which had the seven vials which came to speak with John. This is simply given to identify the angel. It is, however, somewhat appropriate that one of the angels that helped reveal the ultimate defeat of the apostate Roman Church is the one who shows John the Lord's Church, which was so often persecuted by the Great Whore. This angel told John to come over to where he was, so that he could show John the bride of Christ, the Church. Again this is not just the Christian Church, but is the group of redeemed men from the earth of all ages.

21:10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

John again makes mention of the fact that he is in the spirit and is not present physically. His body never left the island of Patmos while his spirit was in Heaven experiencing these visions.

The angel takes John to the top of a very tall mountain and from that very lofty perch he beholds Heaven, as it were, descending from above to receive the Church. The glorious city of God, prepared for the faithful. The best vantage point to see a city here on earth is from high above. In John's day there were no airplanes so a mountain top would be the most ideal vantage point. The main point of this statement is to let us know that John is in a position overlooking the whole city where he can see and describe it all, with missing anything.

21:11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

Now John begins his description of that Great City which he saw. As we have mentioned previously, Heaven is not a physical place. Here John will use physical terms in an attempt to describe for us Heaven and all of its glory. The Apostle Paul once spoke of the difficulties of communicating the things he understood to other men. *"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh"* (Romans 6:19). Our humanity limits our capacity to understand, and therefore hampers spiritual discernment. As it is written, *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Isaiah 55:8-9). As we go through the next several verses, we must keep in mind that the mention of all of these valuable and precious items from the earth are not to be taken literally, but are merely intended to provide for us an understanding of the great beauty and magnificence of Heaven. Were we to actually find a place here on earth that was constructed as Heaven is described here, we would certainly say it was grander than anything we had ever seen, and this is the point the Lord wants to get across to us. Heaven is much grander than anything we have ever seen or even imagined.

The first characteristic of Heaven we are told about is that it possesses the glory of God. Certainly nothing can be more glorious and wonderful than if it possesses the glory of God. The light of the city is compared to a precious stone such as jasper. As we saw in chapter four, jasper is a type of quartz of varying color. The light here is said to be clear, which is not a color of the jasper stone. This just serves to reinforce the point that we are not looking at literal jasper. The intended meaning is that the light is pure and flawless, much superior to any light that we could find here on the earth.

21:12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

During the times in which John wrote Revelation any city of note would have a wall around it. The wall served as a barrier against the outside world. Access to the city could be controlled if it was walled. A good wall could keep some people in and others out, whatever may have been the wish of the ruler(s) of the city. The wall would also keep wild and domesticated animals out of the city, improving safety and sanitation. Above all else, a wall was especially valuable in stopping invading armies, which were so prevalent in John's day.

Obviously, Heaven will not need a wall or anything else for any of these purposes, or any other for that matter. Consequently, do not expect to see a real wall in Heaven. The reason it is mentioned here is that in John's day a city would have been incomplete without a wall. In keeping with the extravagant illustrations, Heaven is pictured with a wall greater than any other city has ever dreamed of having. The wall was great and high, and contained twelve gates. Each of the gates had an angel standing beside it. Angels would be perfect guardians, only letting those into Heaven admitted by the Father. There would be no possible way that any undeserving person could talk or bribe their way into Heaven.

We also find that on each gate was written a different name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The Children of Israel are the ones who brought Christ into the world. Therefore it can be said that it is through them that man gained access to Heaven, hence they are pictured as the doors to Heaven.

21:13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates.

The city was in the shape of a square and the twelve gates were equally distributed along the four sides, with three gates being on each side. This would allow for easier movement in and out of the city, something very important for a real city, but not so for Heaven. Once Heaven receives her residents the doors could be closed, locked, and the key thrown away. No one will be allowed in after that and everything that will be needed will be right there in Heaven.

21:14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

In verse twelve we saw the names of the twelve tribes of Israel on the gates. Now it is the names of the twelve apostles on the foundations. The foundations are what the walls sit upon. It would indeed be very foolish to expend a great deal of time, effort and money to build a wall if you were simply going to place it right on top of the dirt. A wall so built would be unstable, easily tunneled under by man or beast, and because of its great weight subject to sinking. Smith's Bible Dictionary alludes to "the practice common in Palestine of carrying foundations down to the solid rock."³⁶⁷ The soil and loose rocks would be dug out and replaced by what would essentially be a subsurface wall to support to actual wall people would see. "The earlier Romans erected their buildings on the most solid foundations constructed of large blocks of concrete, composed of quarry rubbish, gravel or burnt earth, bonded by an excellent mortar. This material formed under the superstructures homogeneous basements of veritable artificial rocks capable of sustaining the heaviest of buildings without rupture or settlement."³⁶⁸

"Twelve foundations" is an allusion to the perfect strength and durability of the foundation, the number twelve, like seven, denoting completeness. This wall, or any other structure for that matter, would have only one foundation. Since this wall is intended to last for eternity, the foundation needs to be perfect so that it can support the wall without ever failing. The durability of anything built on a foundation depends more on the foundation than on the structure itself.

While the Children of Israel presented Christ to the world, His message went forth to the world with the work and teachings of the apostles as a foundation. The Apostle Paul spoke of the Lord's Church as being "*built upon the*

³⁶⁷ Smith, 1986, s.v. "walls."

³⁶⁸ *Americana*, 1954, s.v. "foundation."

foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:20). Even today the writings of the apostles are to be used by Christians as the sole basis or foundation for godly living. The Papacy built its Empire on an unsure foundation, not on Christ. Jesus Himself warned of this type of foolishness. “Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:47-49).

The Apostle Paul said, *“According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 3:10-11). Regardless of the size and strength of a Church that is built, if it does not have as its foundation Jesus Christ, “the Rock of Israel” (II Samuel 23:3), then it is destined to fall in the Day of Judgment.*

21:15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof.

The angel that had been talking with John had in his possession a reed, or measuring rod, with which he was able to measure the dimensions of the city, the gates, and the walls. The measuring reed which the angel has is said to be made of gold. In reality, gold would be a poor material for a measuring instrument. First of all, gold is very heavy and any measuring device made from it would be very unhandy to use. Secondly, gold is soft, so the measuring device could easily be dented or even bent. Thirdly, gold tends to shrink and expand with changes in temperature, and thus the length of the measuring reed would change with the temperature. All in all, gold is a very poor choice for a measuring device. Clearly, this is not meant to be taken so strictly. The intent of saying it is made of gold is to show its worth and value. Such an instrument would be worthy of measuring something as grand as Heaven and should be expected to give extremely precise measurements.

21:16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal.

“The city lieth foursquare” simply means the city was a perfect square. The fact that the length is equal to the breadth is redundant, for if they were not equal then the city would not be square. Most large walled cities of ancient times were not squares, but had very irregular shapes. Their shapes were determined more by the topography and geography of the area where they were constructed, as well as the fact that they may have been added on to as the city grew. There are no such limitations with Heaven, however, and it will form a perfect square.

When the angel measured the city with the golden reed it was found to be 12,000 furlongs. A furlong is 606 feet and $\frac{3}{8}$ -inches.³⁶⁹ Twelve-thousand furlongs would be over 1,377 miles! The scale of this city is unimaginable. The city is a perfect cube with the length, breadth, and height all over 1,377 miles. In a city of that size every single person currently living in the world, which has a population of well over six billion people, could have about 65,000,000,000 (sixty five billion) cubic feet of space if it were divided up equally. To put this into perspective a house which is 40 feet wide, 100 feet long, and has an 8 foot ceiling, only has 32,000 cubic feet of space. This is well over two-million times smaller. Once again it should be mentioned that Heaven is not a physical place and will not have physical dimensions. However, by using physical measurements, God has certainly done an effective job of conveying to us just how impressive Heaven really is.

The number twelve-thousand that is used here is not arbitrary. Twelve is the heavenly number of completeness. One thousand, as we have mentioned previously, is used to convey the magnitude of a large inexact or unknown

³⁶⁹ Davis, 1983, s.v. “furlong.”

number. Taken together as twelve-thousand we have the idea that Heaven is very large and just the perfect size. Would we expect anything less?

21:17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel.

Next the angel measures the thickness of the wall, it was 144 cubits. A cubit is the distance from a man's elbow to his fingertips, and is generally taken to be about 18 inches. John makes it clear that the cubit he is speaking of here is the one measured with a man's arm. There is, however, one slight difference in this case. It is an angel and not a man who is doing the measuring. I do not believe John is implying any significant difference in the size of a cubit by telling us it is measured by the angel's arm. Anything measured with a human body part would be inherently inaccurate due to the flexibility of flesh, and more importantly the fact that people are of different dimensions. The angel, however, being perfectly proportioned would be able to render a perfect measurement. Smith's Bible Dictionary gives an exact value of a cubit to be 19.0515 inches.³⁷⁰ Using this value the walls would be over 228 feet thick. That's the better part of a football field. Again we see the superiority of Heaven over all earthly cities, no enemy could ever hope to scale or breach those walls.

21:18 And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.

The "*building of the wall*" means the material from which the wall was built. The wall surrounding Heaven is made of jasper. Jasper being a variety of quartz is very hard and resistant to weathering. The "*city*" would include all the structures and buildings. All of these things were made of gold which was clear as glass. Obviously, gold is not clear. The idea is that this gold is so shiny and glittery and pure that it almost seems transparent. This gold far exceeds any ever seen on the earth in beauty and value. In reality gold is gold. Pure gold cannot be made any purer. This is another item which lets us know these descriptions are not to be taken literally, but are simply meant as an attempt to describe the wonders and glories of Heaven in physical terms, and to show Heaven's superiority over the earth. Everything in Heaven will be far superior to its counterpart here on Earth.

*21:19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald;
21:20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz;
the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst.*

In verse fourteen the twelve foundations of the wall were introduced and said to contain the names of the twelve apostles of Christ. Now we find that they are garnished or decorated with precious gems. Each foundation was decorated with a different gem. On earth no one would use such precious materials to dress up the foundation of a wall. Nothing is too good for Heaven, however. God is not limited by money, the availability of materials or labor, or any of the other problems that an earthly ruler would face when constructing a large city. He can use the best materials and use them in any amount He wishes, something not true of an earthly city.

Jasper has already been discussed earlier in the chapter. The sapphire was "a precious stone, apparently of a bright-blue color, and extremely precious. The sapphire of the ancients was not our gem of that name."³⁷¹ The term chalcedony is applied in mineralogy to one of the varieties of agate. It is generally translucent and exhibits a great variety of colors. So named because it was found near the ancient Chalcedon, near Constantinople."³⁷² The emerald is believed to be the same stone which we call by that name today.

³⁷⁰ Smith, 1986, s.v. "weights and measures."

³⁷¹ Ibid., s.v. "sapphire."

³⁷² Ibid., s.v. "chalcedony."

Sardonyx is “a name compounded of sard and onyx, two precious stones, varieties of chalcedony or agate. The sardonyx combines the qualities of both, whence its name. The sardonyx consists of ‘a white opaque layer, superimposed upon a red transparent stratum of the true red sard.’ It is, like the sard, merely a variety of agate.”³⁷³ Sardius also called sardine is “a variety of chalcedony, which the Greeks called sardios and sardion. Two sorts, distinguished by their color, were known by the name of sardius: the transparent red being our carnelian and the brownish red being the variety of carnelian to which we restrict the name sardius.”³⁷⁴ Chrysolite is identical with the modern Oriental topaz, the tarshish of the Hebrew Bible.³⁷⁵

“The beryl is an earthy mineral, having as its chief constituents silica, alumina, and beryllium. It may be colorless or aquamarine, bluish green, or various blues and violet, or yellow and brown. It is closely allied to the emerald.”³⁷⁶ “The topaz of the ancient Greeks and Romans is generally allowed to be our chrysolite, while their chrysolite is our topaz. Chrysolite is a silicate of magnesium and iron; it is so soft as to lose its polish unless carefully used. It varies in color from a pale-green to a bottle-green. It is supposed that its name was derived from Topazos, an island in the Red Sea where the stones were procured.”³⁷⁷ Chrysoprasus or chrysoprase is “a variety of chalcedony of an apple-green hue, the color being produced by the presence of oxide of nickel.”³⁷⁸ “The jacinth or hyacinth is a red variety of zircon, which is found in square prisms of a white, gray, red, reddish-brown, yellow or pale-green color.”³⁷⁹ Amethyst is “a subspecies of quartz of a bluish violet color.”³⁸⁰

21:21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

These gates were first introduced in verse twelve. There it was said that each gate had the name of one of twelve tribes of Israel written on it. Here we are told that these gates are giant pearls. Obviously no pearl of the size described here has ever been seen by any man. This extends the thought that the beauty and glory of Heaven will far surpass that of the earth.

We found back in verse sixteen that Heaven is a cube of nearly 1,400 miles. Yet here we find that Heaven has only one street. It is not “streets,” as so many people often say, but simply “*the street*.” Again, all of this is figurative anyway, so we should not try to make something out of the fact that there is only one street in such an enormous city. The emphasis is not on how many streets there are, but rather on what it is made from.

³⁷³ Ibid., s.v. “sardonyx.”

³⁷⁴ Ibid., s.v. “sardius.”

³⁷⁵ Ibid., s.v. “chrysolite.”

³⁷⁶ Davis, 1983, s.v. “beryl.”

³⁷⁷ Smith, 1986, s.v. “topaz.”

³⁷⁸ Davis, 1983, s.v. “chrysoprase.”

³⁷⁹ Smith, 1986, s.v. “jacinth.”

³⁸⁰ Ibid., s.v. “amethyst.”

In the days of John the best roads were made of stones, but the majority of them were simply dirt. To someone living today seeing a street of gold would be unbelievable, but to someone of John's day, where most of the roads were dirt, to see a street constructed of pure gold would be mind boggling. Imagine the amount of gold it would take to build something like this! In truth, pure gold would be totally unacceptable material for a street. It is very soft and simply would not last long at all. The real intent here is to show us that in Heaven even the most basic thing like a street will be something to marvel at. A king who can afford to pave the streets of his city with gold can certainly take care of his people.

We have seen the gold in Heaven described as transparent before. Again this is simply an attempt to convey to us that it is much superior to any gold found on the earth.

21:22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

In the days of John, any important city where very many Jews lived would have its own temple or synagogue. The temple was where the people went to worship or sacrifice to God. However, John points out that this wonderful city he is describing has no temple. It's not that this city is not important enough to deserve a temple, but that there simply is no need for one. There is no need to go to a building somewhere to worship God when you will be eternally in his presence.

21:23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

On this earth, man depends on the sun for his very survival. Without the sun we would live in darkness. Plants and animals could not live under these conditions. To top all of this off, the earth would be so cold that everything would freeze solid anyway. By contrast, Christians will not be dependent on physical light sources in Heaven. Hot and cold, as well as light and darkness, as we know them now, will have ceased to exist. God will be the "light" of this Great City. He will not shine like a light bulb, but His presence will "brighten" the entire city and thereby make it inhabitable just as the sun does for the earth. This also points out the dilemma for the damned. They will reside eternally in darkness. In fact this is one of the bad things the Bible specifically mentions about Hell. "*And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matthew 25:30).

21:24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.

"*And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it.*" This speaks of the effects Heaven had on the earth while it was still in existence. The nations and countries which had many of their citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the Lord's Church, will tend to be influenced by those righteous people to walk in the light of Heaven, which is God. In other words, otherwise heathen nations will be made somewhat righteous by the presence of a few Christians. We can indeed see from history that the Western world, where most Christians lived, has been blessed to a far greater extent than any other region of the world.

"*And the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.*" This does not mean that the leaders and rulers of secular governments will all be allowed into Heaven. In fact, it will tend to be quite the contrary. As the Apostle Paul pointed out, "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (I Corinthians 1:26). What John is pointing out here is that all kingdoms and nations of the earth, regardless of their stature among men, will be vastly inferior to the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore all nations of the earth will "*bring their glory and honor into it.*" This means that they will be subservient to the Kingdom of Heaven realizing its preeminence among the nations. This is the same thought expressed by the prophet Isaiah. "*And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it*" (Isaiah 2:2). The mountains here are kingdoms, and the Lord's Kingdom will be greater than all the rest. Therefore they will all bow down to it and offer tribute. This was not necessarily done literally, but in the end all other kingdoms fell while the Lord's remained.

21:25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there.

This verse really contains two distinct but related statements. First of all, the gates of the heavenly city will never be closed during the day. Secondly we are told there will never be night there. As we have already seen physical light sources will not be necessary in Heaven, God will be the light there. Together these two statements tell us the gates of Heaven will never close. They do not close during the day, and eternity is just one endless day, therefore they do not close.

This tells us a lot about Heaven. The gates of earthly cities were often closed. The reasons for closing them were many. To keep out wild animals or to keep out thieves or other undesirable people, but especially to seal the city up against enemies. However, in Heaven these problems will not exist, therefore there will never be a need to close the gates. This again points out another way in which Heaven is superior to all earthly cities. Even the mightiest earthly cities in history have fallen victims to invasion. Rome, the Eternal city, was taken several times. Even the great Constantinople, which still bears the infamous title of the world's most besieged city, also eventually fell to the sword of an invading army. Or we might say more correctly, as we saw in chapter nine, the cannons of an invading army. Heaven, however, will be eternally secure. No one is mighty enough to come against the God of heaven to besiege His city.

21:26 And they shall bring the glory and honor of the nations into it.

This verse really just reiterates the thought expressed in verse twenty-four. The Lord's Kingdom will be superior to all others in every way. Therefore all other nations will eventually fall before it and become subservient to it, thereby testifying to the superiority of Heaven.

21:27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

Entrance into Heaven is restricted, only those deemed worthy by the Gatekeeper may enter. And Christ said, "...I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:7-9). Only those known of Christ will be admitted.

Only what is pure and righteous and holy will be allowed to pass through the gates into the city. Everything that is vile and base and carnal will be kept outside. In the next chapter we will see some of the things which will be kept outside the city. "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie" (Revelation 22:15). This is what will make Heaven such a wonderful place. I'm sure we often wish we could get away from some of the people we have to deal with in this life. While we're on the earth it will not be possible, we will always have to deal with very carnal and evil people. When this life is over, we can either spend eternity in Hell with all of those people we wanted so badly to get away from, or we can spend it in Heaven with people who will all be righteous, those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life because of their faithful service to God.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Admonitions and Salutation

22:1 And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.

This chapter continues the line of thought began in the previous one, with one of the angels who had one of the seven vials continuing to show John a grand vision of Heaven. Here John sees the water of life which Christ had described to him previously. *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”* (Revelation 21:6).

The water of life is not literal water, but is described as such because it has the same importance. In Palestine, water is a very precious commodity. Rainfall is not plentiful, and most of the drinking water must come from wells. It was no secret to people of that day that water is essential to every living thing. No plant or animal can survive without at least some water whatever be the source. Therefore, water can be equated with life. Any place where the annual rainfall is greater, life tends to be more abundant. Similarly, the water of life signifies the abundance and grandeur of life in Heaven. John does not merely see a glass of the water of life, but an entire river! This water was not polluted as so much of the water on earth is, it was absolutely pure. To the eye it is *“clear as crystal.”* Natural spring water is praised by many people for its purity. However, when compared to the water of life, it may as well be from the muddy Mississippi.

Notice the source of this river. It does not simply spring out of the ground, but comes from the throne of almighty God. This is the reason for its purity and its amazing life giving powers. This is not real water, but signifies the free-flowing fountain of life in Heaven. Life that will never end, and will never be tempered with anything unpleasant. As the Lord said, *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). This is what the water of life represents.

22:2 In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

The location of the tree of life as given by this verse is a little confusing. The problem lies not with the Bible per se, but with the King James translation. The words are basically correct, but the punctuation is wrong. Every other translation I have seen connects the first part of this verse with the previous verse. This gives an entirely different, but I believe correct, meaning to the verse. I will quote one such translation of these two verses.

“Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations” (Revelation 22:1-2 RSV).

It is the river which is in the middle of the street, not the tree of life as the wording of the King James Version might suggest. The tree grows along side the street and the river. The fact that the tree grows on “*either side of the river*” shows that it was not just a single tree but many trees. This does not contradict the statement in this verse which says the “tree” of life at all. Its just as if someone said, “the peach tree grows quite well in the temperate climate of Central Georgia.” This statement is not about an individual tree, but a type of tree. Likewise, the reference to the tree of life is not to an individual tree, but to all trees of that type.

Taken together these two verses paint a beautiful portrait in our mind of Heaven. There is a beautiful shiny street of pure gold running through the middle of the city. A crystal clear river of the water of life flows down the middle of the street. To top it all off, beautiful trees of life lining the street of gold. Some cities in the South like Mobile, Alabama and Savannah, Georgia are famous for their giant and often ancient oak trees in the downtown areas. Many visitors are awed as they drive down the streets totally encircled in what is nearly a “tunnel” of oak trees. This is nothing, however, compared to the beautiful tree lined street in Heaven.

The tree of life in many ways is to be compared to the water of life; it is simply a symbol of eternal life. That is, of the abundance of life that is to be enjoyed by the saved in Heaven. However, there are also some noteworthy differences between the two. The tree of life goes back much further in biblical history than does the water of life. The tree of life was even in the Garden of Eden. “*And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil*” (Genesis 2:9). While Adam and Eve had access to the tree of life they had eternal life. They could have lived forever as human beings on the earth had they never sinned.

After Adam and Eve sinned, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God then denied them access to the tree of life. “*And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life*” (Genesis 3:22-24). The next reference to the tree of life in the Bible is in the book of Revelation and shows the tree to be in Heaven. Mankind lost access to this marvelous tree in the Garden of Eden, but can regain it in Heaven.

The tree of life is no ordinary tree. Not only does it have extraordinary powers to give eternal life to the partakers of its fruit, but it also bears more than one kind of fruit! Imagine a tree that yielded apples in the spring, oranges in the summer, and bananas in the fall. What is truly amazing is that the tree of life bears twelve different types of fruit; one each month. Of course we are not talking about a real tree here, but a symbol. Its manner of bearing fruit year round is representative of the fact that in Heaven there will be no times of plenty and times of scarcity. There will be no drought or famine, but rather everything will be wonderful all the time.

We are somewhat spoiled today to have fresh fruits and vegetables available to us practically year round. Today we get produce grown in green houses or in places like South America which is quickly shipped to market. Just a few decades ago most items were only available fresh when they were “in season.” This meant that people had to preserve some foods in some way if they wanted to have them at other times of the year. The tree of life, however, is always in season.

Throughout history one of the greatest difficulties man has faced is staving off starvation between harvests. You had to make your food stretch for the entire year which called for a great deal of planning and restraint. In Heaven, all of these worries will be forgotten, the tree of life will continually supply man’s needs.

“*And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.*” The leaves of many plants have medicinal value. For example, the aloe plant, also known as the burn plant, is supposedly very soothing when the juice is applied to burned skin. Similarly, the leaves from the tree of life have the power to “*heal the nations.*” This is again a reference

to the positive affect the presence of righteous people will have on an otherwise heathen nation. A Christian does not as yet have access to Heaven and to the fruit of the tree of life, but these things have been promised. God not only promised these things to faithful men, but also left them a pledge. *“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit”* (II Corinthians 5:5). The Holy Spirit was given to man by God as an earnest or pledge of the future gifts He has promised. This is like a leaf from the tree of life. It is not the fruit which is so desirable, but it is a pledge that the tree will soon be made available.

22:3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him:

When the tree of life was taken away from man in the Garden of Eden, God also did something else, He cursed the ground. *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life”* (Genesis 3:17). This made man’s existence much more difficult than it would have been. In Heaven, there will be no such curse. Man’s existence will be free from problems and difficulties. He will have the curse lifted from him, plus he will have regained access to the tree of life.

“But the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it.” Above and beyond all of the other wonderful aspects of Heaven mentioned thus far, is the fact that God and Christ will dwell with man there. The redeemed will worship God before His throne for ever and ever. *“Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them”* (Revelation 7:15).

Man cannot presently understand how wonderful it will be to serve God for eternity. For the saved He will be their light and their everything. Their love and adoration for Him will compel them to worship Him time without end.

22:4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.

To see the face of God will be an unbelievable privilege. Even the great prophet and leader Moses was not allowed to see God’s face. *“And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: and it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: and I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen”* (Exodus 33:20-23). The fact that man will be allowed to see the face of God in Heaven shows that the relationship between God and man will be much closer there. The redeemed have been reconciled to God and will be granted many things formerly impossible for men.

“And his name shall be in their foreheads.” This idea has been expressed several times previously in different applications. To say that the name of God will be in the foreheads of the redeemed in Heaven means that they will have true desire and affection toward Him. They will truly enjoy serving Him because they love Him and this is what they want to do.

22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

It was pointed out toward the end of the previous chapter that there will be no night in Heaven. Again this is due to the fact that no physical bodies will be relied upon to generate the light. In fact there will be no need for physical light at all. Since there will be no physical eyes to make use of the light, no light will be needed as it is now. The reason that no physical eyes will be present is that redeemed man will no longer occupy physical bodies. *“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 15:44). Consequently, none of the things we rely on presently to give light, the sun, moon, stars, candles, etc., will be needed in Heaven. There will always be abundant light there, although it will be spiritual light and not physical. As was pointed out previously, God is the source of this spiritual light.

The reigning of mankind has been previously discussed in other terms. In chapter twenty the saved were said to reign with Christ in His kingdom for a thousand years. This however, is different. The redeemed will reign with God and Christ in Heaven for all eternity. They will reign victorious over Satan and his evil companions, and over all of his attempts at defeating them in their quest for eternal life.

22:6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done.

The person speaking is still the angel which began to speak to John in the previous chapter. The angel has now finished his discussion of the glories of Heaven, which have occupied our thoughts for over a chapter now. Instead he begins to try to wrap up this marvelous book.

The angel states that the things he has shown John are undeniably true. He also reveals the source of these comments as being God, who he refers to as *“the Lord God of the holy prophets.”* The God who inspired this angel to speak is the same God who inspired all of the prophets of the past to speak. Such renowned men as Moses, Elijah, Samuel, and many others. *“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (II Peter 1:21). When this fact is realized it then becomes quite apparent how the many books of the Bible, which were written by so many different men, harmonize so beautifully with each other. They were all written by the same author, God.

The angel then states his mission. He was sent by God to reveal to God’s servants, which means righteous men, certain things which must soon begin to occur. Of course he is speaking of the things John has been shown in this grand revelation. This statement is very similar to one we saw at the beginning of this book. *“The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John”* (Revelation 1:1). In many ways our present verse is just a repeat of the first verse of the book.

“Shortly be done,” has the same meaning as *“shortly come to pass”* in chapter one. It means the prophesies of Revelation must soon begin to be fulfilled, and not that they will ALL soon be fulfilled. As we have progressed we have indeed seen that the prophesies given in this book covered the entire Christian era, beginning with John’s day and concluding with the end of the world.

22:7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

The speaker has changed in this verse, and instead of the angel, it is Christ who is addressing us. *“Quickly”* is a relative term. It has been over 1,900 years since He spoke these words and He has yet to return. When compared to the life span of a man it is a very long time. When compared to eternity, however, it is truly but the blink of an eye.

“Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” *“Keepeth”* is from the Greek word *“tereo,”* which Strong’s defines as *“to guard (from loss or injury, properly by keeping the eye upon; by implication to detain (in custody; figuratively to maintain); by extension to withhold (for personal ends; figuratively to keep unmarried):-hold fast, keep (-er), (pre-, re-) serve, watch.”*³⁸¹ There are several meanings here, but I believe the context can lead us to the correct one. The idea is that the Christian should understand these prophesies and watch for their fulfillment. A blessing is pronounced on those who do this. Certainly many Christians have been able to escape potentially dangerous situations by understanding that they were going to be the fulfillment of prophesy. In addition, it is certainly reassuring to see how God’s plans have unfolded throughout the Christian age, and to see how Satan has been slowly brought to his knees by God.

³⁸¹ Strong, 1982, s.v. “Greek #5083.”

22:8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things.

“*These things*” refers to the visions of Heaven John has just been shown by the angel. He was so overwhelmed by the beauty and glory of Heaven that he forgot about what he was doing and fell down before the angel to worship him. He did this once before in chapter nineteen and was rebuked sternly by that angel for doing so.

22:9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

This angel, like the one in chapter nineteen, also rebuked John for worshipping him. The angel reminds John that he is not to be worshipped since he is also a servant of God as John is, and as so many other people are, in particular, the prophets and people who understand and remember the prophecies of Revelation. The reason that he mentions in particular those who keep the prophecies of Revelation, is that only Christians would do this with the proper understanding. In reality, he is speaking of Christians here. Among all men and angels, there is not a single one worthy of worship. As the angel points out, God is the one who is to be worshipped. This rules out the worship of idols, images, saints, and apostles as has been the practice of the apostate Roman Church for many centuries.

22:10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.

The angel tells John that he should not try to conceal the contents of the book he has just written. When Daniel wrote his book of inspired prophesy, he was instructed to seal it up for a time. John, however, was instructed that it was to be different with him. “*The time is at hand.*” This means that the prophecies of this book were soon to begin to be fulfilled when it was written in the A.D. 90’s, and He wanted His people to have access so they could begin to understand what was happening.

22:11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

This verse is not permission to continue in a life of sin, far from it. When the Lord returns there will be both righteous and unrighteous people in the world. Christ’s coming will not change that, in fact it will seal it. When He returns it will be too late for anyone to change. All things must be said and done prior to His return. If, when He comes, He finds someone who is unjust or filthy, then this is how that person will be judged. On the other hand, if, when He comes, He finds someone righteous or holy, this is the way the person will be judged. He is saying that in whatever state He finds a person that is the state in which he will be judged.

22:12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.

To give more importance to the warning just given in the previous verse, Christ now adds the comment that He will return quickly. This tells people not to waste time but to straighten out their lives immediately. Regardless of when He returns, no one has a guarantee of life beyond today. Therefore, everyone would do well to be prepared to meet “...*him with whom we have to do*” (Hebrews 4:13).

Christ also says that He will bring His reward with Him. He will reward every man based on his life. The righteous will be granted entrance into Heaven, while the unrighteous will be damned to Hell. For the righteous the reward is to be in His presence forever. That will begin when “*we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

22:13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

This is the fourth and final time in the book of Revelation where Christ refers to Himself as alpha and omega. Again, these are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. By this He indicates His eternal nature, nothing was before Him and nothing will be after Him.

22:14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

There is no secret as to how someone can make it to Heaven. If anyone will keep God's commandments then the tree of life is theirs to partake of freely, and the gates of Heaven will swing wide to greet them. As Christ simply said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments*" (John 14:15). Love on our part is manifested by obedience to Him which will be richly rewarded by eternal life.

22:15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

For all men who choose to live carnal lives, and whose desire is to the flesh, the gates of Heaven will close shut and leave them standing outside. The dogs referred to here certainly are not canines for they will have no place in eternity. Despite the naive sentiments of many pet owners, dogs are nothing more than animals and have no souls. The dogs referred to here are immoral men, homosexuals, and male prostitutes.

Sorcerers are those who practice unauthorized magic and divination. I say unauthorized because God has in the past authorized and empowered some men to do these things. There are others, however, who pretend to have powers and practice these things for their own profit.

Whoremonger is from the Greek word " pornos," which Thayer defines as "a man who prostitutes his body to another's lust for hire, a male prostitute. A man who indulges in unlawful sexual intercourse, a fornicator."³⁸²

Idolaters are those who serve anything other than God. Someone does not have to literally bow down before an idol to be an idolater. A job, the television, another person, a car, and many other things can be idols in a person's life. If a person allows something to take away from their service to God it becomes an idol.

A liar is anyone who tells something which he knows is not true. His intentions are not the issue. While most people generally regard lying as wrong, it is also widely accepted as being necessary at times. Most everyone feels comfortable telling a "little white lie," but, unfortunately, there is no such thing. A lie is a lie regardless of the person's motive. All lies are sin and will be punished as such.

The fate which awaits the people who practice any of these evil things is without doubt. They "*shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone*" (verse 8) which is Hell." This is the same as saying they are "without." In eternity there are but two places. If someone is not in Heaven then they are in Hell.

22:16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

Here Jesus corroborates the claim of the angel that he was speaking for God. Jesus also lets it be known that He is superior to the angels, by saying that the angel which talked with John was His. Then Jesus tells John that the things which have been revealed to him are for the benefit of the churches.

Next He states that He is a descendant of David. This was a qualification for the Messiah and thereby states His worthiness to attest to the truthfulness of the angel's statements. Both of Jesus' parents were direct descendants of

³⁸² Thayer, 1989, s.v. "πόρνος."

King David, Joseph through Solomon and Mary through Nathan. “*The bright and morning star*” is a reference to His spiritual excellence and brightness. In the morning sky, nothing shines as brightly and distinctly as the morning star. Similarly, Christ outshines everyone and everything else in the spiritual realm.

22:17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

The Spirit is the Holy Spirit which God has given to Christians as a comforter. The bride has previously been identified as the Lord’s Church. Both openly proclaim an invitation to join the Lord’s Church and thus become qualified to enjoy the wonders of Heaven just described. The invitation is a standing one and will be there until Christ returns. The Lord expressed His desire for others to be brought into the fold before He ascended into Heaven. “*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen*” (Matthew 28:18-20).

Ideally, when a sinner hears the invitation he will accept it and then in turn he will also begin to invite others to join him. This is what is meant by the phrase “*And let him that heareth say, Come.*” Unfortunately, most people spurn the invitation of God. Their desire is not for righteousness but for physical pleasure. To them the invitation is foolishness. To the wise, however, it is life and peace.

The thirst spoken of here is spiritual. It is the thirst which can only be quenched by the water of life which flows in abundance in Heaven. The water flows freely for all who are willing to lay aside their sins and come to drink of it. It is not difficult to get to this precious water, but a person must go to where it is to obtain a drink, and it lies in the land of righteousness. Therefore, a person must turn from sin and embrace holiness and godliness in order to reach this water. Many explores of past centuries ventured into strange lands in search of the fountain of youth. The seventeenth century Spanish explorer Ponce de Leon, for example, thought it might be in Florida. His calculations were a little off, however, it is, and will remain, in Heaven.

22:18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:

22:19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Jesus now gives everyone who hears the prophesies contained in this book a very stern warning. Any man who tampers with it will be dealt with very harshly. Whether it be an addition or a deletion, no tampering whatsoever is permitted. For the person who adds to this book he will be forced to suffer the many plagues which have been mentioned in Revelation. We have certainly seen many great and terrible things brought against Satan and his evil accomplice Rome. It would be devastating for anyone to be forced to endure these things. However, this is exactly what will happen, since that person would actually be no better than the papacy if they too altered God’s word. On the other hand, if anyone takes away from this book his name will be removed from the book of life. All hope of salvation will be quickly erased with one stroke of the pen.

As the book was written so should it remain. It is created in perfection from the mind of God and cannot be improved upon despite the best intentions of men. The warnings given in these verses are meant to apply to this book and not to the entire Bible. However, the principle does apply to every book of the Bible. No man can hope to improve on the inspired word of God. When a man teaches or practices anything not contained in the Bible he is guilty of adding to it. Or when a man fails to teach or practice something taught in the Bible he is guilty of deleting from it. Neither will be treated lightly by God. The only safe and logical course is to follow the biblical pattern as precisely as possible.

22:20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

Most of this verse seems to be the comments of John, with a quote of Christ added in. He repeats the statement that Christ made earlier in this chapter that His return is imminent. John then adds an “amen” to this. One meaning of amen is “so be it.” And I believe this is what is intended by John here. He is ready for Christ’s return whenever it occurs. Then to that he even adds an invitation for Him to return. Certainly this old and wearied servant of the Lord’s was ready to see His face once more knowing what joy and happiness it would bring.

22:21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

John closes this marvelous book with a simple but meaningful statement. He wishes the grace of the Lord upon all of his brethren. Grace is unmerited favor. It is God giving man something he does not deserve. Without the abundant grace of God salvation would have never come to man in the first place. Man is a sinful creature and deserves to be correspondingly punished. God, however, being as loving, merciful, and gracious as He is, chose to pardon man’s iniquities through the blood of His own Son.

Then to this John simply adds another amen. Thus concludes what to me is the most intriguing, fascinating and beautiful book in the entire Bible. There might be more important books, but I know of no other which is so beautifully written, and can build the faith of a Christian so much when understood. I join John in saying, “Amen.”