

SECTION THREE

CHAPTERS 8-11

THE SEVEN TRUMPETS



○ U T L I N E

- 8:1-6 The origin and purpose of the seven trumpets
- 8:7-13 Four trumpets of God sound upon the Church
- 9:1-21 Two trumpets of God sound upon the world
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Theme: Christ works in human events to fulfill His purpose, and for the good of His Kingdom on earth.

REVELATION CHAPTER EIGHT



THE TRUMPETS OF WARNING

Chapter 8 begins a new section in the Book of Revelation. The imagery of the seals is over and John describes a new set of visions given in the form of seven trumpets. Just as the seals did, the trumpets present a panoramic view of the Church Age from its beginning to its end, but from a different perspective. Each of the seven sections of the Revelation has a particular emphasis or purpose that reveals itself as the visions unfold. Like all prophecy, the trumpets are warning messages for the Church's edification and benefit. Those who do not heed the warnings will experience the plagues of the wicked (18:4).

There is an unmistakable literary structural parallel between the seals and the trumpets. In the short list below notice that the sixth seal was a lengthy passage detailing the end of the world, and the sixth trumpet is also a lengthy description of the last years of the world. There is no reason to doubt that the two sections cover the same time period of history. Dual, parallel visions

are a common device of the prophetic writers of the OT as evidenced by the triple vision of Peter, the double vision of Daniel, and the parallel prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel.

<u>SEALS</u>	<u>TRUMPETS</u>
Vision of heavenly things	Vision of heavenly things
Four short seals	Four short trumpets
The transitional fifth seal	The transitional fifth trumpet
Sixth end-time seal	Sixth end-time trumpet
Seventh seal—eternity	Seventh trumpet—eternity

The trumpets are also very similar to the seven last bowl-plagues in Chapter 16, and what are we to make of that? For now we will only say that while the trumpet-messages sound throughout the entire Church Age, the bowls are poured out during the last epoch of world history. The trumpets are said to affect only a third of mankind and the earth, but the bowls are poured out upon all of mankind and the earth. The overall message of the trumpet series is to show that the acts of Christ in ruling the earth are calls to repentance, though it appears that only a few will heed the call. The trumpets describe earthly events within and outside of the Church that God uses both to purge His people and to call the wicked and backslidden to repentance (9:20-21), while the bowls describe scenes of retribution on a largely wicked world, the execution of the final punishments that the trumpets warn will take place if man does not repent from his sins and worship God.

Bible scholars and commentators vary widely in their interpretations of the seven trumpets. From the trusted old men of God like Matthew Henry, Adam Clarke, and Barnes to the ones of our day, there is little agreement, even among those of the same method of interpretation. There are several difficulties that cause this diversity of opinion in the trumpets. The initial four trumpets are short pictures with very little detail to develop the scene. Each is only one sentence long, with just two or three Scripture clues to help in its interpretation. There is also the problem of determining whether the trumpets signal one-time events, or recurring conditions. And are they trumpeted to the world in general, or to the Church?

Not far into writing my own thoughts about the trumpets, I ran into a figurative wall. After much study, prayer, and healthy discussion with others, I rewrote most of what I had already written, for the problem was a foundational one: who are the intended recipients of the trumpets? That is, who is affected by their warning judgments? While the message is obviously for the whole world, I believe it is primarily directed to the Church of Christ on this earth, not to the world without Christ. The Book of Revelation was written to encourage and show Christians of all ages that they need to keep their eyes *on things above, not on things on the earth*. What benefit do we receive if these trumpets speak of the fall of the Jews at the hands of the Romans almost 2,000 years ago? Or if they describe the Roman Empire until its fall in A.D. 476? Or if they are symbols of general judgments that fall on the wicked earth throughout the Gospel Age? Are we encouraged to live more faithfully if they simply describe events that will take place after the Church has been raptured from the earth? The trumpets are of very limited benefit for Christians living the Gospel message if one uses any of these popular interpretations. The trumpets of the Old Covenant were used specifically for God's chosen people: in warning, announcement, and gathering them for battle. It should be similar here.

At first, it seems wrong to say that the trumpets affect the Church, seeing that these are disastrous and deadly acts of God. However, the trumpet plagues do not necessarily fall on the Christian, but upon the people of the earth as symbolized by the earth, sea, fresh waters, and heavens. As a side effect, Christians will die; this is the solemn prediction of the trumpets. When wars embroil the nations, many of the casualties are Christians. Natural disasters will claim Christians along with the wicked. Some who live a fruitful life for Christ will endure a slow, agonizing death by cancer. Other men with special talents are killed early in life by accidents that He could have miraculously stopped but didn't.

The mystery of why God allows pain and suffering in the lives of Christians when He could work a miracle has been explored and debated for millennia and will never be fully understood in this life. The trumpets provide some insight into this question and also help the Christian to understand

how God works in the affairs of men. In answer to the prayers of the saints, He manipulates the general events of the world for His purpose and the good of His Kingdom (Dan 2:21). He does not supernaturally keep every Christian from physical harm because that would mean removing them from the world itself, and that is contrary to the plan of salvation ordained from the very beginning. Jesus prayed *not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil* (John 17:15). God often does miraculously intervene and protect His people from harm, sometimes obviously and sometimes without them even knowing it. At other times He allows the course of nature to continue, and loved ones suffer pain and death. We will continue to wonder why until that heavenly day arrives in which all things will become open and plain. Most assuredly, God does love and care for those who trust in Him, shown in that a restricted amount (one-third only) suffer under the trumpet-warnings.

God also has a long history of coming in judgment upon His chosen people who have fallen away. The first four trumpets especially show that this continues into the Age of Grace as well. *Whose fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor* (Mt 3:12). Jesus is Lord and Ruler of His Kingdom on earth now, and He rules them with a *rod of iron*. The letters to the seven churches illustrate that Christ will not tolerate sin, laziness, or idolatry in His Church any more than God did in the OT Jewish Covenant.

As already explained in the introduction to this book, the keys to finding the true meaning of the trumpet scenes must be found by first contemplating the picture as a whole, and then applying the Scriptural implications of the symbols within that picture. There should be no disagreement or conflicts with other passages. It is as we use these tools to study and arrive at the purpose of the vision that we can really recognize to whom the trumpets are directed, and what their individual warning messages are saying. This we will do as the first trumpet sounds.

1. *And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.*

THE SEVENTH SEAL

When the *seventh seal* is opened there *was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour*. Verse 1 belongs in the previous chapter with the other seals, and closes the seal-vision. The seventh seal, following after the sixth, opens into heaven, after the world has come to an end. The heavenly silence that ensues is in stark contrast to the voices, thunderings, and earthquakes that are common throughout the Book (v5), and which describe the mighty acts of God. *Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before Him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about Him* (Ps 50:3). The silence in heaven indicates that the Day of the Lord is past, and for the followers of Jesus peace and rest will be their eternal joy. The silence also provides a break between the seals and the trumpets, and now we will see new symbols and a new setting telling the same story but with a new theme in mind.

2. *And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.*
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.*
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.*
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.*

THE PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS ANSWERED

As an introduction to the coming trumpets, John is shown the reason that they will sound out over the earth. Seven angels stand in readiness before God, each with a trumpet in his hand. However, God does not immediately command them to blow; He is waiting for something else to happen first. Then John sees another Angel approach the golden altar with a golden

censer and incense in His hand. As the prayers of the saints ascend upward, the Angel adds the incense to them, and together they ascend right up to the Throne of God. Now the Angel takes the censer and fills it with *fire of the altar* and throws it onto the earth, causing *voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.*

The picture is showing us the importance of a Church that prays for God to intervene in earth's events. The *prayers of the saints* move the Angel to throw down fire from heaven, and great signs are then seen and heard. Just as Elijah called down fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice at Mount Carmel, Christians should be calling on God for power to live and spread His Word across the globe. Probably the most neglected command in the Bible is to *pray without ceasing* (I Thes 5:17).

How important prayer is to God's people and even society in general. Prayer is what causes the Holy Spirit to move, whether in an individual, church, community, or nation. Many Christians know this is true at the individual level and even at the local church level, for they have had first-hand experience of the power of prayer. It is on the larger world-scale that we have grown weary in petitioning God for spiritual intervention. When we read the stories of great men of faith who lived years ago we see how drastically the Church has changed in the matter of prayer. Evangelistic meetings in a new area used to be held only after weeks of prayer and fasting, often all night long, and when the Gospel was preached, the Spirit was there in great power. Revivals swept across whole nations, and religion was the dominant topic of choice in speech, literature, music, and art.

The reason for the steep decline in morality and increasing apathy in the pursuit of God in our communities and nations comes from a restricting of the work of the Holy Spirit. Why? Godly fear, holiness, and commitment are lacking, and the prayers of the saints for God to act have weakened and faded to a wisp of smoke. The power of a kingdom is measured by the strength and will of its constituents. The Kingdom of Christ on this earth is measured in strength by how successful and powerful its members are at influencing communities to believe and do the works of Christ.

In these days the situation is more complex. The Church looks at society and its wickedness and rightfully distances herself even more as she attempts

to keep what she has. This leads to a divide of ever-increasing width between the Church and the world, and brings greater pressure than ever to yield to worldly values. Some churches take the opposite approach and become more like the world in order to attract converts. Soon they look and act no different than the rest of society. The whole scenario is exactly what we will see at the end of the world according to Revelation 20. The *camp of the saints* will be surrounded and slowly squashed smaller and smaller until the true Church of Christ is only a small band of lowly men and women. Suddenly fire falls from heaven and devours the wicked (Rev 20:9), and the remaining saints rise in triumph to heaven.

There are other reasons for the decline of prayer in our *peace and safety* churches. Does not the doctrine of eternal security diminish the necessity of prayer? For if a man's salvation has already been decided without his choice or input, then prayer is useless and powerless to save, intercession is a myth. Almost all of the influential Protestant teachers endorse the teaching of Calvinism, and while most would attempt to distance themselves from the previous sentence, the fact remains inescapable. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints* (Eph 6:18)—the Christian can change the very course of history. Prayer is the one power that a Christian cannot be without.

Prayer is a formidable weapon, but we have willingly laid it down. We clutch our shields and helmets close and tighten the ranks to protect our young, and yet the camp still dwindles and shrinks as age and lures of the flesh claim more and more victims. Pick up those weapons! Fight as Elijah, who was only a man and yet his prayer restrained rain from the earth for three and a half years. Give God a reason to send down fire from heaven, to see miracles of deliverance, and hear stories of the Spirit working in a community. Don't let the thought that "it's no use, the world is just too bad" stop us from trying. The Bible says that there will be devout Christians living when Christ returns, so every age must resolve to add as many to that number as possible.

Prayer is associated with incense often in Scripture. God told Moses to make a golden altar and place it in the Holy Place of the tabernacle, just outside the veil of the Holy of Holies. Every morning and evening the High

Priest was to offer sweet incense to the Lord upon this altar. The incense symbolizes prayer as the way to God, even as David says in Psalms 141:2, *Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense*. The Israelites are often rebuked for offering incense to Baal and other gods instead of Jehovah. They were praying to a false god and rejecting the one true God of heaven.

The perfume of the OT incense was to be carefully *beaten small* from three equal parts of special spices and then mixed with frankincense as described in Exodus 30:22. It was never to be mixed for personal use or even other ceremonial use. Anyone doing so was to be excommunicated. That recipe is safe from abuse even today because nobody can remember or decipher what the actual spices are that the ancient Hebrew words describe.

The scene presented in verses 3-6 is based on a special Jewish ceremony—the offering of the Atonement by the High Priest. The Day of Atonement was one of the most sacred of the priestly rituals, and provides a beautiful type of Christ taking our sins upon Himself. Read about the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16 and marvel at the beautiful way the Bible speaks specifically about the work of Christ the Messiah a thousand years before He came. A special part of the Atonement ceremony was when the High Priest would *take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail, and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not* (Lev 16:12-13).

Notice the close similarity of our passage in Revelation 8, with the Atonement ceremony. Jesus is our High Priest, now in heaven interceding for us before the Throne of Almighty God. *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. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need* (Heb 4:14). Such wonderful words of strength and encouragement!

The incense is offered *with the prayers of the saints*. This is the work of Christ and the Holy Spirit, *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 (Rom 8:26). The prayers of the saints ascend to heaven, to the very Throne of God, and He has promised to hear. Then the Angel hurls *fire from the altar* onto the earth, and the voice of God is heard, and His great power revealed. Not in obvious manifestation, but in acts of nature and human activity as He warns the backslidden and calls the sinner to repent. It takes sincerity and humility to recognize the hand of God in the normal events of our lives. It is even more difficult to change our behavior in response to God's trumpets. *None of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.*

The fire that falls from heaven by the hand of Christ yields *voices and thunders, and lightnings and an earthquake*, figuratively speaking of the acts of God on the earth. His hand shapes history and brings to naught the enemies of His people. He intervenes in earthly affairs for the good of His Kingdom. David says: *His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw, and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord* (Ps 97:4-5). (See glossary for more references.)

6. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

TRUMPETS ANNOUNCE IMPORTANT EVENTS

The prayers of the faithful have ascended to the Throne, and now the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets. There is a conspicuous division of the trumpets into sets of four and three. This is the divine arrangement of many of the sevens we will study in the Book of Revelation. The seven seals were also divided into four and three. The significance of this fact is not explained, but the numbers four and three are important in Biblical numerology. The number four represents the creation of God: the world, life, and the tangible universe, while the number three is associated with the Trinity and things spiritual, the intangible realm.

Trumpets were used in the OT to announce important events, like gathering the people for feasts and sacrifices, coronations, and for special proclamations. The sound of a trumpet was also a warning of danger. *Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem; and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry,*

gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the defenced cities (Jer 4:5, see glossary). *Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the Day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand* (Joel 2:1). The end of the world will also be announced with the *sound of a trumpet* (Mt 24:31; I Cor 15:52).

The seven trumpets announce things that will take place during the Gospel Age. They are alarms, calling men to acknowledge the Creator and to accept His Son, and they warn Christians to expect danger and tribulation. Man cannot escape from God, no matter how hard he tries. David said, *whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me* (Ps 139:7-10). This thought is a comfort to the righteous, but holds only an inevitable terror for the wicked.

The first four trumpets are closely related, and probably constitute one overall picture. The first falls on the *earth*, the second on the *sea*, the third on the fresh *waters*, and the fourth on the heavens. The four physical trumpets detail four general types of divine intervention in the affairs of men. Four represents the whole creation of God, the entire natural realm of the universe: land, sea, sky, and water.

God's trumpets of warning judgments usually fall within the normal events of the physical realm, rarely do they happen supernaturally. The power of nature was and is used by God to work His will among the nations of the world. David wrote that God *gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts* (Ps 78:48, 105:32). In the hand of God, nature is a tool, warning every man that he is a mortal. Human activities like war, economics, and government are also used by God for His purposes.

The Israelites were especially quick to attribute what would appear to be normal life circumstances to actually be the hand of God. *And the children of Israel did evil again in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years* (Judges 13:1). How did they know the Philistines were a judgment from God? There was no audible voice from heaven; they simply knew it because they had sinned, and they knew that punishment would follow: *wherefore the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem,*

and He hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes (II Chr 29:8). Do we see God's hand in the happenings of our lives as Israel did? Sometimes we wonder why God doesn't intervene sooner, but maybe we just don't recognize the many times that He has. Human advances have dulled nature's power, a good thing for man physically, but has it also dulled our spiritual senses, creating a feeling of safety and self-reliance at the expense of the pursuit of God?

God does not bring evil upon sincere Christians, but when the wrath of God fell on Israel, the righteous suffered too. God allows the course of history to continue as it may, working within nature to accomplish His purpose. There are times God, on His own, directly changes that course because of His people, but that is the exception rather than the rule. More often, God alters history on behalf of His people because of the prayers of the righteous. All of us have had brushes with death, where if we had been one or two seconds along on our path we would have had a serious accident. God is the reason for these deliverances. We should not forget however, that sometimes God does bring pain into the lives of Christians who have fallen away to get them to repent, and this is the illustration of the first trumpet.

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: PURGING THE CHURCH

The first angel trumpets and a distasteful concoction of *hail and fire mingled with blood* is thrown onto the *earth*, resulting in one-third of the *trees* and *grass* being *burnt up*. Think of a terrible, powerful storm sweeping over the earth. Huge hailstones fall from the sky and pound down on the land. The lightning is so bad that it ignites whatever it hits. Rain falls in torrents, but it's not water—it's blood. This storm is nasty and deadly, but it is not a physical storm, it's a picture that conveys a lesson for Kingdom saints.

We know the storm comes from God because it was His angel that cast it upon the earth. The first time we read about hail and fire in the Bible is in

Exodus 9, when Egypt was enduring the ten punishing plagues from God at the hand of Moses. That description is fearsome as well: *and Moses stretched forth his rod toward heaven: and the Lord sent thunder and hail, and the fire ran along upon the ground; and the Lord rained hail upon the land of Egypt. So there was hail, and fire mingled with the hail, very grievous, such as there was none like it in all the land of Egypt since it became a nation.* The hand of God in nature is also described by David in Psalms 148:8 as *fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling His word.* The reason for God's acts is to warn and punish those who are not obeying His commandments. *I smote you with blasting and with mildew and with hail in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the Lord* (Hag 2:17).

Hail and fire are also used in a figurative sense to describe divine vengeance by the armies of foreign kings whom God uses as tools for punishing those countries who have forgotten Him. Assyria was called a *tempest of hail* when her armies swept through Ephraim (Is 28:2), but then God supernaturally punished the Assyrian army as described two chapters later: *And the Lord shall cause His glorious voice to be heard, and shall shew the lighting down of His arm, with the indignation of His anger, and with the flame of a devouring fire, with scattering, and tempest, and hailstones* (Is 30:30). So we see that both literal hail and the figurative hail of war are warnings God uses to get our attention. He tries gently at first, but if we do not obey His *still small voice*, He must use His mighty *voice*—drastic measures that cause pain. Too often the mighty voice of God is misunderstood, and He is blamed for the pain, rather than acknowledged as the Almighty, all-wise One. The trumpets of God are a good thing in that they force man to take notice and make a decision. The trumpets will either draw man to God, or harden him to reject Him even more. This is illustrated later in Chapter 16, where one of the last plagues to fall on the earth is hail. However, *men blasphemed God because of the plague of hail*—they blamed Him for their pain rather than acknowledging that they deserved these plagues.

The *hail and fire* are even more dramatic in the Revelation than they are in the OT because they are *mingled with blood*, which symbolizes death by killing and murder. Blood is *the life of all flesh* (Lev 17:14) and under the Law, human blood was sacred. If a man shed another's blood, his own life was

required (Gen 9:5), even if only God knew of the murder. The brothers of Joseph were convinced that the reason for their troubles in Egypt was because God was requiring from them the blood of Joseph, their younger brother (Gen 42:22). Blood represents death by murder, though it can also represent spiritual death (see glossary).

The deadly mixture that is cast upon the earth destroys *the third part of trees, and all green grass*. The green *trees* symbolize righteous, strong-in-faith Christians (see glossary), and the *grass* seems to represent new Christians and the weak in faith (II Kings 19:26, James 1:10, I Peter 1:24). The meanings of these symbols is corroborated by the locusts of the fifth trumpet, which are not allowed to hurt the trees, grass, or any green thing, *but only those men who have not the seal of God in their foreheads* (9:4). If the trees and grass of the next chapter represent the people of God, as Revelation 9:4 definitely indicates, we should expect the same to be true here. Notice the distinct word selection: *trees* and *grass*. In a literal hailstorm, people would be much more concerned with the wheat crop, the livestock, and the house (Ex 9); who cares about the grass and trees? Obviously the Holy Spirit instructed John to write these words because of what they represent figuratively.

As to the number of Christians affected—one-third—we consider first the imagery of a tempest sweeping over the earth. The tempest does not engulf the entire world, but falls on various lands and nations of history. One-third is a symbolic, yet fixed number that represents all of those Christians that will die from this trumpet. Some of them may be Christian in name only; others are sincere men of faith.

It is important to keep in context the reason that God allows the trumpet judgment. Ezekiel 38:22 says, *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*. God *pleads* for repentance by sending judgments upon a land. Some will turn to God, many will not.

Notice the manner in which the *trees* and *grass* are affected. They don't just wither and die, they are *burned up*. This is an interesting word choice that adds a significant detail to the vision. The Greek word translated *burned up* is *katakaio*, and is virtually always used in passages describing the judgment of

those who have fallen away. Jesus said in John 15:6, *if a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned (katakaio)*. Again we are reminded that the acts of God on this earth are for both prompting repentance and pronouncing judgment. Those *trees* and *grass* that hear and respond to God's voice will not be burned up (spiritually). Christ will purge His Church from dross and apathy, for He is more concerned with the spiritual condition of man than the physical.

Earlier we wondered if the trumpets are one-time events, or events that will happen again and again throughout history. As with the message of the seven churches and message of the seven seals, we believe the trumpets should also not be limited to one historical event. Quite possibly there are world eras that generally fulfill the conditions of a particular trumpet, but just as tempests strike at different times and places across the globe, so God's unseen hand shapes the events of all world history. In that perspective the trumpets should be a never-ending reminder that while outwardly life continues as always, God is interested and active in earth's history behind the scenes. He directs the natural and spiritual world for the benefit of His purpose and will.

In summary, the first trumpet illustrates that the hand of God in the continuing events of history brings judgment on the wicked and is an alarm to those within the Church to examine their lives, to make sure that they are truly abiding in Christ. The storms will come in every person's life to try them, to sound the alarm against them, to warn the weak and failing, and to judge the wicked. The *earth* often represents the Christianized world, the people who have been exposed to the Gospel (see glossary). It is the stable and known area of man's existence in contrast to the vast *sea*, a symbol of the general world population of heathen nations.

One of the first tempests of purging the Church endured was during the decline of the Roman Empire in the fifth century A.D. Germanic tribes from the far north swept through the Empire and terrorized the land, sacking Rome several times. These raids slowly killed the Roman Empire, and yet they forced many apathetic Christians to examine their lives. The apostate Catholic Church, which blended Christ with other gods, was growing, and characterized the attitude of the era, but at least one good thing came from

this tempest: the barbarians terrorizing Rome returned to their lands with Christian captives, and the Gospel was spread even farther into the world. In some of these regions, Christianity even became the primary religion.

Tempests of purging occur throughout history, and are a sign of Christ's concern for His Kingdom. A severe political tempest struck Russia in the late 1800's, purging the Sardinian church there and forcing many of them to flee to the Americas. The Thirty-Year war in Europe was a fearful purging of the land, reducing the population of Europe by two-thirds. The war began as a conflict between Protestants and Catholics in the mid 1600's, and many Christians fled into Russia to escape the carnage. All these are christianized lands that had let the fires of their love for Christ burn low. We must heed the warning today if we wish to avoid the same chastening.

BIBLE MANUSCRIPTS AND TRANSLATIONS

We would like to make a peripheral comment at this point. Almost every other version of the Bible excluding the KJV and the NKJV adds the following phrase to verse 7: "and a third of the earth was burned up." This is a textual difference that can be traced back to the ancient manuscripts used in the translation of the Bible into English. There are roughly 5000 manuscripts in Latin, Greek, Syriac, etc. still in existence, and they agree very closely. From these manuscripts three texts have been formed from which the majority of English Bibles have been translated. The KJV and NKJV are translated from the Textus Receptus, which is based on several manuscripts of very high reputation. Most other English versions are translated from the Critical Text (Nestle Text), which relies heavily on the Alexandrian manuscript, which is very old, but of questionable accuracy. The third text is the Majority Text, which is formed by taking the majority position of all the ancient manuscripts. The arguments for which text is the most accurate is out of the scope of this book, but for the record, we believe that the Textus Receptus is the closest to the original autographs. The Majority Text is also a very reliable option. The Critical Text has excessive omissions, and cannot be trusted. Increasing numbers of Bible scholars have returned to the Majority Text, believing it is closer to the original autographs than single manuscripts.

The differences between Bible versions are not great, but we believe that any serious Bible scholar should use the Majority Text or the very similar Textus Receptus, as his final study text. We also should stress that the KJV is a translation of the original, inspired Word of God. Other translations have valid uses, for over time language changes, words acquire different meanings, and definitions become obsolete.

In verse 7, the phrase "and a third of the earth was burned up" is supported by the Majority Text, but not by the Textus Receptus, a rarity outside of the Book of Revelation. Adding the phrase does not change the meaning of the passage.

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;*
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.*

THE SECOND TRUMPET: THE CHURCH SPREADS

The second angel sounds and something like a *great mountain*, all afire, is thrown into the *sea*, causing a third of the sea to become blood, and killing a third of the living creatures in the sea and destroying a third of the ships. As we did with the first trumpet, we should begin by contemplating the overall picture to get an idea of the main point of the vision, and then examining the figurative details to complete the full purpose of the prophecy. Obviously, the overall vision here portrays some great event, catastrophe, or influence that brings great peril, and leads to the death of many. The natural world seems to be the setting for the second trumpet, though we should keep in mind that the Revelation is written to the Church, and God's chief concern is for the spiritual condition of His people. From the beginning that has been the reason for prophecy. The OT prophets were sent to warn the backslidden Israelites of God's impending judgments if they did not repent and serve God. Those warnings are equally true in the Age of Grace.

Before offering an interpretation for this trumpet, let's research the meaning of the symbols in the passage, some of which we have already defined. Adding these details to the vision may help us to determine the intent of the trumpet-prophecy.

The *sea* represents the collective heathen world population, as explained earlier (see glossary). Figuratively, the *sea* and the *earth* are almost similar, for both represent the peoples and nations of the world. The *sea*, however, refers to the non-Christian nations of the world, while the *earth* seems to represent those nations that at least nominally are classified as Christian. Often, the prophets of the OT addressed their warnings to the *earth*, by which they meant rebellious Israel (see Is 24). When they spoke of the Gentile nations, they used the sea as a figurative term. Consider Isaiah 60:5, which foretells the opening of the Gospel to all men: *then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.* In Chapter 13 we will read about a beast that arises out of the sea, and then another one that comes out of the earth, a reverse order of the first two trumpets.

The meaning of the fiery mountain that is cast into the sea is a little more difficult to unmistakably determine. A country, like Assyria or Ephraim, is occasionally called a *mountain* in the OT, but far more often a figurative mountain refers to the Kingdom of God on earth—the *holy mountain* (see glossary). The fact that this is a *great* mountain and is burning with fire inclines us to believe that this mountain represents the Church of God. Only three other times in Scripture do we read of a *great mountain*, and all are prophecies about the Church. Revelation 21:10 mentions a *great and high mountain*, further described as *the Lamb's wife*, or *holy Jerusalem*—the Church. The most important occurrence is in Daniel's vision of the image during the reign of King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. Daniel saw a huge image with a gold head, silver body, brass legs, and feet of iron and clay. He watched *till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces...and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth* (Dan 2:34-35).

Daniel interpreted this vision to be foretelling the next four kingdoms on earth, Nebuchadnezzar being the 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.* These were the kingdoms of Medo-Persia and Greece. *And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise* (Dan 2:36-45). This was the fearful Roman Empire, which ruled the known world for 800 years. The vision concludes with a prediction of the coming of Christ during the days of the Roman Empire, and of how He would establish His Kingdom which will never end: *And in the days of these kings [of Rome] 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, forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold* (Dan 2:44). (Read the whole vision in Daniel 2, and again in Daniel 7.)

The stone that Daniel saw was just beginning to become the *great mountain* in the days of John. What happens when the fiery mountain of the Kingdom of Christ is cast into the nations of the world? One third of the sea turns to blood, a third of the living sea creatures die, and a third of the ships are destroyed. It is a massive, tumultuous event with widespread effects for the entire world.

Certainly nothing has influenced more people and affected more of the crucial events of history than the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Wars have been fought, nations established, people oppressed, knowledge expanded, and countries developed, all because of the authority and teaching of one Man. Even secular historians concede that nothing and nobody has affected the lives of more people than Jesus Christ. The Kingdom of Christ has influenced earth's history more powerfully than any dynasty, force, or nation for the last 2,000 years. All the kingdoms of history with their armies, rulers, and governments combined have not affected man as much as has the Kingdom of Christ.

Futurists apply Daniel's vision to the Millennial reign of Christ. But the text says plainly that during the *days of these kings* of the fourth kingdom

(Rome) God would set up His everlasting Kingdom, and that is exactly what happened. Jesus came in the middle of the Roman Empire's history, saying, *I will build My church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. He gave to Peter the *keys of the Kingdom* (Mt 16:18-20), for Peter was the one by whom the Gospel was opened to the Gentiles (Acts 10). By the power of the Holy Spirit the spiritual Kingdom of Christ grew into a great and mighty force which will never end. When we see a prophecy so directly fulfilled, it makes no sense to look for another application.

The mountain John saw was *burning with fire*, implying that it was active, under the control of the Spirit. The picture is similar to Moses' experience with the burning bush that was not consumed (Ex 3:2). Throughout the Scriptures, fire is a symbol of the Holy Ghost, shown in power at Pentecost when He first appeared as *cloven tongues like as of fire* (Acts 2:3) descending on the early believers. The Greek word *kaio* in verse 8 translates "on fire," and is different from *katakaio* in the first trumpet, which translates "completely burned up." (See Revelation 8:8 in the NIV.)

The Book of Hebrews speaks at length about this Spirit-led *holy mountain of God*, contrasting the OT *Mount Sinai* to the NT *Mount Zion*: *For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire...and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more... But ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, 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, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Covenant... Wherefore we receiving a Kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire* (Heb 12:18-29). The Kingdom of Christ is a spiritual force that moves men to honor God above all else, even unto death.

The picture of the sea becoming blood would indicate death and murder of the innocent. Notice that it *became* blood, differing from the two witnesses in Revelation 11:6, who had *power to turn them to blood*. The language implies that turmoil, persecution, and death will follow the spread of the Gospel into the world. History certainly tells us that this has been the

case. Great missionaries like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, and Hudson Taylor suffered terribly for Christ and countless unknown others endured equal struggles as they labored in foreign lands. They died from disease, accidents, elements of nature, murder, and war, but their lives and unwavering commitment continue as a testimony forever. We may wonder why God allows some to die early when they are clearly so useful to Him, but as we noted in the first trumpet, God's plan will never be fully understood in this life.

The third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed (v9). The death of living creatures likely refers to Christians dying for Christ. The Greek word for *life* (*psuche*) appears often in the NT, and always refers to the soul or human breath of life (6:9, 12:11, 16:3, 20:4). There are not many creatures in the sea that have life in the sense of being air-breathing animals (whales, seals, dolphins), and yet living creatures are the symbol John was given. Spiritually alive Christians definitely seem to be the meaning of this symbol.

A third of *ships* are also destroyed, and the symbolism here would point to individual churches or congregations. A ship is the sailor's life on the ocean, it is a place of safety and refuge. Noah's ark carried the eight righteous souls of the ante-diluvian world safely through the Great Flood, and baby Moses was spared death by taking refuge in an ark. The loss of one's faith is likened to a *shipwreck* in I Timothy 1:19. Jonah's experience on a ship is also instructive. Because he was out of God's will, Jonah was not allowed to stay on his ship of refuge, and after he was cast out the sea became calm. When severe persecution comes, churches are forced to either leave, or go underground. Often the underground church is a living and fervent group of Christians, though their witness is limited.

We gave several examples of historical fulfillments for the first trumpet (page 178), and re-reading those will reveal that the second trumpet's fulfillments often closely follow the first. The tempests that purge the Church spur Christians into moving into other lands, spreading the Gospel as they go. The purging of the Russian Church, for instance, brought Christianity to unreached parts of Paraguay, Mexico, and Canada. The tempest of the Reformation brought Christianity to the New World, at great sacrifice of

life. But the most powerful fulfillment of the second trumpet was when the Apostles and early Church spread the Gospel like wildfire throughout the Roman world, *turn[ing] the world upside down* with their Spirit-inspired power and boldness (Acts 17:6).

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;

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 TRUMPET: FALSE TEACHINGS

The third trumpet sounds and a star falls from heaven and strikes one-third of the fresh waters of the earth, making them bitter and causing many men to die. The symbolic details of this vision point to poisonous false doctrines being introduced into the pure wells of salvation by treacherous religious leaders. These false teachers deceive many into sin and complete spiritual death.

Most probably the *great star* is a symbol for Satan, an interpretation we support with the following points. 1) John sees the star fall from heaven. The language is very similar to Luke 10:18, where Jesus said, *I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven*. 2) The star is *burning as it were a lamp* (Gk-*lampas*), and thus purports to be a light-giver (see page 99), a deceitful method of Satan, who *himself is transformed into an angel of light* (II Cor 11:14). The *seven spirits of God* were represented by *seven lamps of fire burning before the Throne* (4:5), and the fact that this star burns like a lamp hints that it is of a similar spiritual nature. 3) Three verses later John sees another star, already fallen to earth. Though it cannot be proven, we believe the two stars symbolize the same person, and virtually everyone identifies the second star as Satan. 4) The star's mission is to poison the truth. Though many notorious men in history have had the same goal, Satan is the grandmaster of deception, and is the real mind behind all such attempts. If we are looking for the greatest deceiver the world has ever known, the search is over: Satan is the culprit.

The star falls and corrupts a third of the *rivers and fountains of waters*. These fresh waters supply the people with life, refreshing the spiritual soul. In Scripture, pure water is a symbol of the cleansing work of God in forgiving our sins. *I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely* (21:6). (See glossary for more verses on this symbol.) When the Israelites journeyed through the wilderness they came to *Marah*, which means “bitter.” There the water was so bitter that nobody could drink it, and Moses instructed them to throw a tree into the water which made it sweet (Ex 15:23). Under the symbolism of the third trumpet, the sweet waters are made bitter by a corrupting influence which pollutes and poisons the pure Word of God. The name of the star is *Wormwood*, which means, “bitter.”

There are many false doctrines which have muddied the pure water of the Word. The letters to the churches (Rev 2-3) reveal that just 50 years after Christ many areas were facing problems related to false teachers. In the early centuries of the Church false doctrines greatly multiplied as the Devil came and sowed tares among the wheat. Water is essential for life, but poisonous drinking water kills. A person may be only sickened by drinking a little poison once, but drink too much at once, or just a little too long and you will die.

Many examples could be given of false teachers and their doctrines, but the Roman Catholic Church surely holds the all-time world record. Historically, no denomination has influenced more people with wrong Bible interpretation and doctrine than Catholicism, but sadly, many Protestants have overtaken her and gone even farther into false doctrine. The religion of Islam has also corrupted the true plan of salvation, bringing spiritual death to millions by its false teachings; the seven churches of Revelation geographically now belong to Islam. (Read more about Islam and prophecy on page 191.) The purpose of the third trumpet is to warn the true Church to beware of all poisonous waters—*damnable heresies*, as Peter calls them. Just a little poison is all it takes to sicken and kill the soul. There are many that distort the Word and lead the simple astray, and their number will continue to grow as the Day of the Lord nears.

The question may be asked, “When did the fall of the star take place?” We will fully answer that in Chapter 12 of the next section. As far as the trumpet

series is concerned, note that the first trumpet began early in Church history, for of the seven churches only two did not bear reproach for allowing false teachers to lead them astray. Four of the churches needed some purging, and one was ready for judgment. The second trumpet pictured the Mountain of God hurled into the nations of the world—also an early event that will continue to the end of the age. Now, as the third trumpet sounds we are not surprised to see the pattern continued. Satan was cast out of heaven when Jesus defeated him by His death and resurrection, and he roams the earth desperately trying to wreck God's plan and corrupt mankind in the short time he has left. The trumpets are events that begin at a particular time, but they do not simply stop. They continue to sound the alarm within the Kingdom of Christ until the day of repentance and salvation has ended.

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 TRUMPET: SIN IN THE CHURCH

We come to the fourth and final trumpet to sound upon the Church of Christ—the last three will afflict the world in general. As the angel trumpets, the heavens are smitten so that a third of their light is darkened. The picture is that of a partial darkness which restricts the amount of light the earth receives. Both day and night are darkened by a third.

The darkening of the sun, moon, and stars occurs several times in prophetic contexts, and therefore we take them to have one meaning. Several times when God sends judgment upon a land, the heavens become figuratively dark. God says of Egypt, *and when I shall put thee out, I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light* (Eze 32:7). God created the sun and moon to rule the day and night (Gen 1:16), and the disruption of this day/night cycle indicates great calamities, judgments, and strife (Luke 21:25). Compare the picture here with the sixth seal-vision, when the sun became black as sackcloth, the

moon turned to blood, and the stars fell to earth as the whole heaven dissolved. That was the final judgment, but the fourth trumpet is only a warning judgment, though fatal to those who do not heed it.

We believe this trumpet represents the withdrawing of God's support from those churches that are not doing His will and the varied warnings and judgments He sends to awaken them from their spiritual slumber. The church of Laodicea is an example of this sad condition, and provides a lesson for all Christian churches. Hypocrites and those with hidden sin beware, Christ leads His sheep with staff and rod; He will punish those who are corrupted with sin. Within the churches there will be deceivers, dressed *in sheep's clothing* but who are actually *wolves* (Mt 7:15, Acts 20:29). These will be judged for their iniquity. They will receive signs and warnings first, for the Spirit is longsuffering. He will not be ignored indefinitely however, and when the time allotted for repentance has passed, judgment will follow in some form or another.

The fourth seal and fourth trumpet are companions, both symbolizing the coming of God in judgment on a people who have gone too far into sin. The repetition of this theme here and later in the Revelation holds significance for all of God's people—He will not tolerate rebellion and sin in those who profess to know Him. He rules with *a rod of iron*; false teachers and straying sheep will both feel His punishment. The sun is a symbol of God's justice and righteousness, and the picture of a smitten sun indicates that God's favor is withdrawn from the nominal church (see page 376).

Darkness symbolizes sin, spiritual oppression and wickedness. The darkening of the heavens describes a condition of spiritual poverty and lethargy in the Church, which is the reason that this judgment is brought upon her. Men's evil deeds and the love of *darkness rather than light* will bring punishment: *God is not mocked, for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap* (Gal 6:7). The present age of the Church needs this message in particular, for the Kingdom is filled with *wolves* and *dogs*, living a religion of self and sin.

The darkening of the heavens is often used in figurative contexts to describe political struggle and the failure of earthly authority because of civil

war or natural disasters like crop failure, earthquake or fire (see glossary). The two World Wars of the 20th century are prime examples of such warning judgments. We are not saying that God sent these wars, but that He used them for His inscrutable purpose. The current condition of Haiti is another example of this warning trumpet. Sin and outright Satanism has brought turmoil and danger in Haiti that many have linked to a limiting of God's Spirit there.

13. And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, 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!

A NEW SERIES INTRODUCED

John sees an angel flying through the heavens announcing that the next three trumpets are *woe* trumpets, worse than the previous four, and different in character. This effectively breaks the trumpet series into two parts. The first part consists of four trumpets directed to those within the Church, but the three *woe* trumpets of the second part are specifically for those outside the Church (9:4, 20). Instead of an angel flying through heaven, the Majority Text and the Nestle Greek Text read that John heard an eagle flying through the heaven. By the context, it would certainly appear that *angel* is more likely to be the correct translation, for the message is from heaven, and eagles are not normally employed as talking messengers. The Greek words for angel and eagle are very similar, and the difference is probably due to a copying error. (See page 179).

The triple pronunciation of *woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth* is significant. A few chapters later, the same phrase precedes the Devil's great rage at being cast down to the earth (12:12). As we read into Chapter 9 we will see the Devil and his demons working feverishly to advance their goal of wrecking God's plan, and corrupting His creation. The declaration of *woe,*

woe, woe, warns that the next three trumpets will be even more serious and frightening than the previous four.

The sounding of the fifth trumpet concerns the general population of the earth, the people of the world who are not part of the Kingdom of God. The people of God are seen completely outside the realm of the fifth trumpet and first half of the sixth trumpet. While the first four trumpets warned of dangers within the Kingdom of Christ, the next two describe the wicked kingdom of the Devil and its coming destruction at the end of the world. The angel proclaims that this woe will affect all the inhabitants of the earth; the wicked directly, and the people of God as influenced by the proponents of Satan.

The meanings of the Four Trumpets can be briefly summarized:

Hail, fire, and blood	The acts of God on earth purge the Church, punish the wicked.
The great mountain	The Church is cast into the world; many will die for Christ.
The wormwood star	False doctrines being taught in the Church will poison many.
The heavens darkened	God withdraws from the apostate church.

REVELATION CHAPTER ΠΙΠΕ



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.*
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.*

INTRODUCING THE FIFTH TRUMPET: ISLAM?

There is a definite change as the fifth trumpet begins the final three woes. The recipients of the woe trumpets are no longer the *green trees* or the *fountains of water*, but *only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads* (v4). The pictures of the fifth and sixth trumpet become ghastly, unearthly, and demonic. The language conveys a condition of terror and torment, of hell itself, though the setting is obviously on earth. The mind

and mental part of man rather than the physical become the focus of the prophecy. There probably is not a more terrible description of life on earth in the entire Bible than that of the next two trumpets. The torments these people endure make them wish that they could die, but they are even unable to kill themselves.

Several interpretations have been advanced concerning the fulfillment of these two trumpets. The most common and certainly possible one applies the *star* in verse 1 to the Moslem world's first chieftain, Mohammed, and the *locusts* to the great hordes of Arab fanatics who have terrorized much of the civilized world since they appeared in the seventh century A.D. Only the famous Battle of Tours in 732 checked the Moslems from completely conquering Europe, and most definitely God's unseen hand intervened there. For years after their defeat at Tours, they remained content mostly to fight among themselves and not bother outsiders. But today with the rise of national Israel and its American supporters, Muslim nations are attempting to unite in jihad against Christian and Jewish "infidels."

Associations with Islam are apparent in the description of the great locust army of Chapter 9. Their war-like attitude, long hair, cavalry-type fighting, and great numbers aptly describe the Muslim armies of the past. There, however, the comparison breaks down, and a few questions arise. First, notice the locusts are not permitted to kill men, but may only torment them. The advance of Islam, on the other hand, brought both physical and spiritual death to the nations and people it conquered. Second, the duration of the locust army is only five months, a time-period I see as incompatible with Islamic history, though several attempts have been made by others to reconcile them. Third, the enigmatic statement that men shall *seek death but shall not find it* does not square with early Islam, when the Arabs were often greeted as deliverers by the people they conquered. Nor does it agree with the current wave of Muslim suicide bombers. Finally, while Islam today is a very corrupt, deceptive and evil religion, its founding was actually an improvement upon the many gods and pagan beliefs of its time and place. Mohammed, an illiterate and uneducated thinker, saw the polyglot religions of paganism, apostate Eastern Catholicism, and corrupt Judaism around him and attempted a religious return to the one Creator-God who controls all things. He believed

that God had chosen him as the last prophet to the world because the Jews and Christians (whom he respectfully called “the people of the Book”) had neglected God’s revelations to them. Much of the Koran is actually taken from the Bible, though it is greatly distorted.

Islam appears to be better represented by the third trumpet of the poisoning of the spiritual waters of life. Only three world religions believe there is just one God who created and controls all things: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three claim the Book of Genesis, but then they rapidly diverge. Mohammed said Jesus was a prophet from God, but rejected Him as being the Son of God sent to redeem the world. According to II John 1:7, this makes Islam an antichrist. A drink from spiritual waters without Christ is just like drinking poison, and will lead to spiritual death. Jesus said, *I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man comes to the Father but by Me* (John 14:6). Some sincere Muslim seekers have converted to Christianity because of what the Koran has to say about Jesus Christ, but Islam itself greatly distorts God and the Bible.

The impact of Islam on religious man should not be underestimated. During the Dark Ages in Europe, the Islamic world to the east was the intellectual center of the world, making key advances in math and science. Islamic cities like Cordoba and Istanbul grew from humble towns to great metropolitan powers, while Roman cities were being abandoned into total ruin. Today that has changed. The Muslims are a backward, relatively uncivilized and barbaric society, a breeding ground for angry fanatics and extremists bent on terrorism, suicide, and murder. An estimated 1.2 billion Muslims live on planet Earth, making up one-fifth of the world’s population. With 2 billion nominal adherents, Christianity alone outnumbers this fractious, false religion.

Islam is indisputably a corrupted form of Christianity, and it has led to the spiritual death of millions of people. It is more than just a man’s attempt to make a new religion; it is Satan’s attempt not only to subvert the truth of the Gospel, but to counterfeit God’s plan of salvation. Religion by general definition is the way to God, but the way of Islam will not lead to God. Satan has authored this religion as a deceptive counterfeit to true Christianity, and many have been poisoned by it. Even a fake religion brings a sense of security to its believers, though it is false, worthless security. God created in humans

the need for worship, and Satan has not hesitated to corrupt that need by filling it with a sinister counterfeit religion that leads to death.

THE LOCUSTS: SATAN'S DEMONS

If the demon-locusts are not Muslims, what are they? Several key phrases would indicate that very possibly they are evil spirits afflicting men, specifically relating to that time just before the end of the world when Satan must be loosed from his prison for a little season (Rev 20:1-7). To support this view, we first need to understand the history of the Devil and his demons.

When Jesus rose from the dead, Satan's authority was destroyed (Heb 2:14). No longer was he permitted in heaven where he could stand and accuse men on earth for their iniquity (Rev 12:10) as he had been able to do earlier (see Book of Job). Now Jesus could rightfully claim for Himself any man that Satan had corrupted, for He had paid the purchase price for their iniquity with His sinless life and shed blood. Now if Satan tries to accuse a Christian of sin (and all have sinned), Jesus can say, "Out Satan, I have bought this man, and your accusations are therefore meaningless."

That is why Jesus foresaw *Satan as lightning fall from heaven* (Luke 10:18) at His resurrection. Jesus' victory means that Satan has been cast out of heaven into the *bottomless pit*, where he must wait for the inevitable final judgment that will consign him forever to the Lake of Fire. This was all part of the plan of God from the foundation of the world, and a detailed picture of it will be given under the vision of Chapter 12. The Bible is also clear that Satan and his demons will be released from their prison for a short time just before Christ returns. They will deceive people on a scale unprecedented in all history, bringing sin and wickedness to a level that Jesus compared to that of Noah's day, when *every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually* (Gen 6:5). Exactly how this demonic army afflicts man is not clear, but a few details can be found in Chapter 9.

The most significant point that links this passage to the loosing of Satan concerns the *bottomless pit* (Gk—*abussos*). Comparing the different Greek words, the *bottomless pit* is neither *hades* (the waiting place of the wicked dead) nor *gehenna* (the eternal state of wicked men and angels), but is rather

the waiting place (*tartaroo*) of the fallen angels until the day of judgment (Jude 1:6, II Peter 2:4). The fallen angels were evidently free to roam the earth at will before the resurrection of Christ, but they knew and dreaded the day that they would be confined to the abyss. The legion of devils that Jesus cast out of the man of the Gadarenes (Luke 8:26) begged Him not to send them into the *deep* (Gk—*abussos*). Did He really listen to their plea? I think it more likely that He waited until that day His victory over Satan was complete. Then He cast them all into that *bottomless pit*. This is not at all to say that Satan has been rendered entirely helpless. As a spirit, he is still far more powerful than any human being, but his authority and range of destruction has been limited, just as a chained lion is only dangerous within the boundaries his leash allows. The *bottomless pit* is probably not a literal place, but is a symbolic way of illustrating the restricted power of Satan and his demons.

The demon-locusts are granted their power from God, and He has limited their boundaries (9:3). (Read more about this in Chapter 20, where a complete dissertation on the binding of Satan is given.) Here in Chapter 9 we read that the *bottomless pit* is opened and the Destroyer's army is released. Nowhere in Scripture do we read that the *bottomless pit* will be opened before the little season at the end of the world, but three more times after this the Revelation alludes to the opening of the *bottomless pit* at the beginning of Satan's little season (see 11:7, 17:8, and 20:1). Consistent interpretation would say that this passage also describes that time period, giving details the other passages do not.

Another indication that this passage relates specifically to the end-time can be seen in comparing the sections of the Revelation to each other. The seven seals began with four visions concerning the life of the Church, while the seven trumpets begin with four visions concerning the purifying of the Church. The fifth seal describes the saints waiting *for a little season* (6:11) until the iniquity of the earth has reached its full measure, at which time the wrath of God revealed by the sixth seal will fall on sinful man. Similarly, the fifth trumpet describes the rise of Satan in the world, which precedes the wrath of God revealed by the sixth trumpet. Again, consistent comparative interpretation would indicate these probably refer to the same time, especially when we see this repeated once more in the vision of the seven vials in

Chapter 16. (See the end of this chapter for a chart showing a side-by-side listing of these three sections.)

Finally, the graphic description of the locust army points to a fulfillment in the spirit world, not the tangible human world in which we live. Locusts in name only, these winged creatures have faces like men, hair like women, indestructible armor, lion's teeth, and scorpion-like tails. They make a rushing sound as of horses running to battle. Especially key is that they cannot kill, only paralyze and torment whomever they sting. There is no close equivalent of this description anywhere else in the Bible, though there are several passages that will provide some insight.

THE DIFFICULTY OF EXPLAINING PROPHECY YET FUTURE

If indeed the locusts are symbolic of the Satanic demon-army that will be released during the *little season*, we must acknowledge that it cannot be definitely proven by a simple study of the symbolism which we are using to interpret the Revelation. Fulfilled prophecy can be understood and appreciated by comparing the events of the past with the prophet's prediction, but prophecy of the future is not so easily confirmed. We can make out only the dim outline of what will take place; the details may not make sense until we see them fulfilled.

Consider the prophecies of the Messiah. Devout Jews at the time of Christ knew all about the promise of a coming Saviour, but like the Ethiopian eunuch they were completely baffled by some of the details (Acts 8:27). They just didn't make sense until after the Messiah had come and fulfilled those prophecies exactly. Over the next few pages the thoughts presented are given to support the view that the locust-army is the loosing of Satan and his demons during his *little season* before the end of the world. I offer this interpretation as one that makes sense to me, but admit that it is the most difficult vision of the Revelation, and one of the most puzzling passages of all Scripture. For those interested in the view that these two trumpets refer to the Moslems, we recommend F.G. Smith's book, The Revelation Explained.

SATAN OPENS THE BOTTOMLESS PIT

The fifth trumpet reveals a *star* that has fallen from heaven, and the star is given permission to open the *bottomless pit*. The KJV sounds as if John sees the star in the act of falling, but the Greek verb tense would show that the star had already fallen, which also makes more sense if the star is Satan. Most prophecy scholars agree that the star symbolizes Satan, because the star cannot be a literal one—stars cannot operate keys. In figurative contexts, stars often symbolize spirit beings (see glossary). This star is associated with the *bottomless pit*; he is probably the king of the *pit* mentioned in verse 11, whose name is *Apollyon*, or Destroyer. The star is *given* the key to the bottomless pit; he does not escape from it on his own. God is always in total command of every part of His creation, and His purpose cannot be prevented by man or evil spirit.

Upon the opening of the pit, a huge cloud of *smoke* rises into the air darkening the light of the sun. As shown under the symbolism of the fourth trumpet, the darkening of the heavenly bodies symbolizes sin, and the inevitable punishment that follows. Here only *the sun* is darkened. By itself, the sun often represents God, and in this verse would mean that God in the consciences of men is darkened. The black domain of the Devil in the fifth trumpet contrasts with the brightness of the Kingdom of Christ, where *the Sun of righteousness arise[s] with healing in His wings* (Mal 4:2).

The *smoke* hides the demons as they come out of the pit, so that people do not recognize them for what they are and where they are from. Such is the condition of men who have not the Light of Truth to expose error and deceit. Neglecting God's law brought spiritual night on Israel as foretold in Micah 3:6-7, *Therefore night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God.* No answer of God. What a scary and hopeless thought, and yet it is just. The people of Micah's day allowed themselves to be deceived and blinded, expecting God to answer them even while they lived in complete disregard of His laws. The darkness caused by the smoke of the pit is an ugly

picture of widespread sin, lawlessness, and wickedness. These men do not even call upon God, or care about Him.

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.*
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.*

UNNATURAL LOCUSTS

Onto the sin-darkened earth come *locusts* which have been given the authority to sting people as a scorpion does. Locusts have a remarkable reputation in the Old Testament as being the worst instrument of plague from the animal kingdom to afflict man. While most of the other judgments and plagues God brings on man are natural phenomena like hail, fire, pestilence, earthquakes, epidemics, famine, and heat, locusts are simply little insects, but with amazing destructive power. Early in Israelite history God warned that He would allow their crops to be destroyed by locusts if they disobeyed Him (Deut 28:38, 42; II Chr 7:13; I Kings 8:37; Nahum 3:15). The children of Israel remembered how the locusts had wrecked the land of Egypt: *And the locusts went up over all the land 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* (Ex 10:14-15). These literal locusts were more than pests; they ate up crop and fruit until not one green thing was left in Egypt.

The prophet Joel draws on the history of these locusts as he figuratively describes the coming punishment of Israel because of her unrepentant iniquity. He pictures a land that has been completely devastated by locusts, so that the *whole land mourneth*. The fields are bare, the vineyards wasted, trees debarked, and all creatures are dying of hunger. It is *a day of darkness and of gloominess,*

a day of clouds and of thick darkness. He describes the locusts as having the appearance of horses, and with the noise of chariots on the tops of mountains shall they leap, like the noise of a flame of fire that devoureth the stubble, as a strong people set in battle array. Before their face the people shall be much pained. They shall run like mighty men; they shall climb the wall like men of war; and they shall march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks: neither shall one thrust another; they shall walk every one in his path: and when they fall upon the sword, they shall not be wounded. They shall run to and fro in the city; they shall run upon the wall, they shall climb up upon the houses; they shall enter in at the windows like a thief (Joel 2). In Joel's day this probably had immediate reference to the armies of Babylon under King Nebuchadnezzar, but notice the locusts' seeming invincibility and unity of purpose. They cannot be hurt, even by sword, nor can they be deceived into killing each other.

There is an unmistakable and ominous connection between the locust army of Joel and the locust army of Revelation 9. Joel's fearful picture of destruction should lay the appropriate groundwork for understanding the meaning of the demon-locusts in the Book of Revelation. Locusts are insects and therefore not living creatures in the sense of having the breath of life. A locust plague is different from most other Biblical plagues because it indirectly harms man. The locusts of Revelation 9 do not look anything like literal locusts; in fact, they share exactly one characteristic—wings. Though in name they are locusts, it is the features of the whole creature that forms the symbolism, and these features we will now study. The picture in both passages is that of great flying hordes of ravenous critters, making the locusts an appropriate symbol for demonic spirits, and that is what we believe they represent.

The locusts may not hurt the *grass, trees, or any green thing*. These are symbols for the people of God as detailed earlier (see 8:7, glossary). Their victims are allowed to be *only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads* (v4). This fits well with what little we know about Satan's demons. Paul declares that *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* (Eph 6:12), but that these can never separate us from God (Rom 8:38). The *wiles of the Devil* will cause us to fall into temptation if

we are not clothed with the *armor of God*, but demons are powerless over the true Christian with the Holy Spirit in command of his life.

Today, popular belief is that demonic attacks on Christians are commonplace, but this does not agree with the experience of the early Church or with the rest of Scripture. In fact, the closest example we have of demonic attack on a Christian in the NT would be the *thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan* that buffeted Paul (II Cor 12:7). Contrast this with the joy of the seventy which returned *saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name* (Luke 10:17). The true Christian should not fear demons, he should fear being enticed by *his own lust* (James 1:14). Consider Luke 10:19, *Behold, I give you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy and nothing shall by any means hurt you*. Satan's demons fear and flee from the very name of Christ, for their condemnation is certain and they know that soon the punishing sentence of Hell will be carried out.

Demons do have power over non-believers, and can even enter their bodies and take over their minds and actions if given that person's consent. In this there appears to be a limiting of Satan's power, for before Christ demons apparently were able to indwell men, animals, and even children as they desired. Christ and His Apostles cast out many unclean spirits, but after the resurrection there are only a couple references to demon possession in the Bible, both in the Book of Acts. Perhaps the *little season* will see much more demon possession in the world, and there are many who believe and offer examples that this is rapidly increasing even today. The Christian can take comfort that *greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world* (I John 4:4); these sinister locusts have no power over those sealed by the Holy Spirit. Though we respect the power of Satan, we should not give His demons more power than God has given them. Demons fear and tremble at the greater power of a Spirit-filled Christian. However, if a Christian allows sin and doubt into his life, it will open a crack in his spiritual armor and will give Satan and his demons permission to attack. *Neither give place to the Devil* (Eph 4:27) means giving him an opportunity or right to be in our vicinity. Satan is a *roaring lion* and man is no match against his spiritual powers. Putting on the *whole armour of God* we must actively *resist the Devil, and he will flee* (James 4:7).

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.*
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 OF THE DEMON-LOCUSTS

Special attention is given in describing how the locusts inflict harm. They do not eat plants or vegetation; instead, they attack men. Their only weapon is a scorpion-like tail with stingers that severely hurt, but do not kill. Throughout this passage we are reminded that God is in control of all. Notice how often we read that “it was permitted them” or “they were commanded not to hurt the grass.” That the power of the locusts is limited to tormenting their victims (v5) fits well with the power of demons, for demons are not able to kill, at least not spiritually, and probably not physically. The demons do have power to tempt men into sin, and sin leads to spiritual death. This is the meaning of the torment they inflict. Jesus warns us to *be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him* (Luke 12:4-5).

Nevertheless, the torment that the locusts bring is great enough to cause the wicked to despair of life, wishing they could end it all by committing suicide, though they are unable to carry out their wish. What exactly this means I am not sure. We do hear many stories of the unsaved choosing death as an escape from the perceived futility and vanity of life. Others live a miserable existence, tormented by their own fears, mistrust, and sinful life. The two good witnesses of Revelation 11:10 *tormented them that dwelt on the earth* too. Their righteous lives were a constant reminder to the wicked that they were living contrary to God’s law and thus were guilty before Him, and this tormented the wicked. The torment portrayed in verse 6 hints at the terrors of eternal Hell itself, and resembles the sixth seal’s description of the wicked as they implored the mountains and rocks to fall and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb (6:16). They too wished for death, but it eluded them.

The torment of the locusts is likened to the sting of a scorpion (v10). The only other place we read about a sting in the Bible is in I Corinthians 15:55-56, where sin and death are likened to a sting: *O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.* These stings are powerless to harm the Christian, for the very next verse proclaims: *but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* The sting is sin. And it leads to death.

Years ago in Central America I was stung by a scorpion. It was not a painful sting, not even as bad as a bee. But after a few minutes a sort of numbness began to take over my head, and I found it increasingly difficult to think correctly, or even understand what was going on around me. Though my body worked fine, my brain was half-paralyzed and partially ineffective. Thankfully, the poison, which researchers say is a neurotoxin that affects the nervous system, wore off in a few hours. Doesn't the sting of sin affect men the same way? It's a mental thing, and if it is allowed to progress will slowly dull the senses until the mind cannot reason or think correctly. The Devil takes people captive by drugging them with sin, leading them deeper and deeper into spiritual paralysis. Finally, a feeling of immunity to the severity of God ends any hope of recovery. Does this sound like the unsaved in your community? If ever there was a time of spiritual apathy it is now, and indications are that it will grow worse. There are many opportunities for salvation, and many churches and institutions to help, but the vast majority of individuals do not want to hear about the message of God's Word. These are the ones tormented by the locusts of the fifth seal.

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.*
8. *And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions.*
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 DEMONS SEEM TO BE INVINCIBLE

The description of the locust army is beyond any comparison to an object of nature. The overall picture is that of a huge army of wild creatures running to a battle. Imagine in your mind's eye one of these locusts. Begin with a horse, but with a face like a man, and with lion-like teeth. Next add long hair like a woman, and put something like a golden crown on its head. Now put iron armor or scales on its body, and watch it fly swiftly on rushing wings to battle. Don't forget its only weapon, that scorpion-like tail with stings that paralyze. At the head of the army rides their king, called The Destroyer, who is the angel of the bottomless pit. A more devilish army even a fiction writer could not imagine.

How much of this description is symbolic? When a writer uses similes he is using figurative language to draw a picture. A simile is a figure of speech used to draw a comparison between two very different things. Similes can be easily identified by their key words, "like" and "as." "The sun was like gold on the water" is an example of a simile. Obviously the sun is not gold, but the sentence gives the reader a clearer description than, "the sun shone on the water." The object of comparison in a simile is only like the real object and therefore cannot actually be the real object. There is another, much stronger figure of speech, called a metaphor, which is similar to a simile except that the writer leaves out the key words "like" or "as" and lets the reader supply them. Our previous example of a simile in metaphorical form would become, "The sun was gold on the water."

Metaphors are numerous in the Book of Revelation, but some may be open to the argument that they are not metaphors at all, but are to be understood literally. Similes though, are unmistakable, as they are always found with their comparison words. And they can only be taken in the figurative sense. Notice in this passage the strong usage of similes. In fact, no part of the description is stated as definitely literal. Their faces were not men's faces, but resembled them; their hair looked like the hair of women; something like crowns of gold were on their heads, etc. Maybe this is an indication of their extra-terrestrial nature, for things spiritual can only be described by comparing them to things in the human world. In the Revelation, similes are used

much more often when describing things beyond the human experience. The description of God in Chapter 1, and the heavenly Throne in Chapter 4 are examples of this.

Earlier in our discussion of the first four trumpets we lamented the scarcity of description, making it difficult to determine the meanings of the trumpet-visions. The fifth trumpet overwhelms us with description. Our only means to understanding the nuances of these figurative details is to go back into the Word and see what these symbols and figures meant when they were used by other writers.

Horses have already been shown to be symbols of war, swiftness, and strength. On several occasions they represent angelic beings (see glossary). In verse 9, the horses are pictured as prepared for battle, comparable to the horses of Joel 2, implying that they are capable of dealing out death and destruction. Remarkably, the locust-horses of Revelation are not able to kill. They are only permitted (*didomi*) to torture—not kill—the unsealed men of the world only (v5).

On their heads were as it were crowns like gold (v7). These crowns are *stephanos*, not *diadema*, a victory wreath instead of a diadem (see page 99). Though usually we see crowns on the victorious Christ and His army of overcomers, this is not the only time crowns are depicted on evil creatures in the Revelation. In 12:3 a *great red dragon* with *seven crowns* appears in heaven and attempts to kill the newborn Child. Later in 13:1 we see an evil beast which rises out of the sea with *ten crowns*. The battle-lines are sharply drawn in symbolism, for the *crowns* of Satan and Christ are *diadema*, while both of their armies are described as wearing *stephanos*.

The crowns only look like *gold*. Contrast this with the *crowns of gold* that the 24 elders wore (4:4). Gold is a familiar symbol of purity, divinity, and holiness; less known is that gold has negative connotations too. In fact, in the Revelation *gold* is found in negative contexts at least five times (see 9:7; 9:20; 17:4; 18:12; 18:16), where it is a symbol of materialism and worldliness.

The demon-locusts have faces like men and hair like women. Possibly the imagery is giving us a part to represent the whole, a literary device called metonymy. The whole man is represented by his face, and the woman by her hair. In fact, this is the overwhelming use of the human face throughout the

Bible. A man's face is used to refer to a person's dignity, emotions, and attitudes. Faces are *pale*, *aflame*, *like flint*, and *strong* (Jer 30:6; Is 13:8, 50:7; Eze 3:8). Contrast the weakness of a man's face with the power of God's face of *lightning* (Dan 10:6), which makes the wicked flee in terror (Rev 6:16).

The human qualities of the locusts may be representing the method by which demons often attack their victims. Demons do not reveal themselves to humans as evil, other-worldly creatures; they appear as normal humans, offering pleasures and provoking selfish desires in the hearts of their prey. Men must be alert if they wish to recognize them, for demons can take on many different forms, even making themselves appear to be angels of light. Earthly men and women are often directly used by the Devil and his angels to carry out his wicked plans, and the Apostle Paul warns the Church that this will happen.

While the essence of a man is represented by his countenance, the glory of a woman is her hair (I Cor 11), which connotes beauty and seduction. The Devil continues to deceive millions by offering things that appear lovely and satisfying but which underneath are ugly and unfulfilling. The Bible presents Man as a fallen creature, bent to sin, weak of will, and corrupted by moral failure. Man is earthly (John 3:31; I Cor 15:47), and his natural impulse is to worship self—the pursuit of humanism. This seems to be the implication of the human features of the locusts.

The fallen angels of the fifth trumpet contrast with God's angels of destruction we will see in the sixth trumpet, which have no human features whatsoever. The fallen angels were pure when they were created by God, but became Satan's demons when they chose to follow him in rebellion against the authority of God. How this happened the Bible does not exactly say, but many, including some early Church writers, believe the spiritual realm was divided into good angels and evil demons when Satan the *covering cherub* tempted the lower angels to leave their created purpose and take on physical human form. These angels lived as men on the earth and cohabited with women, producing human offspring—the *men of renown* spoken of in Genesis 6:4. Satan, according to this idea, was attempting to corrupt the entire human race so that God would not be able to send the promised One that would *bruise his head* (Gen 3:15). Of course, God preserved the pure human

line by saving only Noah and his family, and after the flood He prohibited the wicked angels from living on the earth (Jude 1:6). Whether this is really what the Bible is teaching in Genesis 6 is open to debate, and I do not present it as fact, but it does give a plausible origin for the fallen angels of Satan.

A lion is a symbol for strength and ferocity, from the *two lionlike men of Moab* (II Sam 23:20) to the wrath of a king (Pro 19:12). Being predators and the *strongest among beasts* (Pr 30:30), lions are an appropriate and oft-used symbol for the destroying armies of kings. The locusts of the prophet Joel were *strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of a great lion* (Joel 1:6). Why are the features of these locust-beasts so fierce and war-like if they are not permitted to kill? As mentioned earlier, demons do not have authority to take human life, but as we progress into the sixth trumpet we will read of a time that these demons will fight the angels of God to avoid being cast into the Lake of Fire.

The locusts are indestructible and they cannot be killed, at least by humans. This seems to be the meaning of the *breastplates of iron*. The phrase has also been translated “scales of iron” covering their bodies. Iron represents invincibility, permanence, and strength. The locusts of Joel could fall on a sword and not be wounded, and that seems to be true of the demon-locusts as well.

The demon-locusts have wings of some sort, about the only thing they have in common with a literal locust. Their wings take them swiftly to their targets, making a noise like that of many horses and chariots running to a conflict. The horse and chariot are instruments of war, and again form a picture of a huge impending battle. While the invisible spiritual battle has raged since Satan rebelled, the final encounter will be a momentous conflict of the ages, and will close the book of time forever. That end-time battle will be fought in both the spiritual realm and the physical realm, and the demon-locusts are the evil participants of that spiritual battle. There are several Scriptures that describe that event, and we will discuss them in Chapters 19 and 20.

10. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months.

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.*
12. *One woe is past; and, behold, there come two woes more hereafter.*

SATAN IS THE KING OF THE DEMON-LOCUSTS

The locusts have tails like scorpions, and their sting will poison and hurt those who are not Christians. We have already discussed the scorpion stings back at verse 5. The demon-locusts will be released for only *five months*, which is probably a symbolic number linking to the *little season* in 6:11 and 20:3 that Satan will be loosed before Christ's return. Five is the number of God's grace, and this Age of Grace will end when the *five months* are completed. The actual length of time the *five months* represents is not to be found in symbolic contexts elsewhere in Scripture, but in the destruction of the first world, the flood waters prevailed over the earth for 150 days, or five months. Those five months ended with the destruction of all human life except for Noah's family of eight souls, a figure of the deliverance of the end-time Church at the destruction of the world.

The mission of the demon-locusts is to advance the kingdom of Satan until it overcomes the Kingdom of Christ on the earth, an ambition that will never be realized. The locusts cannot directly attack the Church; that has been forbidden (v4). Instead they fly to and fro among the human supporters of the kingdom of darkness trying to pull them deeper and deeper into sin. The Destroyer and his demons know that if they can inoculate their victim's minds from moral accountability that they will eventually win the war. So they keep stinging them with a million different amusements and distractions, keeping them so preoccupied that they have no time for interest in God.

Sin cannot be satisfied, it makes its victims want more and more. The continual sting of sin gradually numbs the conscience, slowly hardening the heart to all wickedness until *even as they [do] not like to retain God in their knowledge, God [gives] them over to a reprobate mind* (Rom 1:28). A reprobate

is someone who once knew the truth but has been *hardened through the deceitfulness of sin* (Heb 3:13). It is the removing of God from man's conscience. These hardened men are not content with just living contrary to God; they want to make the moral standard say that they are right in their rebellion. The kingdom of darkness on this earth is full of such people, and they are fanatical in their attempts to make society not just accept them but approve of them. The homosexual movement, animal rights fanatics, abortionists, euthanasia supporters, evolutionists, etc. are extremely antagonistic toward God and the Church of Christ. Their hatred is becoming so vicious that even the liberal news media has taken notice.

The kingdom of darkness has recently come out of the closet, and it is not content to co-exist with Christianity. Wickedness has always been on this earth, but today its form has changed. Satan and his demons have brought an organization and unity of purpose to evil that has never before occurred in the history of the world. A big reason for this can be attributed to the advancement of communications and technology. Consider the animal rights activists, who place a greater value on animal life than they do on humans. Some will not even kill a bug. In the past there may have been people with similar abnormal thinking, but with today's internet and media they are able to organize and angrily voice their ungodly doctrine around the world. Television programs repeatedly cast God and Christianity in a negative light, trying by obvious and subtle means to get men to doubt God.

In my grandparents' day, divorce carried the stigma of impropriety. Now the kingdom of darkness has successfully sold divorce as acceptable and normal. Is it any wonder that after the so-called church's acceptance of divorce and remarriage that the gay and lesbian agenda wants to redefine the definition of marriage entirely? Why do they care? Why don't they just continue in their perverted lifestyle and let the Christian moral standard alone? Because they have given themselves completely to the kingdom of Satan, and they hate God's law. It torments them as it speaks against their sinful actions. These people are aggressive, vicious, even insane in the promotion of their wicked acts. They will stop at nothing less than a complete eradication of Christ and His code of ethics, and they are controlled by Satan himself. Make

no mistake, these reprobate actions come from something deeper. Satan and his demons have taken over the minds of these people. Sin has given the Devil a foothold, and he has pressed the advantage to the maximum. More and more people are falling completely under his power, and this we can see by the immoral and irrational process of reasoning and argument that they employ.

We are convinced that the power of evil has never been so militant and organized against the Kingdom of Christ than at the present time. Just three hundred years ago many Bible teachers believed that the world would eventually become entirely evangelized, and good would completely eradicate evil. They believed this because that was what seemed to be happening then. Missionaries were spreading the Gospel throughout the world, and the printing press and Christian colleges made it possible for the Bible to be published in every new language discovered. How the times have changed! The inventions of man that were so well used for the Kingdom of Christ have now been defiled by Satan's demons and are being used to spread wickedness as never before. The purpose of the fifth trumpet is to warn the people of God of this fact, and to spur them to be ever watchful and alert to Satan's schemes against the Church of Christ. Earlier attacks on the Church were from within—religious leaders persecuting the faithful and suppressing truth. The end-time attack will be primarily from without, as wicked leaders and organizations under the influence of Satan insidiously corrupt the people of God.

Here is a summary of my understanding of the meaning of the fifth trumpet. The locust army represents the minions of Satan as they are allowed greater ability and power to work in the human realm in the last era of world history. Their authority is restricted to coercing the wicked and the backslidden Christian to even greater wickedness, spreading the kingdom of darkness across the globe until it engulfs the witness of the Church and only a faithful few remain. At the head of the locust-army is Satan. He is called *Apollyon* and *Abaddon*, Greek and Hebrew words respectively with the same meaning: destroyer. The army is pictured as *prepared unto battle* (v7), a reminder that they will meet the armies of Christ at that final day, when they will be thoroughly defeated and banished forever to Hell.

13. And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God,

THE SIXTH TRUMPET ANNOUNCED

The sixth angel announces the second woe to fall on the earth. Similar to the fifth seal, this supernatural army seems to afflict only the wicked. The three woes progress from bad to worse. The demons of the first woe may not kill, they can only torment their prey. The armies of the second woe are worse: not only are they more powerful, they will kill the third part of mankind. The third woe is Hell—the final, ever-burning Lake of Fire. All wicked mankind will experience the third woe.

John hears a voice *from the four horns of the golden altar* in heaven instructing the angels of the sixth trumpet to begin their work. The trumpet section began with a picture of Christ ministering at this same heavenly altar (8:1). The intent of that passage was to show the importance of human prayer to bring the acts of God upon the earth and to illustrate the intercessory work of Jesus in heaven on our behalf. Many types and shadows of the OT show that the four horns symbolize the power of prayer. As the sixth angel sounds and the answer is heard at the intercessory altar in heaven, we are made to feel that some great event, long sought in prayer, is about to be fulfilled. Is not this sixth trumpet the answer to the prayers of the saints of the fifth seal? Remember that those martyrs, who were under this very altar, were petitioning God to avenge their blood on the earth. It was told them to wait a *little season* until the world had filled up its iniquity to the full, and then judgment would come (6:9-11). Now the five months have expired, and the clock is striking midnight. A deadly woe such as the world has never known is about to fall upon a wicked, unrepentant, and sin-stung world.

14. Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

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.

16. And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

A SUPERNATURAL ARMY

The simple overall picture of the sixth angel is of an innumerable army of invincible horsemen with weapons of hellish character sweeping over the earth and killing a third of mankind. The four angels leading this army have long been restrained, and have been prepared for this very hour. Now, at the command of God, they are loosed upon the wicked world. There is no repentance; those who are not killed by the mystical army only blaspheme God more because of the plagues inflicted upon them (16:21). In order to understand the meaning of the sixth trumpet, we must not only study the meanings of the symbols, but also match this account with the corresponding sections of the Revelation.

Two points help us identify the time-frame of the sixth trumpet. First we note the loosing of *the four angels* who are in charge of this tremendous army of horsemen. Back in Chapter 7, at the close of the sixth seal, John saw these *four angels standing on the four corners of the earth*. They were prepared and waiting to bring final judgment upon the earth, but Jesus restrained them, saying, *hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads* (7:1, 3). That seal series gave us a detailed description of the physical end of the world but did not describe the judgment of the wicked or the spirit world. We saw the terror of the wicked as Judgment Day came upon them and we saw the earth and universe dissolving into nothing, but the instruments of destruction were there only introduced. Here in Revelation 9 we are given an account, in human language, of that angelic army which will be loosed upon all wickedness. They will cleanse the entire universe of the curse that sin has brought upon the creation of God, and then He will make a *new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness*. The four angels represent God's agents of judgment prepared to punish the entire wicked world on that Day. This is the final fulfillment of Zechariah's vision of the four horse-chariots, which represented four spirits (angels) that go out into the four directions of the world and carry out God's will there.

The second point that helps fix the time of the sixth trumpet is in verse 15, which states that the four angels have long been prepared for an exact *hour* in the future. The KJV misses the meaning of the original Greek here, translating *an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year*, which implies a time interval. Actually, the original is *the hour, and day, and month, and year*, which indicates an exact date fixed in the future. Quoting the Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Commentary on verse 15:

“for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year--rather as Greek, for (that is, against) THE hour, and day, and month, and year, namely, appointed by God. The Greek article (teen), put once only before all the periods, implies that the hour in the day, and the day in the month, and the month in the year, and the year itself, had been definitely fixed by God. The article would have been omitted had a sum-total of periods been specified.”

The Bible records a singular event that has been fixed and known by God alone, and that is the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the world. In fact, even the wordings of these passages are similar: *But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is* (Mark 13:32-33). Verse 15 tells us that this angelic host of death has been prepared for this exact hour, and is waiting for God's signal to begin their work of destruction.

The number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand (v16). In the original it reads “twice myriads of myriads.” It is similar to the number of the angels about the Throne in 5:11, “myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands.” This is obviously a figurative phrase representing a mathematical number beyond the scope of the human mind. Compare it with the number of the stars, a sum so great that it also exceeds the capabilities of the human mind. Daniel describes the angels of God as numbering *thousand thousands*, a vast multitude that only God can count.

THE EUPHRATES RIVER

The destroying army is held at *the great river Euphrates* (v14). Many commentators choose to interpret this verse literally, along with its companion at 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 armies of Mohammed, Russia, Iran, Iraq and China have each been proposed as a fulfillment to the army of Revelation 9, based on the location of this river and the land of Israel. It is much more likely that the reason the Euphrates River is used here is for the symbolism it gives to the passage, rather than its actual geographical location.

The Euphrates River in the OT had a special significance for the children of Israel, and was often simply called *the river*, or *the great river*. This probably began with the promise God made to Abram that his descendants would be given the land of Caanan. *In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates* (Gen 15:18). As it flows to the east, the river forms the northernmost boundary of the land of OT Israel (Ex 23:31; Deut 11:24; I Kings 4:21), then it makes a huge curve and flows southward into the Persian Gulf some 1,700 miles later. Jacob crossed the Euphrates at this north border when he fled from his father-in-law Laban (Gen 31:21). Farther to the east the ancient idolatrous cities of Babylon and Ur were built on its banks. The prophets often warned of the *northern army* (Joel 2:20) that God would allow to cross the River and punish the Israelites for their iniquities (I Kings 14:15, Is 7:20). This was fulfilled when the Babylonians carried them beyond the River into captivity. As the boundary and physical barrier between Israel and many of her enemies, the Euphrates River represented to the Jews the important first battle line of defense, the place they needed to watch most for invading armies. The NT equivalent would be the moral line between the Church and the world, the spiritual battle trenches of the great war between good and evil.

The picture of the four angels at the front of an innumerable army on the banks of the Euphrates River now becomes clearer. The army, which I take to be God's angels of destruction, is gathered to destroy the earth because of

its wickedness. Nowhere is this army “given” the right to inflict harm as the locusts of the fifth trumpet were. Like the angels of 7:1, these armies have long been prepared for this time and obey God’s command to mete out judgment and death upon the wicked world. This implies that they are not a wicked army, but ride under the true and righteous banner of Almighty God, ready to carry out His purpose on the earth. The Scriptures pertaining to the final Day of the Lord describe it as a great battle, with all the wicked on one side, and the hosts of heaven on the other. The armies of the fifth and sixth trumpets are the two combatants of this conflict.

The four angels are *bound*, or restrained from carrying out their work of judgment until the final day arrives. Interestingly, exactly four angels are involved in the parallel picture in 14:15-20; the messenger from the Temple (14:15), the angel with the sickle (14:17), the angel with power over fire (14:17), and the One with the sickle and golden crown (14:16). Each one has his own part in the destruction of the world.

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.

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.

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.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE ANGELS OF DEATH

The description of this army has a few similarities with the locust-army of the fifth trumpet. They are both likened to war-horses, both have a powerful tail, and both have a lion-like characteristic. The differences are perhaps more instructive. We see no human features at all with this army. The

horses themselves appear to be the agents of destruction, having lion-like heads which pour out *fire, smoke, and brimstone*. They are dangerous front and back, for their serpent-like tails have heads which evidently also pour out the three punishments of hell. Except for their armor, the riders are not described. We are given no clues as to what they resembled. While the demon-locusts had breastplates of iron, these have breastplates of *fire, jacinth, and brimstone*. Strangely, their armor and their weapons consist of the same elements—untrue of any human parallel that I can think of.

Brimstone is an old word for sulfur, a yellow mineral that produces a smelly, poisonous smoke when it is burned, and which was often used to fumigate houses for insects in Bible times. Fire and brimstone are virtually always found together in the Bible as elements of God's judgment on the wicked. Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 19:24), the wicked (Ps 11:6), hell (Is 30:33), and the famous army of Gog and Magog (Eze 38, Rev 20:10) all receive this ultimate retribution. In the Book of Revelation, *fire and brimstone* occurs four more times, always in connection with hell (14:10, 19:20, 20:10, 21:8). Jesus warns us that *the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all, even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed* (Luke 17:29-30).

Jacinth is a color—dark blue—that most likely relates to the killing *smoke* of the horses. The horses' *power*, or authority (Gk—*exousia*), is in their mouths, but not in the normal fashion of biting and tearing. Instead, a deadly stream of fiery liquid pours out. Even their tails are dangerous, having heads which are capable of inflicting harm. This is not the only odd occurrence of "heads" in the Revelation. Later John sees a dragon that has seven heads, and a terrible beast with a head that receives a death wound and yet revives. How these details are to be understood I do not profess to know. Rather than just being baffled by them, I choose to simply let them contribute to the overall picture being presented by the voice of this woe-trumpet. The details indicate that this army is not human, and is indestructible, deadly, and fearless. One of the most vivid NT passages describing what will happen on that great day says, *when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God...when He shall come*

to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (II Thes 1:7-10). The terrible angels of destruction are mighty and powerful; they will carry out the long-withheld vengeance of God upon a sinful world.

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:*

21. *Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.*

THE GREAT WICKEDNESS OF THE EARTH

The purpose of the whole trumpet series is revealed in these last two verses of Chapter 9. God is sounding the alarm throughout the world, warning every man, woman, and child to repent and worship the Creator of heaven and earth. The trumpets sound to those within the Church and to those without, but these verses apply most specifically to the men affected by the voice of the sixth trumpet, for the *plagues* of verse 20 are the *fire, smoke, and brimstone* of the warhorses prepared for the great hour of destruction.

Why are only one-third of men killed? If this is the end of the world, the entire wicked human population should be destroyed, not just a third. In context with the rest of the trumpets however, one-third is obviously a figurative number, with a special meaning unique to this section. This is supported by the fact that “one-third” occurs thirteen times in Chapters 8-9 and only once more in the rest of the Book. The meaning seems to be that God has set an exact amount upon which these judgments will fall, represented by the *third part*, which could be more or less than a mathematical third.

It does not seem likely that one-third should represent all wicked mankind. The number seven could represent all, but a *third part* would seem to represent a portion of the whole. Apparently not every wicked person is physically killed by the supernatural army. Maybe some, like the *beast* and *false prophet*, will be thrown *alive* into the Lake of Fire (19:20). We are told

that the saints that are alive when Christ returns will not die and it would be very possible for sinners to be sent to Hell without dying as well.

There is another possible meaning of the *third part* that is rather intriguing. God told Ezekiel to perform an object lesson for the children of Israel that was intended to foretell their destruction, and it involved a *third part* as well. Ezekiel was to shave his head and divide his hair into thirds. *Thou shalt burn with fire a third part in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege are fulfilled: and thou shalt take a third part, and smite about it with a knife: and a third part thou shalt scatter in the wind; and I will draw out a sword after them* (Eze 5:2). Evidently a very few would avoid destruction: *Thou shalt also take thereof a few in number, and bind them in thy skirts. Then take of them again, and cast them into the midst of the fire, and burn them in the fire* (Eze 5:3-4). The few who avoid destruction in the prophecy of the sixth trumpet would be the righteous who are living at the end of the world. One-third of the trees (representing men) were burned up under the first trumpet, and a third of living sea creatures (also representing men) died under the second trumpet. To complete the whole, the last *third part* is killed by the death angels of the sixth trumpet.

A dirty laundry list of the sins of these men demonstrates that they are well-deserving of their fate (v20-21). They do not repent, neither can they if this is indeed the end of the world. The main thought given is that they do not want to repent, an end-time portrait of the wicked also seen in 16:21 and 6:15. Though the facts now force them to acknowledge God, instead of driving them to their knees in repentance they blaspheme and defy Him. The flood of Noah was used by Christ and Peter as a parallel with the destruction of the world. Those people believed too, when the rain began to fall. But the ark of Salvation had already been filled and sealed by the hand of God. No amount of human effort could save them from the ever-increasing depth of the flood, though they surely tried their utmost. Some may have survived for days, floating about on trees and wood. As hope faded and they realized that their prayers were not going to be heard, many probably shook their fists at God, cursing Him for the destroying flood He had sent to punish them. Is this the way it will be at the end of the world? It is certainly possible.

According to Chapter 7 the saints alive when Christ returns will be sealed and protected from the destroying army of the four angels. By all appearances that time of destruction will be like none other in all earth's history. It will be hell on earth whether it lasts an hour or a month. The wicked will see the righteous as they are taken off the earth, and they will realize that the Church was right, and the Bible was true (11:12).

The wicked men are worshipping *devils*, or demons, when the destruction comes (v20). Remember that the fifth trumpet's locust-army represents Satan's demons, afflicting men with sin and torment, inciting them to rabid actions against the Kingdom of Christ. The wicked are also said to be worshipping *the work of their hands*—idols. They trust in their earthly wealth and position for safety but these are found to be woefully inadequate when tested by the fires of hell. Their idols are made of *gold, silver, brass, stone, wood*—earthly things of no heavenly value. Take care on this earth in laying up gold; in heaven it will just be pavement material.

The actual battle between the two armies of the fifth and sixth trumpets will be described in Chapters 16, 19, and 20. The battle is not even a contest, for just the spoken word of Christ will overthrow all the Devil's authority and strength. Likewise, the gathered human strength under Satan's control is so small in comparison to God it is laughable; He considers *the nations as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance* (Is 40:15). The combined evil realm of human and angelic constituents is utterly without strength compared to the power of God and His angels.

COMPARING THE SECTIONS

It may be helpful at this time to give a short comparison of the three sections of Revelation that use seven chronological visions of the Age of the Gospel. These are the seven seals of Chapters 4-7, the seven trumpets of Chapters 8-11, and the seven vials of Chapters 15-17. The seven candlesticks of Chapters 1-3 could also be given, but their message is thematic rather than chronological, while the others are successive events affecting the Church of Christ. Comparing these three timelines reveals helpful parallels and

supporting details not immediately evident in the other sections. Each of the three sections has its own purpose which should be kept in perspective. The seals show what happens when the Lamb opens the Book of the Covenant and the early events of the Church unfold. The trumpets show what happens to the Church because of the prayers of the saints. And the vials are the last seven plagues to fall on the earth, compressing its message into a shorter timeframe and making the seventh vial different from the seventh seal and trumpet. Each section is divided into a first group of four with an emphasis on the people of God in Church history, followed by a group of three showing the end of the world with details of both the righteous and wicked. Often the same theme and key words can be seen in each of the corresponding visions. For example, study the third seal, trumpet, and vial. We should not expect these to be perfectly similar in all cases, for that would most probably conflict with their section's purpose.

Understanding the structure of these sections is very helpful in placing the time periods of the individual visions within the sections. Especially study the final visions of the sections, which are patterned closely. The sixth seal began with a description of the end of the world and of the wicked fleeing from the wrath of God, but the actual end of the wicked was not described. Just when we expected to see the great white Throne Judgment the scene shifted to the people of God, and for a whole chapter we saw how the saints alive at that final day were sealed for protection before the four angels were loosed. The same thing happens with the sixth trumpet. We hear that the angels of destruction are released to kill the wicked, but the battle is not described. Again the scene shifts to the people of God, and we see what they will face during the same end-time era. This will be the subject of Chapters 10-11.

The theme of the Revelation concerns the Kingdom of Christ on this earth. The seven letters to the churches introduce the purpose, and the seven seals, seven trumpets, and seven vials present the message and history of the Church from its beginning to the consummation.

<u>Seven Seals</u>	<u>Seven Trumpets</u>	<u>Seven Vials</u>
First Seal —a white conquering horse goes out, symbolizing the Church triumphant evangelizing the world.	First Trumpet —hail, fire, blood are cast onto the <u>earth</u> , burning up 1/3 of greenery. Represents the purging of the Church.	First Vial —poured out on the <u>earth</u> ; grievous sores fall on those who have taken the mark of the beast.
Second Seal —a red horse goes out, symbolizing the persecution and trials that follow the work of the white horse.	Second Trumpet —a burning mountain is cast into the <u>sea</u> , 1/3 of breathing sea-creatures die. Represents martyrdom.	Second Vial —the <u>sea</u> becomes blood, and every living creature in the sea dies.
Third Seal —a black horse goes out, symbolizing a spiritual famine and poverty of God’s Word in the world.	Third Trumpet — <u>rivers</u> and <u>waters</u> poisoned, many men die. Represents the false teachings and doctrine of antichrists.	Third Vial — <u>rivers</u> and <u>waters</u> become blood “for they have shed the blood of saints and prophets.”
Fourth Seal —a pale horse goes out, symbolizing sin, judgment, and spiritual death.	Fourth Trumpet —the <u>sun</u> , moon, and stars are darkened, symbolizing the effects of sin and wickedness in the Church.	Fourth Vial —The <u>sun</u> scorches men with great heat, so that they blaspheme God.
Fifth Seal —the blood of the martyrs cries out to be avenged. They are told to wait a little season until the iniquity of the earth is filled up.	Fifth Trumpet —demon-locusts come out of hell onto the earth. They have power to torment the wicked until they wish for death during the 5 months.	Fifth Vial —the kingdom of the beast is smitten with darkness, and men “gnaw their tongues for pain.” They don’t repent.
Sixth Seal —the stars fall, the mountains and islands disappear. The wicked run in terror as the four angels prepare to execute their orders to destroy the earth.	Sixth Trumpet —four angels lead a huge spiritual army from the Euphrates River to destroy 1/3 of wicked men. There is no repentance.	Sixth Vial —the Euphrates is dried up, preparing the way for all nations to gather together into battle against Almighty God at Armageddon.
Seventh Seal —there is silence in heaven, symbolizing the eternal rest of the saints.	Seventh Trumpet —the kingdom of this world has become the Kingdom of our Lord and He shall reign forever and ever.	Seventh Vial —a huge earthquake signals the fall of Babylon. The mountains and islands disappear and the world comes to an end.

REVELATION CHAPTER TEN



THE CHURCH AT THE END OF THE WORLD

Chapter 10 continues the sixth angel's trumpet warning, which does not end until the seventh trumpet sounds in 11:15. There is a drastic change, however, from the dark picture of Chapter 9 to the angel-visions of Chapters 10-11. The fifth and sixth trumpets gave us a long and uncomfortable look at Satan's kingdom of darkness during the last era of earth's history, and it is only fitting that we should now be given a detailed look at the Kingdom of Christ during the same time.

Chapter 10 returns to the subject of the *Bride of Christ*, the real purpose for which the Book of Revelation was written. The love story of Christ for His people is never left for long in the visions of the Book. The Church is His *purchased possession* (Eph 1:14), *holy and without blemish* (Eph 5:27). But do the actions of His people show that they truly return His love? Am I worth the price He has paid for me? Understanding the great cost of our redemption

should motivate us to *know Him*, to sell all that we might gain that ultimate one *pearl of great price*.

Our lives are easily filled with liberties and the pursuit of happiness for ourselves and our families. If we give God only what is left over of our time and talents, the Church grows weak and indifferent. Christ asks that we put His Kingdom first, and He rewards those that do so with far greater and long-lasting benefits than what this world can give. If the pictures of Chapters 10-11 are only studied for their factual accuracy we will have missed the true purpose they were given. We must apply their lessons to our hearts and allow them to inspire us anew to live for Him who paid so high a price for our redemption, purchasing us from the evil one who had rightfully owned us.

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:*
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,*
3. *And cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices.*
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.*

THE MIGHTY ANGEL

Who is this *mighty angel* that John sees *come down from heaven*? This is not one of the seven angels of the trumpet series; he is *another angel* (v1). By the description there can be little doubt that this is Christ. Remember that in the visions of the Revelation Christ is never mentioned by name; He is always figuratively described (page 150). Notice the symbolic details of this Angel.

He is *clothed with a cloud*. The Lord is described at least 20 times with clouds in the Bible. In the tabernacle He dwelt between the cherubim,

appear[ing] in the cloud upon the mercy seat (Lev 16:2; also Num 12:5; Is 19:1; Rev 14:14; Eze 1:4). He comes *with clouds* at the end of the world (1:7).

A rainbow was upon His head. The rainbow symbolizes God's faithfulness and His promises to man, and was pictured earlier encircling the heavenly Throne (4:3). *His face was as it were the sun.* At His transfiguration, John saw Jesus' face *shine as the sun* (Mt 17:2), and when He first appeared to him in the Revelation *His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength* (1:16). The sun, as the brightest and largest source of light, is a natural symbol for the God who is Light (I John 1:5). His feet are *as pillars of fire*. Pillars are symbols of strength and stability, like the two huge pillars of Solomon's temple named "strength" and "stability" (I Kings 7:21). But these are pillars of *fire*, a symbol of the Holy Spirit (see glossary).

Visualize this powerful Angel as He descends from heaven in terrible splendor. My mind pictures a giant, ten thousand feet tall, standing with one foot in the sea and the other on the earth. With His body in the clouds and a face like the shining sun He opens a little book and *with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth...the Lion of the tribe of Judah* (5:5) speaks. Immediately *seven thunders utter their voices*. John is about to write what the seven thunders said, but another voice stops him: *Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not* (v4).

The overall figurative picture conveys the idea of God's voice thundering from heaven over land and sea, but what He is saying we are not permitted to hear. What are these *seven thunders*, and why are we not allowed to understand them? In answering this question let's look at the meanings of the symbols and allow them to direct us.

CHRIST'S VOICE IGNORED

The *little book* in the Angel's hand is probably the same book we saw the Lamb take from the hand of God on the Throne in Chapter 5. We saw the Lamb open that book, revealing to the Church what she should expect to encounter during the Church Age. The vision of the Mighty Angel concerns the Church at the end of the world and thus is only a portion of the whole book of the Covenant—it is a *little book*. The Greek words of both passages

are the same except that the *little book* of Chapter 10 is in diminutive form (*biblion, biblaridion*). The book is *open*, for much has already transpired along the timeline of God's people before this vision takes place. The Angel does not appear to read from the book but cries *with a loud voice*. This phrase is used often in the Revelation in connection with an important command or announcement (7:10, 18:2, 19:17). Here the Angel's voice commands the seven thunders to give forth their voices, which they do.

Something unusual happens after the seven thunders speak; their messages are commanded to be sealed up and John is told to *write them not*. To *seal up* means that the prophecy is closed and hidden from our eyes. So it was with Daniel, who twice asked the angel to explain further the meaning of his last vision, and twice the angel replied that the words were "sealed up" or hidden from him (Dan 12). Some think the reason the prophecies of the seven thunders are sealed up is because they reveal so clearly events related to the end that there would be no doubt as to the time of the Lord's return. While that is a possible interpretation, we believe there is a valuable message for the end-time Church just as the account reads.

The voice of God calls over *earth* and *sea*—but what is He saying? It could be the call of salvation, or the call to a closer walk with Him. But the fact that His voice is *as when a lion roareth* hints that His message is one of punishment and judgment. A roaring lion is symbolic of a strong and terrible killer (Pro 28:15; Is 5:29), and *thunder* is used often to illustrate the voice of God in mighty acts against the inhabitants of the earth. *God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend* (Job 37:5, see glossary). The seven thunders appear to be God's message to the Church during the final era of the earth, and seem to illustrate that generally the Church either does not take the time to listen to His voice or simply disregards it. The voice (or Spirit) of God is drowned out by all the other voices clamoring for men's attention, and consequently the power of the Church grows weaker. According to the OT prophets, when the Israelites disregarded God's gentle voice, *He shall roar from on high* (Jer 25:30) to get their attention.

My summary of the meaning of the seven thunders: God's voice, though loud and clear, is ignored by the end-time Church. The message may not be the same for each person, for there are seven thunders. The universal call,

however, is given in Chapter 18, just before the great fall of Babylon: *Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues* (18:4).

5. *And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven,*
6. *And sware 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:*
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.*

THE MYSTERY OF GOD

Now the Angel ruling over land and sea raises His hand to heaven and makes a solemn proclamation, certified by Eternal God, who made *heaven, earth, and sea*. The seven thunders have been ignored long enough; man has filled the cup of iniquity to the brim. So the Angel says, “At the sounding of the seventh angel’s trumpet the mystery of God will be finished, and time shall cease.”

Among many prophecy commentators there is a general annoyance with the KJV which simply states *that there should be time no longer* (v6). Most of the new translations, though not all, have left the apparent Greek text and render this phrase, “there will be delay no longer.” There is no grammatical basis for this construction. The Greek word *chronos* occurs over fifty times in the Bible and never means or is translated “delay.” Most commonly it is used to denote a period of time, though sometimes it is used in the concept of time, as in II Timothy 1:9, *before time began* (NKJV). Some commentators (see Albert Barnes) write whole pages in an attempt to circumvent the plain meaning of this verse. The difficulty is that for many interpretations the end of time and the world should not take place until Chapter 19. With the

parallel method of interpretation however, the end should be exactly here, at the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

Skipping ahead a few verses to the seventh angel we are convinced that it really does constitute the *last trump*. For it is the *time of the dead, that they should be judged*, the time of reward *to those that fear Thy name*, and the time to *destroy them which destroy the earth* (11:15-19). In my opinion, the plain meaning of this passage portrays the Angel announcing that the time God has allotted for man's salvation will end with the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet. The *mystery of God* will be finished, ended, completed, and time shall cease.

What is this *mystery*? Ample Scriptures convince us that it is simply God's plan of salvation for man—a deep mystery man cannot fully understand. It is called *the mystery of the Gospel* (Eph 6:19), the *mystery of Christ* (Col 4:3), the *mystery of the faith* (I Tim 3:9), and the *mystery of the Kingdom of God* (Mark 4:11). As we think about God and His character and the incomprehensible work of Christ in reconciling man with God, mystery is even too simple a word to describe the concepts of salvation. The Apostle Paul said it best, *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift* (II Cor 9:15).

This mystery was earnestly sought for by *His servants the prophets* of the OT. Though they wrote many things about the NT Age of Grace, they did not understand what they were writing. I can imagine Isaiah's head shaking in questioning wonder as his pen foretold of the Messiah as a despised, rejected, and sorrowful man, dying without struggle and making His grave with the wicked. The prophets wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost and not from their own hearts (II Peter 1:21). But the time came that this mystery was revealed: *Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the [revealing] of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world [literally, "time" Gk—**chronos**] began* (Rom 16:25). The *mystery of Christ* is both simple and profound. A small child can grasp that Jesus died for our sins, and yet as the earnest seeker ponders the events and concepts of our salvation he realizes that *now we see through a glass darkly* (I Cor 13:12). Someday we will fully understand the mystery of the plan of God, now we can only marvel at His great mercy and love.

The main point of verses 5-7 is the solemn proclamation that the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet will finish the *mystery*, and time will end, engulfed by eternity. The Angel swears by the God of heaven and earth, absolutely affirming that God will keep His promise to return to earth again for His people. This is not the first time that God swore by Himself; He did this with Abraham too (Heb 6:13). As the years stretch into centuries and millennia, we may begin to wonder if perhaps God has forgotten us. Maybe the world is so wicked and man so selfish and depraved that God has just decided to forget about His little earth-experiment. Not true. Upon the oath of God, Christ will return and perform the promises He has made to His people.

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.*
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. *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.*
11. *And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.*

JOHN EATS THE LITTLE BOOK

Chapter 10 is a triple vision in one setting. There are three messages illustrated in the actions of the Angel, and this is the third. The voice from heaven speaks again, and this time John becomes a participant in his own vision. The main subject of Act III is the *little book*, which earlier in this chapter we saw in the Angel's hand when He descended from heaven. The *little book* is a symbol of the Covenant that Christ has offered to man, as explained in Chapter 5. The covenant must be accepted by each individual person, as demonstrated by John taking and eating his portion of the book.

The voice from heaven tells John to go to the Angel over earth and sea and take the *little book* He holds in His hand. In this there is a striking parallel to the Lamb going to the Throne and taking the big *book* from the hand of God (5:7). But while the Lamb's task was to *open* the book, John's task is to *eat* the book, and this is every Christian's task. Symbolically, eating the book is to partake of Christ and His sufferings, to accept the blood of His covenant and identify with Him. *Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you* (John 6:53). Jesus is the *Word...made flesh* (John 1:14). John was to *take* the book and *eat* it up, a parallel with the ordinance of communion, which signifies the same meaning as this passage. Notice the identical words when Jesus broke the bread and said, *Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me* (I Cor 11:24).

The prophet Ezekiel had a similar experience when Jehovah sent him to the rebellious house of Israel. A hand came to him with a book spread open. The book was filled with words of *lamentations, and mourning, and woe*. The voice then said to Ezekiel, *cause thy belly to eat, and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee. Then did I eat it; and it was in my mouth as honey for sweetness* (Eze 2-3). The words that God gave Ezekiel were sweet (Ps 119:103) and full of life, just as the words of the Covenant are to the Christian. His Word is lamp unto our feet and a light unto our paths (Ps 119:105). We take it into our lives and hide it in our hearts to be approved of Him (Ps 119:11). God's Word is not simply a way of life, it is our life. All natural things grow dim in comparison to its light and promises. Job said, *I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food* (Job 23:12).

A Christian who lives his faith and takes the Word into every part of his soul must be ready and willing to face persecution, suffering, and sorrow. *All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution* (II Tim 3:12). John eats the little book and it tastes wonderful to him at first (Ps 34:8), but when he begins to digest it his belly becomes bitter. Living for Christ leads to bitter experiences: why else was John on the Isle of Patmos? Jesus told Peter that when he was old they would lead him where he did not want to go, signifying that he would die a martyr's death (John 21:18). Peter lived his whole life with this knowledge, and tradition says that at his execution he requested to be crucified upside down because he did not consider himself

worthy to die on a cross as his Master had before him. Many times in history eating the book meant choosing almost certain death. Even today there are Christians in foreign lands that are called to die for their faith in Jesus.

In countries that do not physically persecute Christians the analogy of the belly becoming bitter is also true. Obeying Christ brings temptation and trial as we deny self and take up our cross and follow Him (Mark 8:34). John did not just take a bite from the book, he ate it all. Jesus wants our complete obedience first, and then He wants our availability to do His work. The result of submission to Christ invariably leads to the embittering of self; that is, our personal earthly goals and desires must be forgotten and counted as nothing *that [we] may win Christ* (Php 3:8). Figuratively, *belly* often expresses the inner thoughts and soul of man (Job 15:35; Ps 31:9; Pro 20:27). Those who believe in Christ, *out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water* (John 7:38).

The action words of this passage correctly describe the process of salvation and of continuing obedience. The voice from heaven calls, and John responds by asking the Angel for the book. The Angel gives it and asks John to eat it all up, which he does. John knows ahead of time that if he eats the book his belly will become bitter, but he chooses to do so anyway. After John has proven his love and obedience by taking the Word into his belly, God gives him a work to do—prophesying again concerning nations and kings. God has different tasks for each person, and we should not despise them for being too small or despair because they are too great, God's grace is sufficient and more for any task He has called us to do.

Verse 11 marks a transition from the triple message of the *little book* to the concise history of the Church we will see in Chapter 11. John *must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings*. Probably a better translation of the word *before* in this phrase would be *over*, the intent being that John's vision was not finished. He would see much more of what would happen to the Kingdom of Christ in the nations of the world. The subjects of these visions concern people, nations, tongues, and kings. It is a broad vision, extending far and wide and speaking to people of all walks of life.

REVELATION CHAPTER ELEVEN



A HISTORY OF THE CHURCH

Chapter 11 continues the end-time messages of the Angel which began in Chapter 10. We noted that there were three parts to Chapter 10, each part illustrating the state of affairs within the Church and the various environments she will face during the time of the end. Chapter 11 is part four of the Angel's message, but that message changes slightly and becomes more prophetic of actual events that will take place when Christ returns. It introduces the time element of 1,260 days, which reappears four more times in the next two chapters.

It is obvious that 10:1 through 11:13 (where the sixth trumpet ends) belong together, for John and the Angel continue their interaction begun in Chapter 10. The full account of the *mighty Angel* is given as part of the sixth trumpet and His message is directed to the Church of Christ on earth.

There is however, a slight difficulty in reconciling the time-setting of the vision in Chapter 11 with the time-setting of the appearance of the Angel

back in 10:1. There we said that Chapter 10 is a continuation of the sixth trumpet, directed to the people of God during the last era on earth. That belief is based on the fact that the fifth and sixth trumpets describe the end-time state of the kingdom of darkness and are followed by the four-fold message of the Mighty Angel to the Church before the final trump of the seventh angel. The section of the seven seals was similarly structured, for the sixth seal also had two parts. The first described the judgment of the wicked (6:12-17), and the second described the Rapture of the Church (7:1-17).

The problem is that beginning with the Angels's announcement that time would cease when the seventh trumpet sounded (10:5), the vision cannot be rigidly restricted to only the end-time stage of the Church. Remember the illustration of John eating the little book (10:8-11). Every Christian who has ever lived must take and eat his portion of that book, and thus the message is applicable to every age and to every believer. This continues to hold true in Chapter 11 right up to the sounding of the seventh trumpet-angel. The primary emphasis however, does remain on the end-time Church. We believe the complete message of the Angel in Chapters 10-11 concerns the condition of the Church at the Second Coming of Christ, but that the messages are also relevant in every age and place.

GOD'S PLAN FOR PHYSICAL ISRAEL'S FUTURE

Because Chapter 11 is probably the most frequently cited passage in the Book of Revelation for Dispensationalism, we need to examine the basis of that belief before beginning a verse-by-verse discussion. Though the current form of Futurism accepts the teaching of Dispensationalism, the two are not interchangeable terms. Futurism is the belief that all of the prophecies in the Revelation must be fulfilled in the future, at the end of the world. Dispensationalism incorporates the Jews and their Old Covenant into the Futurist interpretation of how the last events of earth's history will take place. Early Futurists did not subscribe to Dispensationalism, and it was not until the 1800's that the idea was promoted and became popular.

According to Dr. John Walvoord, a Dispensationalist who wrote the popular commentary The Revelation of Jesus Christ, God has two programs:

one for the Church and one for Israel. In the OT God's program involved national Israel, but when the Jews rejected Jesus as their Messiah, God instituted the program of the Church. The day is coming however, when God will again turn His attention back to the Jews, and will fulfill His OT promises concerning Jerusalem and Israel. This program shift happens after the Church has been raptured from the earth, and it will last for a brief seven-year period during which all unfulfilled OT prophecies will quickly take place. After seven years are completed, Christ will return and set up a physical kingdom made up of resurrected saints of all ages and also those who have survived the great seven-year tribulation. The physical reign of Christ, called the Millennium, is yet a third program (or dispensation). During the Millennium, resurrected saints, physical man, and all Jews will live together on the earth with Christ as their king for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, a revolt against the kingship of Christ will bring about the end of the world. This is the basic teaching of Dispensationalism.

What is God's relationship with the Jewish people during the Church Age, and what is His plan for their future? This is probably the single most divisive issue about the end-time, and people have very strong opinions on how God views national Israel. Rather than offend many good Christian people by attacking and criticizing their belief that God will once again honor the Israelite Covenant, we will simply offer the reasons why we believe that God's plan for physical Israel is finished, and we will give the Biblical sources in support of that belief.

Our view is based on the belief that the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel fall under two categories. A) Those made to *Israel after the flesh* (national Israel) and which have been completely fulfilled. B) Those made to spiritual Israel, *they which are of faith*, from the time of Abraham to the present and which are being fulfilled in the NT Kingdom of Christ, the Church. Dispensationalism rejects any dual nature to OT Jewish prophecy, insisting that all prophecy must be fulfilled as the writer had intended it, even if the passage has been interpreted differently in the NT (see Walvoord). We therefore wish to defend our view by making and proving from the Scriptures three logical points which we hope will establish its truthfulness:

1. The New Testament divides the Jews into physical Israel and spiritual Israel.
2. The promises and covenants of God to Abraham and Israel in the OT are still in effect, but they are given to spiritual Israel, not physical Israel.
3. Therefore God's people are no longer Israel after the flesh, but after the spirit.

PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL JEWS

Concerning point one, we believe that there are two kinds of Jews mentioned in the NT—spiritual Jews, and physical Jews. Let's begin with Romans 9:6, *For they are not all Israel which are of Israel*. How can that be? Are there people outside of Israel that are actually Jews? On this we don't have to guess, for the Bible is clear that the answer is yes. In Revelation 2:9 Christ says He knows all about those who say they are Jews but really aren't. He cannot be referring to physical Jews—Greeks and Egyptians were not pretending to be Jews, it was just the opposite. However, it brings meaning and unity to both passages when we realize that Scripturally, being a Jew has nothing to do with the physical and all to do with the spiritual: *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* (Rom 2:28-29). Clearly, Christians of all nationalities are spiritual Jews.

Physical attributes do not a Jew make; it is the inward man that determines who is a Jew and thus an heir of Abraham. Paul told the Gentiles, *we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit* (Php 3:3). Paul distinguishes between physical Israel and spiritual Israel in Romans 9:8, saying, *they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed*. In other words, fleshly Israel is not God's, but faithful Israel is, and that includes all people, for in Christ, *there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him* (Romans 10:12).

Restating point one: The Christian is a child of Abraham as it plainly says in Galatians 3:7, *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are*

the children of Abraham. If one wants to be a child of Abraham, he does not need to become a physical Jew! He simply needs to have faith in Abraham's God in order to become part of Abraham's seed and an heir to the promises. Under the New Covenant, physical Jews (Paul calls them *Israel after the flesh* in I Cor 10:18) are no different from unregenerate Gentiles—they are not God's people. According to Galatians 3:28, *There is neither Jew nor Greek...ye are all one in Christ Jesus, and if ye be Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs of the promise* (see also Eph 1:10; 2:11). The true seed of Abraham is reckoned through faith in Christ—the Church of spiritual Israel in which God is no respecter of persons.

GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ABRAHAM AND THE JEWS

If point one is true, then it is only logical to see the OT promises to Abraham and the Jews continued in spiritual Israel, and this is our second point: the promises and covenants given to Abraham and his seed have always been and still are in effect—but to spiritual Israel. The Jews had been entrusted the oracles of God (Rom 3:1), and the OT promised much to Abraham's descendants. What happened to those promises? We believe the NT tells us exactly what happened, as we hope to show; but first we need to define some terms.

A promise is something that one must do regardless of what happens after it has been given; the promised party has no input in the matter. A covenant is an agreement between two or more parties that is contingent upon the conditions of the covenant. Both sides of a covenant must keep the conditions they agreed upon for the covenant to remain in effect, but a promise is not dependent on the other party because it is unconditional. There is no such thing as an unconditional covenant; that would be a contradiction of terms. Look it up in the dictionary and think about it. A covenant is a contract, just like you would make with a business person. There must be two sides, and both sides must live up to the agreement. On the other hand, a promise is purely one-sided, and requires no conditions. An important fact to remember in studying the OT covenants and promises is that the Hebrew language has only one word (*berreth*) for both “covenant” and “promise.”

Of course, in respect to God's covenants, His side is always valid for He always keeps His word, but if man does not live up to his side of the bargain, the covenant is null and void. God does not write any person or nation a blank check to do with as they want. He has written requirements that must be met for His covenant to remain in effect. The covenant promises He has made to Israel are contingent upon Israel keeping the terms of that covenant, and we will give some Scriptures to prove that. This is no different from the NT promises God has made to those that believe and obey Him. If someone rejects His grace or disregards the commands of the New Covenant, he will not receive the heavenly promise. It's that simple.

There are times when the terms of the agreement may not be exactly stated, but they are always understood. With Jonah, God said point-blank, *In forty days Nineveh will be overthrown*. That's it, not one condition is stated. What happened? Nineveh repented and God did not destroy the city, at least right away. Obviously God knew beforehand that the Ninevites would repent, and that He was going to spare their city. God didn't even need to tell Jonah that condition, for he certainly understood it too, if you read the story. Sometimes God's covenants with Israel do not have stated conditions either, but that does not mean that there are none. For example, God's *covenant* that He would make the priesthood of Aaron *everlasting* must have had conditions attached (Num 25:13), though none are directly stated in that passage. Even in the NT there are many verses that do not state all the conditions of the Covenant. Romans 10:9 says *if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*. Belief and confession are the initial requirements for salvation, but other passages show that to continue in salvation, love and obedience to His commandments are also part of the Covenant requirements.

The fact of the matter is, the Jews did not keep their side of the Covenant, and so it was declared void and obsolete. That is why the Messiah came to mediate a new and *better covenant...established upon better promises* (Heb 8:6). *By calling this covenant "new," He has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear* (Heb 8:13, NIV). Can it be any clearer than that? The Old Covenant is gone, superseded by the New Covenant that applies to all spiritual Israel, Jew or Gentile.

The covenants and promises are always valid and correct, but the NT explains in at least three different passages that the OT promises are fulfilled in spiritual Israel, the Church. God did make promises in the OT, particularly to Abraham, but Galatians 3-4 makes it abundantly clear that it is not the blood Jews who are children of Abraham, and therefore heirs, but the spiritual children. *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar. For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all...Now we brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless, what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free (Gal 4:22f).* Very clearly, the freewoman, which is the Church (spiritual Israel), is the *heir*, and where does that leave the physical Jews? *In bondage*.

Any objection to heirs being determined by spiritual means rather than physical bloodlines can be explained by the fact that adopted children are fully qualified to be heirs, and both the OT and NT people of God are said to be adopted into the family of God (Gal 4:5; Eph 1:5; Rom 8:15, 9:4). The account of Ruth and Boaz typifies the relationship of Christ and the Church, and was perfectly designed by God to illustrate the NT Covenant. Ruth was a Gentile, outside the *commonwealth of Israel*, yet she was included under the law of kinsman-redeemer. Ruth became a spiritual Jew, and is listed in the genealogy of Jesus (Mt 1:5).

If there is any doubt left that spiritual Israel is the true heir of the promises given to Abraham, consider Romans 9, where Paul says, *I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises...Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not*

all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed (Rom 9:3-8). Here again we see that the covenant God made with Abraham was not revoked, but was essentially passed from Israel to the Church.

Paul continues this same theme in Romans 9-11, finally concluding: *And so all Israel shall be saved* (Rom 11:26). This phrase has been wrested wholesale from its context and greatly misapplied. *And so* means that one must read earlier to understand how Israel will be saved. As we have shown it means that all spiritual Israel will be saved. Thus, *all Israel*—spiritual Jews from every race and nationality—*shall be saved*. It is not surprising that the fulfillment is different from what the Jews thought it would be, for *God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham* (Luke 3:8). And He did. (See also Galatians 3:15-29; and Romans 4:9-16.)

The OT Covenant God made with Abraham and the Jews was fulfilled in the New Covenant. Jesus said that He did not come to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it (Mt 5:17). All attempts to hold God responsible to honor His promises to Israel after the flesh must be reconciled with the Apostles' teaching that the true Israelite is a spiritual consideration, and that the spiritual children of Abraham are the true heirs of the promises. Appeals to OT passages that indicate hope for national Israel are then invalid, because the NT explains those verses to apply to the Church. This is not a strange occurrence, for the OT prophets wrote before Christ, and men at that time were not given to fully understand the work of the Messiah.

And so we restate the second point: Spiritual Israel, the Church, the *Jerusalem above*, Mt Zion, possesses the inheritance promised to Abraham's seed.

GOD'S PEOPLE: ONE COVENANT FOR JEW AND GREEK

This brings us logically to point three: God's people are no longer Jews after the flesh, but after the Spirit. So where does physical Israel fit in? We do not have a single recorded promise to blood Jews in the NT, and the OT promises God made to Abraham and Israel have all been fulfilled. Let's look

at some of these promises and evaluate what the Bible has to say about their fulfillments.

Genesis 17:7-9 is probably the most well-known promise God made to Abraham: *And I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God. And God said unto Abraham, thou shalt keep My covenant, therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.* This is a covenant. It had to be kept, and Abraham did keep it. It had to be renewed by succeeding generations; some generations did, some did not.

God promised to Abraham's seed the *land of Canaan* if they kept the terms of the covenant. Did Israel really receive the land God had promised? According to Joshua they did, for after he had finished the work of driving out the Canaanites he records: *And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers... there failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass* (Joshua 21:43-45).

Israel was promised the land of Canaan for an everlasting inheritance. Was this promise to physical Israel? At first glance it seems to have been, and thus is a continuing promise. But if it was, why have the Jews been unable to possess the land for so much of their history? They have controlled Canaan for less than half the time since Abraham was given the promise. Does that make God in default? May it never be! The covenant requires obedience to its terms, and the vast majority of Jewish generations were not obedient. The covenant was broken by the choice of man, and so God expanded it to include all nations, kindreds and tribes of the earth. It is wrong to hold God responsible to keep Israel in the land of Canaan. Moses warned the Jews that if they did not keep the covenant that they would *be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth... and the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other... and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest* (Deut 28:25, 64-65).

Even if the promise of Canaan was to physical Israel it is noteworthy that the promise extends no farther. Nothing is said concerning the temple, sacrificial systems, or Jerusalem. It is significant that all of the promises to Israel concerning the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, and the regathering of the Jewish people to their land were made by prophets writing before the Jews returned to Canaan after the Babylonian Captivity. The Book of Malachi is the only OT Book written after the Jews had rebuilt Jerusalem and there are no prophetic statements concerning the regathering or rebuilding of Jerusalem in it. Neither is there any mention of temple sacrifices being reinstated. Not once in the NT are we told that the Jews will be regathered to their land either, or that they will rebuild the temple and restart animal sacrifices. Instead, we are told of their desolation. (See Hebrews 8:7-13 and Matthew 23:37-39, 21:18f [the fig tree is Israel].)

Israel after the flesh is not the chosen of God, it is the Church that God has now chosen and loves. Jesus said, *The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father. Instead, true worshippers shall worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth* (John 4:21-23). In God's sight, Israel after the flesh is no different than any other nation or people. The covenant promises have not been abolished, they have been passed on to the *Israel of God*, the true Jews of the heart, the Heavenly Jerusalem of Hebrews 12:22. Now we can understand I Peter 2:9-10, *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; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God.* Those words are a direct quote from the OT that the Jews applied strictly to themselves only, and yet Peter applies them to the Church (see page 154).

CONCLUSION: THE TRUE HOPE OF ISRAEL

What is still in store for the Jewish people? We are not told that in Scripture outside of a few general prophecies, but we firmly believe the hope of national Israel lies not in OT promises or rituals. No, the hope of Israel is to individually accept the New Testament Messiah and become part of the Temple of God, the single olive tree of the Lord that has branches of all nations

and tongues grafted into it (Rom 11). The Jews have been hated, persecuted, and scattered as no other people that have ever lived, and we hope that they will find some rest and safety in the new country of Israel. As to what God has planned for national Israel's future, we do well to remember Jesus' admonition to those who asked Him the same question: *it is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power* (Acts 1:7).

In the NT age, God controls every nation equally. He has no favorites, *for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him* (Rom 10:12). In studying Jewish history since the time of Christ one is impressed with the stubbornness and pride of non-Christian Jews, and how terribly they have been treated by the rest of the world. Deuteronomy 28-31 is a detailed prophecy of what would happen to Israel if it disregarded the covenant. Compare the two following texts, the first a passage from Deuteronomy 28 and the second a quote from the "Anti-Semitism" entry of the Encyclopedia Britannica.

And the Lord shall scatter thee among the people, from one end of the earth even unto the other...and among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee...in the morning thou shalt say, "Would God it were even!" and at even thou shalt say, "Would God it were morning!" for the fear of thine heart (Deut 28:64-67).

"Anti-Semitism has existed to some degree wherever Jews have settled outside of Palestine. Historians agree that the break between Judaism and Christianity followed the Roman destruction of the temple of Jerusalem in the year 70 CE. In the aftermath of this devastating defeat, which was interpreted by Jew and Christian alike as a sign of divine punishment...some of the most eloquent and persuasive Christian theologians {these were Catholics} excoriated the Jews as rebels against God and murderers of the Lord. In much of Europe during the Middle Ages, Jews were denied citizenship and its rights, barred from holding posts in government and the military, and

excluded from membership in guilds and the professions. The practice of segregating the Jewish populations of towns and cities into ghettos dates from the Middle Ages and lasted until the 19th and early 20th centuries in much of Europe...the Nazis sought the “final solution to the Jewish question,” the murder of all Jews...an estimated 5,700,000 Jews were exterminated. For many centuries, Islamic societies had tolerated Jews but had made them pay special taxes, wear identifying clothing, and live in specified areas. But the emigration of large numbers of Jews to Palestine in the 20th century and the creation of the state of Israel (1948) in a formerly Arab region aroused new currents of hostility within the Arab world. [In Germany] by the late 1930’s there was a desperate search for countries of refuge. Those who could get visas and qualify under stringent quotas emigrated to the United States. Many went to Palestine, where the small Jewish community was willing to receive refugees. Most countries, however, were unwilling to receive large numbers of refugees.”

(Encyclopedia Britannica, 2002 edition)

Beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70, no nationality under heaven has been so reviled and afflicted as the Jewish race. It is estimated that the Romans purged over three million Jews during a four-year period at the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jew’s best friend throughout history has been the Christian, though the Roman Catholic Church cannot be included. What the future may hold for national Israel we do not know, but the Bible is clear that their responsibility is no different than ours, *believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved* (Acts 16:31).

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.*
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.*

THE HOLY PLACE: THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

The fourth and final part of the Angel's message establishes its theme with a picture of John measuring *the temple of God*. The illustration is short and simple, but the deeper meaning is not so easily discovered. The Greek word for *temple* here is *naos*, which the writers of the NT used to refer to the temple sanctuary itself. Only priests were allowed in the *naos*, consisting of the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, where the Shekinah glory of God hovered between the outstretched wings of the Cherubim.

Because it was the dwelling place of God in the OT, *naos* has a deep spiritual meaning in the NT. Jesus and Paul used the *naos* to symbolically represent the New Testament believers, both individually and collectively. *Know ye not that ye are the temple [naos] of God?* (I Cor 3:16, also 6:17). Another word the NT often used for the temple is *hieron*. This word never refers to the temple sanctuary itself, but to the general temple area, with its numerous courts, gates, porches, viewing areas and meeting rooms. Jesus spoke often in the *hieron*, healed the sick there, cast the moneychangers out of it, debated the Pharisees there, and then predicted its ruin. But He never set foot in the *naos*, though He spoke of it in connection with His own death and resurrection when He said, *Destroy this temple [naos] and in three days I will raise it up* (John 2:19). *Hieron* is not once used in a figurative way, though it occurs often in the NT. The word "temple" occurs 16 times in the Book of Revelation, and always it is *naos*.

The reason we provide this background textual information is because it gives us an important indication of what the measuring of the temple signifies. If the temple in question refers to the literal buildings at Jerusalem we should expect John to have used the proper word for them, *hieron*, which is used without fail in each of the 100-plus times the NT speaks of the temple buildings. The text gives us *naos*, the literal meaning of which is restricted to the roughly 30'x60' sanctuary of the Jewish temple, and which had lain in ruins for twenty some years by the time John wrote the Revelation. Even the most liberal interpretation of Biblical *naos* could not be extended beyond the Court of Priests, which was an outside area around the Sanctuary that only the priests were permitted to enter as they performed their daily duties.

We believe the most natural meaning of the *naos* that John is commanded to measure is its figurative meaning, the Church, that *building fitly framed together [which] groweth unto an holy temple [naos] in the Lord* (Eph 2:21). This has been the historical interpretation of Revelation 11 for centuries. However, with the recent rise of the nation of Israel and the expectation that the Jews will rebuild their temple many choose to interpret it literally. There is no purpose in arguing whether the temple will be rebuilt or not, but let it be said that there is not one NT or OT prophecy that foretells the future rebuilding of the Jewish temple. The many OT prophecies given to support the idea of a rebuilt temple in modern-day Jerusalem were all written before or during the return of the Jews from Babylon (fifth century B.C.) when the Jews did rebuild the temple that Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed decades earlier. Those who take the literal Dispensationalist position here also must acknowledge that it means nothing to Christians whether the Jews rebuild their temple or not, for according to Futurism the Church and the Holy Spirit will have been taken off the earth before Revelation 11 takes place.

Not just the temple is measured. John is told to *measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein* (v1). The *altar* most likely refers to the Altar of Burnt Offering just outside the *naos* and not the Altar of Incense, which was within the *naos* and thus would be included already in the measuring. The Altar of Burnt Offering was the most essential and oft-used part of the entire OT sacrificial system. As a type it represents the sacrifice of Christ's body for the salvation of the world, which is the basis, power, and purpose of Christianity. There is no greater concept or power than the Cross of Christ, and before a person may worship in the temple, he must come to this altar outside the *naos*. The last to be measured are those who worship in the temple. Literally speaking, the worshippers must be priests, for only priests were allowed inside the *naos*, but figuratively Christians are priests in the New Covenant (I Peter 2:9, Rev 1:6).

The picture that John gives concerning the measuring of the temple is again derived from symbolism within Jewish religion, "Include the temple, exclude everything outside it." The temple (*naos*) represents the true *Israel of God* (Gal 6:16)—Jews, Greeks, and those of every other nationality that worship

God in spirit and in truth. These are inwardly true Jews of the heart as defined by Paul in Romans 2:28-29.

What is meant by the measuring of the Church? To measure a building is to determine its size and features, to know it and understand its design and purpose. It is in this sense that Habakkuk describes God, as *He stood and measured the earth: He beheld and drove asunder the nations* (Hab 3:6).

John is told to measure the temple but the text does not say how he measures it, or what the dimensions are. This indicates that the important thing is what is included and excluded in the measuring. Zechariah relates a vision of an angel measuring Jerusalem to determine its breadth and length, and Ezekiel's last vision begins with an angel measuring the temple, the city, and eventually the entire land of Israel. Later, in Revelation 21:15, an angel measures the city of New Jerusalem, symbolic of heaven. Each of these visions teaches that God loves and cares for the soul of every person whose heart is set upon Him. He knows those within the *naos* and He knows those in the outer court. He understands His people; He cares for them, and loves them.

From the human vantage point the true people of God may be difficult to identify, as they are scattered among many denominations and nationalities. But God knows each one individually, and He will show Himself strong on their behalf (II Chr 16:9).

The measuring device used is a *reed like unto a rod* (v1). The rod is a symbol for discipline and instruction (Ps 23:4; I Cor 4:21), and its basis is the Word of God which is likened to a line or rule (Php 3:16; Is 28:10).

THE OUTER COURT IS CAST OUT

We have seen what it means to be measured—that is to say included—in the true Church of God. But there is a significant part of the temple that is to be left out; the Greek would be even stronger: *the court without the temple cast out [ekballo] and measure it not* (v2). The court outside the temple is a little difficult to pinpoint, for there were at least four courts to the Herodian temple. Immediately outside the *naos* was the Court of the Priests (open only to priests), which contained the Altar of Burnt Offering. Outside this was the

Court of Israelites, and then the Court of Women. Finally, completely outside and surrounding the *hieron* was the Court of the Gentiles.

The *court without the temple* evidently refers to the *hieron*, the beautiful buildings the disciples admiringly pointed out to Jesus (Mark 13:1), and the whole picture compares closely with the allegorical passage of the two Jerusalems in Galatians 4. The *Jerusalem which is above* is the true heir, while physical Jerusalem was to be *cast out* (same Gk word, *ekballo*), and not permitted to be heir with the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal 4:30).

Furthermore, the outer court, or physical Jerusalem, was *given unto the Gentiles* [*ethnos*—nations], and *the holy city shall they tread* [*pateo*] *under foot forty and two months* (v2). The treading down of Jerusalem by the nations was previously foretold by Christ in Luke 21:24, *And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden* [*pateo*] *down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled*. I take the *holy city* here to represent physical Jerusalem—the icon of Judaism—and it is so called elsewhere in the Bible (Neh 11:1; Dan 9:24; Mt 4:5, 27:53). Jerusalem and Judaism have been decimated and defiled by the *Gentiles* of many long centuries. The Jewish religious system of ceremonies, priests, and worship rituals is gone, and there is no way it can be properly reinstated. The *Gentiles* have seen to that, beginning with the Roman genocide of the Jewish people in the first century after Christ.

The destruction of Jerusalem was the most thorough slaughtering and scattering of an ethnic people the world has ever seen. The Roman torture and killing even exceeded the atrocities of Hitler. According to historians like Josephus, a non-Christian who lived during those days, the entire Jewish population of Palestine was either killed or scattered abroad throughout the nations of the world by A.D. 150. The whole Jewish social, religious, and political system disappeared. Especially notable is that the all-important lineage of the Aaronic priesthood was lost forever; the tribe of Levi dissolved and disappeared. Not one sacred instrument of temple worship remains, though the Old Testament Scriptures have been miraculously preserved by God.

Today, the centerpiece and most essential part of Judaism—the temple—remains a dream. The Temple Mount itself is off-limits to Jews because the Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock, third-most holy place in the

Islamic world, sits directly over where the temple once stood. Many people have predicted that Israel will rebuild the temple, but is it coincidence that they cannot? Is it not quite possible that God made sure it will not be rebuilt by a remarkable method: allowing another religion (a fanatical one) to build a shrine over El-Sahkra, the very rock on which Abraham offered up Isaac and on which Solomon built the temple? The purpose of the Jewish temple has been fulfilled in Christ; now the Christian is the *naos* of God, and worship does not depend on physical location (I Cor 6:19; John 4:21-23).

The nation of Israel and her people are still in disfavor among many of the nations of the world, the United States being a notable exception. Many countries refuse to accept Israel's existence, and even the United Nations does not recognize Jerusalem as belonging to Israel. According to 11:2, the treading down of Judaism will continue for *forty and two months*, or as Jesus said, *until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled* (Luke 21:24). The latter phrase may be indicating the time period that salvation is offered to the Gentiles—this present age which will end with the return of Christ for His chosen people, both Jew and Gentile. Or it may have reference to the time period that the nations of the world will afflict and tread down Judaism and the Jewish people, a period that has stretched from the time of Christ to the present, and has every appearance of continuing. Either way, the 42 months refers to the same time period as *the times of the Gentiles*, and over the next few verses the 42 months appears five more times. For this reason, we will study the meaning of the 42 months a few pages later, in the discussion of 11:3, where it is given as 1,260 days or exactly 42 months of 30 days each.

One of the chief lessons to be gained by the illustration of the measuring of the temple is that salvation cannot be gained by merely being associated with a local church. It is not enough to stand in the courts of the *hieron* and do the outward requirements. No, one must personally progress into the inner, secret, *naos* of God. There alone we have His approval and true communion with Him takes place. A local church must be much more than a beautiful building where people meet to hear the sermon. It is a body of believers bound together in faith and love, a *temple* wherein Christ lives and reigns.

The Anabaptists of the sixteenth century are a good illustration of the witness and power of a community that survived because of their love for

one another and their unwavering faith in Christ. It is a sad fact that today a church no longer means what it once did. Commitment is in decline, and love for the brotherhood has fallen to the sword of disagreement and back-biting. The result is that the Church's witness is crippled and ineffective. The world sees only a *hieron*, with buildings and rules, while the true *naos* of God becomes increasingly harder to find. *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High* (Ps 91:1) has found that place of communion with the Christ who made heaven and earth.

3. *And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth.*
4. *These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth.*

THE TWO WITNESSES: THE SPIRIT AND THE CHURCH

As we continue the temple vision, let's review the overall prophecy of the chapter using what we have learned so far. At the beginning of the chapter the *temple of God*, which represents all of the spiritual children of Abraham, is measured, known, and protected by Christ. The physical Jewish religious system including the *holy city* is cast out and is trodden down by the Gentiles. During this time, *two witnesses* will stand up against the wicked of the earth, exercising great power and authority. When the allotted time of their *testimony* has been completed, a *Beast* will arise from the *bottomless pit* and murder them, leaving their dead bodies in plain sight on the streets of the world. This causes great rejoicing among the wicked, for the *two witnesses* had been an aggravating source of conviction against their evil deeds. Suddenly, the dead witnesses are resurrected, and in the sight of their enemies they ascend into heaven in a cloud. At the same time a tremendous earthquake shakes the world, and great fear falls on the living wicked who now realize that the *two witnesses* had been right all along. Immediately after these powerful events, the third woe of the seventh trumpet sounds, and final judgment and Hell itself are described.

This graphic picture continues the same topic introduced by the strong Angel in Chapter 10—the Church of Christ in a hostile world. The Angel says, “I will give to My two witnesses and they shall prophesy 1,260 days clothed in sackcloth. These witnesses are the two olive trees, the two lampstands which stand before the God of the earth.” The word *power* in verse 3 is not in the Greek, but has been supplied by the translators.

The *two witnesses* are the Church, inspired by the Spirit and the Word. *Ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth* (Acts 1:8). Two is the number of God’s choice in Bible numerology, and the Church is the chosen of God. The Greek word *church* is *ekklesia*, “the called out ones, the chosen ones.” Jesus sent out His disciples *by two and two* (Mark 6:7), to preach in the cities of Israel.

The symbolism of the passage is taken from Zechariah’s vision of a golden lampstand with seven lamps that were being continuously supplied with oil by two olive trees which stood on either side of the lampstand. The temple, which lay in ruins in Zechariah’s day, had a lampstand similar to the one in his vision, but without the olive trees. The angel explained to Zechariah that the vision foretold the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the temple, *not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit* (Zec 4:6). The two olive trees were *the two anointed ones that stand by the Lord of the whole earth* (Zec 4:14), apparently meaning Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two leaders of Israel at that time (Zec 3:1, 4:7). Under these two men’s Spirit-inspired leadership the lampstand of the Israelite Church after Babylon would shine again.

The *two witnesses* are called *two olive trees and two candlesticks* (v4). A *candlestick* (lampstand) is a light-bearer, and symbolizes the Kingdom of God (page 99). The Holy Spirit, represented by the oil, burns with fire and creates the light that shines for the world to see. The *two olive trees* represent the wise leaders of the Church, filled with the Spirit and producing the fruits thereof to be used in the Kingdom of Christ. In Scripture, olive trees symbolize fruitfulness (Judges 9:8; I Kings 6:23; Ps 52:8; Jer 11:16; Hosea 14:6), and Paul uses an olive tree in his analogy of the Kingdom of God in Romans 11. The *olive trees* of Zechariah were continuously supplying the lampstand with the oil of the Holy Ghost, a parallel to the way ministers in the Church supply

the members with spiritual food, provoking them to love and good works (Heb 10:24). Not that the *olive trees* possess the oil of the Spirit on their own merit, but that they inspire their flock to appropriate the Spirit for themselves and to shine forth the light of the Gospel.

There is a double symbolic meaning to the phrase *two olive trees and two candlesticks*. They both represent the Church, though the trees represent her leaders and the lampstands her general community. However, the authority and power of the Church are based on the witness of the Spirit and the Word (John 1:7; I John 5:8), and this is the second aspect of the symbolism. The Spirit and the Word are the spiritual *anointed ones* by which all evangelism and human witness are accomplished. Together these four exemplify the whole witness of the Church of Christ *into all the world*—the symbolic meaning of four in the Scriptures.

The two witnesses prophesy *clothed in sackcloth*. Sackcloth was a rough material worn by the poor, including that great prophet John the Baptist (Mt 3:4), whom Jesus called Elijah (Mt 17:10). In the OT wearing sackcloth was a sign of mourning and humility, as we see from David's poetic words: *my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting* (Ps 35:13). Even kings put on sackcloth as a sign of persecution and affliction (II Kings 19:1; I Chr 21:16). The point of the two witnesses wearing sackcloth is to show that they are not rich, glittery, glamorous and popular, but humble, unpretentious and meek. The wearing of sackcloth is an appeal to Christ in that it glorifies the power and all-sufficiency of God and acknowledges the weakness and futility of man's effort. As we give God His rightful place, we take our rightful place—at His feet. The two witnesses' actions illustrate that though they are unremarkable as men, they are chosen vessels by which God manifests His power and authority to the world.

UNDERSTANDING THE 1,260 DAYS

The time-period that the *two witnesses* rule the earth is 1,260 days (v3). There have been more than a few ideas about what this phrase means, but all begin under one of three premises:

1. The 1,260 days are a literal period of 1,260 days—Futurists follow this premise.
2. The 1,260 days are a literal period of time counted in years instead of days—the literal Historical view.
3. The 1,260 days are symbolic of a length of time that has not been given for man to know. This is the spiritual Historical position.

We will not spend much time arguing against the opposing views other than to give the following points. The literal approach is problematic in that it is impossible to fit the 1,260 days, the 42 months, and the 3½ years into the seven-year futurist program without overlapping each other. But we must also disagree with the literal Historical view, which we normally value highly, because there is very little Scriptural support for prophetic days representing literal years. In fact, I am aware of only one such case in the entire Bible, and then it was fully explained in advance. Additionally, the account is historical rather than prophetic. God instructed Ezekiel to lie on his left side 390 days and on his right side another 40 days to illustrate Israel's long history of iniquity and rebellion. Obviously Ezekiel could not have lain on his side for the entire time length of their iniquity, so God said: *I have appointed thee each day for a year* (Eze 4). This passage is a shaky foundation on which to maintain that, in prophecy, a day represents a year. One could just as easily maintain that a prophetic day represents a millennium, for *one day is with the Lord as a thousand years* (II Peter 3:8).

The most famous supposed day-year prophecy is the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9, but the word "day" never once occurs in it. That prophecy concerns 70 weeks of years, and though each week represents seven years, the symbolic word used is *week* (*heptad*). Here in the Revelation we read of *days*, *months*, and *times*, but never of weeks. Study also Daniel 4:16 where King Nebuchadnezzar was to become like a beast until *seven times pass over him*. Each *time* represented a year, but why isn't the word "day" used if it is supposed to represent a year? There is not one instance of any prophecy containing the word "day" that is divinely interpreted to be a year.

I believe that the 42 months, the 1,260 days, and the 3 ½ times are equivalent expressions representing the entire time period of the Age of Grace, or as

Paul called it, *these last days* (Heb 1:2). In defense of this position let's review the occurrences of these phrases in the Book of Revelation:

1. The 42 months that the Gentiles will tread down the holy city. (11:2)
2. The 1,260 days the two witnesses prophesy clothed in sackcloth (11:3)
3. The 1,260 days the woman is fed in the wilderness (12:6)
4. The 3½ times the woman is nourished away from the serpent. (12:14)
5. The 42 months that the beast is allowed to have power (13:5)

These are all equivalent times, 1,260 days equaling 42 months which is exactly 3½ years. The reasonable approach would be to understand these as equivalent expressions referring to the same time-period, and many commentators would agree. If this is true, we must reconcile all of the passages containing these time seasons with each other.

Probably the clearest proof that the 1,260 days represents the whole Gentile age can be seen in the career of the Beast which appears in Chapter 13. According to Chapter 19, this Beast continues to the end of the world and will be cast into the Lake of Fire when Christ returns. This places the endpoint of the 42 months at the very end of the world, which also agrees with the 1,260 days that the woman and her seed (the Church) are *persecuted* and forced to flee into the wilderness where she is nourished until the Lord returns (12:13-14). And in the very passage before us the two witnesses continue for 1,260 days, until they are finally killed by the Beast near the end of the world. For 3½ days they lay dead on the streets of the world when suddenly they are brought to life and ascend to heaven as the seventh and last trump sounds. A comparative study of the 1,260 days compels us to place its ending at the close of the Age, a position at odds with most literal Historicists.

The beginning of the 1,260 days is not definitely described in the text, but in each of the five passages listed above the length must include the entire Church Age. The Gentiles have trodden down Jerusalem *forty and two months*, ever since its fall in A.D. 70. The 1,260 day testimony of the *two witnesses* began with the Apostles and will continue to the end of the world. The Beast also will span the entire history of the Church, as we shall see in Chapter 13. The woman and her seed fled into the wilderness beginning at

the Roman persecution under which every Apostle except John was killed. The 1,260 days, the 42 months, and the 3½ years, if equivalent, must begin at about the same time. Comparative study would place that time at the start of the Church Age.

THE MEANING OF THE SYMBOLIC HALF-SEVEN

When we research the Biblical usage and meaning of the 1,260 days it becomes clearer why it symbolizes the Age of Grace from Calvary to Consummation. We have already noted how often the Revelation uses the Biblical meanings of numbers in its prophecies. A list of numbers with Biblical significance is given in the glossary. Numbers like two, three, seven, and forty have well-known meanings, but not as widely known is the typological meaning of 3 ½, or half-seven as it is sometimes called.

The first Bible occurrence of the number 3 ½ is when *it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months* (James 5:17) because of Elijah's prayer. This great drought led to tremendous famine, suffering, and tribulation for the backslidden children of Israel. However, signs of God's continuing love for His faithful followers were graciously revealed by some of the most amazing miracles to be found in the OT. Israel's king of this time-period, Ahab, along with his wicked wife Jezebel, had influenced most of Israel into open sin and idolatry. Those who had not bowed their knee unto Baal were few, and yet into this firestorm of rebellion and idolatry God sent one of the most remarkable men to ever walk this earth. In power and righteousness Elijah stood almost alone against the enemies of God—His own people. God Himself nourished Elijah as he hid in the wilderness, first by the ravens at the brook Cherith and then by the widow of Zarephath (I Kings 17). This extraordinary 3 ½ year interval concluded when Elijah prayed and fire fell from heaven on Mount Carmel killing the wicked priests of Baal and prompting the people to bow their knees and shout, *The Lord, He is God*.

This 3½ year time capsule of history has some details strikingly similar to those of the two witnesses of Revelation 11, especially the first part of their ministry (v3-6). The moral condition of the Jewish people in Elijah's day parallels the spiritual condition of the Church at the end of the world.

The priests of Baal and the leaders of Israel were sinful to the core, and they actively tried to wipe out worship of the true God. God worked mightily on behalf of Elijah and His people, protecting them from the hands of Ahab and Jezebel. When fire fell from heaven at the conclusion of the 3 ½ years, every one of the wicked priests were killed (I Kings 18).

There are other 3 ½ year time-periods in the Scriptures. The final siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 lasted 3 ½ years. It was a siege of unimaginable suffering and death according to the vivid and detailed record of Josephus. Jesus' earthly ministry lasted only the last 3 ½ years of His humanity, and the journeys of the children of Israel under the leadership of Moses during their travel from Egypt to Canaan were exactly 42 (Num 33:1-50), equaling the symbolic number of months (page 250).

In every one of these cases we are compelled to notice suffering, persecution, affliction, toil, and pilgrimage, and this is the Biblical significance of the half-seven. Compare this with the number 40, which connotes trial and testing (page 38).

The prophetic Book of Daniel twice uses the number 3 ½, given as a *time*, *times*, and *the dividing of a time*. In Daniel 7:25 the subject is the horn which speaks great words against the Most High. This is surely the Beast of Revelation 13, corroborated by the fact that both continue for the same 3 ½ times, ending with the coming of Christ. In Daniel 12:7 the 3 ½ times measure to the end of the Jewish Covenant.¹ Additionally, the 70-week prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 proclaims that it will be 69 weeks unto the coming of Messiah the Prince. He would *confirm the Covenant with many for one week*, the 70th week, but by His death *in the midst of the week He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease* (Dan 9:24). Jesus' ascension to heaven in the middle of the 70th week leaves a half-seven remaining, another hint that the 3 ½ symbolically represents the entire Gospel Age.

These verses lead me to understand the time periods of 1,260 days, 42 months, and 3 ½ years as a symbolic representation of the Church Age. It

1 In Daniel 12 we read of 1,290 days and 1,335 days. There is no connection between these days and the 1,260 days of Revelation. Daniel's days are almost certainly literal days accomplished during the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish religion in A.D. 70. Their fulfillment is corroborated in the works of Josephus, a non-Christian Jew whose writings strongly support the Book of Daniel. For a complete study of Daniel's prophecy, read The Seventy Weeks, by Philip Mauro.

is a perfect symbolic fit for this time-period because the NT portrayal of the Christian era is one of suffering, trial, and self-denial (I Peter 4:12; John 16:33; Rom 8:35). *We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God* (Acts 14:22). It is a time when the elect of God suffer because of (and often with) evil-doers, though many times they are delivered by Elijah-like miracles. This may not be so outwardly noticeable today, for Christians of North America and much of the world live in a special era of the Church. We are tolerated and even marginally accepted in society, making it easy to forget that the historical experience of the Church was very different. Our faithful predecessors would say with Paul, *We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed* (II Cor 4:8-9).

Another reason the 42 months is a fitting symbol is because the actual length of this Dispensation of Grace is a secret that even the angels are not permitted to know; God alone knows the day and hour of its end. Any time-related reference to it must then be given in a figurative way. And for good reason: the imminent return of the Lord has driven many ungodly men to repentance. If the early Church would have known that Christ's return was far in the future, would it not have affected their ministry? If our great-grandfathers would have known that the Lord would not be coming in their lifetime, would they have been more complacent and put off their salvation to the end of their life? The wisdom of God is correct in withholding from us the knowledge of the time of the end. He knows that Man is not strong enough for that. Every generation must live as if His coming will be in their lifetime, yet only one generation will actually be there in human flesh.

The three most important events of world history are foretold in the Bible, and it is instructive to study them. The date for the destruction of the old world at the Flood was set by God—120 years from His revelation to Noah until the Flood (Gen 6:3). Jesus' first coming was also precisely dated—486 ½ years from the going forth of Cyrus' command to rebuild the temple unto the coming of *Messiah the Prince* (Ezra 1:1-4; Daniel 9:25). However, the date of Jesus' return to this earth is the greatest secret in the universe, and any reference to the time-length between His appearances requires symbolism.

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.*
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.*

THE POWER AND AUTHORITY OF THE TWO WITNESSES

The *two witnesses* have supernatural power over their natural enemies. No man is able to hurt them, and if someone dares to try, fire issues out of their mouths and devours their enemies. The picture here is of indestructibility and power; their *enemies* cannot *hurt* them (v5). Notice the same words in the message of Jesus to His followers: *Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you* (Luke 10:19). How does this harmonize with the persecution and martyrdom that our forefathers endured at the hands of wicked men? It is important to understand that the real enemy of the Church is the spiritual kingdom of darkness, not mere men who are but pawns used by Satan against those that believe in God. Human hands often do wickedly and can destroy the body, but it is Satan that pulls the strings behind the scenes. The Revelation reminds us of this fact again and again. Satan may kill the body, but the Keeper of our hearts will protect what we have entrusted to Him (II Tim 1:12).

Christ warned that *they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you...and some of you shall they cause to be put to death...but there shall not an hair of your head perish* (Luke 21:12-18). Obviously this is speaking of perishing spiritually, and it is in the spiritual realm that the Christian possesses the essential weapons to overcome Satan's every attack. These weapons are the two witnesses of the Spirit and the Word. No demon of Satan can stand before their formidable powers. *Is not My Word like as a fire saith the Lord? Behold, I will make My words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them* (Jer 23:29, 5:14). The *two witnesses* fight not against flesh

and blood, but against *spiritual wickedness* (Eph 6:12). Truth and the Kingdom of Heaven will ultimately win against the kingdom of darkness, no matter how difficult it may outwardly seem at the time.

These *two witnesses* are not only invincible, they have almost unlimited power. They can stop the rain from falling, turn water to blood, and bring plagues on men *as often as they will*. These acts of judgment remind us of the ministries of Moses and Elijah. But we haven't seen a Moses or Elijah during the Church Age. We haven't? Jesus said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father* (John 14:12). The mighty acts of the Kingdom are not physical signs and wonders, but the much more important spiritual miracles of the New Birth, of transformed lives. God does not audibly speak to men as He did to Moses, but many impossible deeds have been done by men of faith who have given themselves to be used by the Spirit.

It is important to understand the purpose of this picture—to show the power and authority of the Church during the Kingdom. We are reigning with Christ now, for He has given us every weapon we need to overcome our foes. Remember that His *Kingdom is not of this world* (John 18:36), and we do not fight against men but against *the rulers of the darkness of this world* (Eph 6:12). He has given us all things. With Him we have power to tread on serpents and scorpions, to run and not be weary, and to understand the deep things of God. He is waiting and *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us* (Eph 3:20). Christ has already defeated Satan and the door of the Kingdom is open for all who accept and trust in Him. *Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!* There is *power* in being a totally committed Christian! This is the recurring theme presented in the Book of Revelation: Christ has overcome, and reigns gloriously with His saints among the kingdoms of the world. *We may boldly say, the Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me* (Heb 13:6).

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.*

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.*
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.*
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.*

THE BEAST KILLS THE TWO WITNESSES

A sobering and shocking statement is made immediately following the powerful picture of the evangelizing and conquering Church. The mighty, invincible *witnesses* will be silenced—killed by *the beast*. Their *dead bodies* will be exposed for all to see and the world will *rejoice* at their death. This is certainly a disturbing picture. Will the witness of the Church really become so weak that it is pronounced dead? Sadly, the answer is yes. Other Scriptures describing the condition of the Church and the world during the end-time agree that most of the Church will become weak and faithless. According to Revelation 20, Satan will be loosed from his prison a little season before Christ returns. He will go out and *deceive the people*, gathering them to battle against *the camp of the saints*. Outnumbered and totally surrounded, things seem hopeless for the oppressed and scorned Church of Christ, but suddenly judgment fire falls from heaven, and the world comes to an end.

Earlier we saw the same situation described under the symbolism of the fifth trumpet, as the demon-locusts, under the leadership of Satan, went about deceiving the wicked into even greater wickedness. The kingdom of darkness became an angry, militant army against the Church, until suddenly the angels of destruction came in judgment upon the wicked and the world ended in violence. Several passages in the Epistles also allude to great apostasy and evil at the end, and Jesus' own words indicate there will be a lack of faith when He returns (Luke 18:8). Noah's deliverance from the pre-flood world is likened to the Second Coming, as is the deliverance of righteous Lot from

Sodom. Those societies are legendary for their violence and wickedness, and such will be the conditions of the end-time world; men will do all kinds of iniquity and will greatly rebel against God and His moral laws (Luke 17:20f; II Peter 3:3f; II Tim 3:1f).

The two witnesses are killed by *the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit* (v7). This is the first time we read about the Beast in the Revelation, and from here to the end of the Book he is a primary character. It is important to note that this beast has nothing in common with the four beasts we first saw in 4:6. The Greek distinguishes them easily, for the Beast is called a *therion*, a wild, dangerous animal, while the four beasts are *zoon*, living creatures. This distinction is found at every occurrence of *beast* in the Book.

Who is the Beast? Without getting into the details ahead of time (Chapter 13), we will simply say that the Beast is a symbol for the political and social world under Satanic control. He is part of the trinity of evil that will be introduced in the next two chapters of the Revelation: Satan the dragon, Satan the beast, and Satan the false prophet. This is not to give more power to the Devil than what he really has, but so often in this Book the pictures show that what we are seeing with our physical eyes is not what is actually happening supernaturally. And that is the purpose of dividing Satan into parts; it outlines the different ways in which he influences men and the world. As the Dragon he is seen as that which opposes God; as the Beast he is seen as the world opposing the people of God; and as the False Prophet he is seen as the “church” opposing the people of God. These three symbols for the works of Satan therefore can and do overlap each other.

The Beast that snuffs out the life of the *witnesses* then, is essentially Satan. It is Satan as he appears in the form of the world—its values, intellect, politics and religions—and that is what overcomes the Church at the end of the age. Christian beware.

The statement that he will *ascend out of the bottomless pit* links with several other key passages in the Revelation. Back in Chapter 9, *Apollyon* and all his demon-locusts ascended out of the *bottomless pit*. And in Chapter 20 the *Dragon* comes out of the *bottomless pit*. The most strikingly similar passage is that of the seven-headed Beast of Chapter 17—*the beast that...was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit* (17:8). This beast is also called the

eighth beast (17:11), and corresponds to Satan the Dragon being loosed at the end (20:2). We will wait until later in our study, when we become more familiar with the Beast and his character, to show how these passages relate to each other. The point we wish to make here is that the *bottomless pit* is the dwelling place of Satan, and it is he that is ultimately responsible for the death of the *two witnesses* during his little season at the end of the world.

The opening of the *bottomless pit* (9:2), which released Apollyon and his horde of demons, sets the stage for the killing of the *two witnesses*. However, it is not the demons that kill, it is the Beast, to whom *it was given to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations* (13:7). After the Beast has killed the Church, he and his horns *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* (17:14). The Beast will have met his match at last.

The two witnesses' powerful *testimony* is weakened to the point that they are symbolized by *dead bodies* (Gk—*ptoma*, corpse). This is a figurative expression that does not mean that there will be no Christians at all on the earth, but that their power and message no longer will convict the world. Later we will see that this is largely due to the Church's lack of obedience to the call of Christ: *Come out of her, My people* (18:4). We are told specifically however, that there will be true believers living when Christ returns (I Thes 4:17), though they will be few in number.

The portrayal of the Church as a corpse implies death—spiritual death. The earlier picture of the Church as *two prophets torment[ing] them that dwelt on the earth* showed her alive and active, now their dead bodies portray her dead and powerless, meaning that the end-time Church will not present the Gospel of Christ in fear and power. The message of repentance will disappear, because sin is not even sin anymore in this era of the Church. It is a time of pleasure-seeking and selfish ambition, of sending gifts and partying, an era of *peace and safety*, when people will say, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry*. But God will say, *Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee* (Luke 12:19f).

The corpse of Christianity will lie on the broad streets of the cities of the world (11:8). *The great city* is Babylon, as it is called that eight times in the

Book of Revelation (14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10f). Adding to the meaning, Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem are also *spiritually* signified, making four symbols to represent the whole wicked world. Each of these terms has its own slightly different symbolic meaning. Babylon symbolizes the idolatry of materialism, pleasure-seeking and “intellectual enlightenment” (Rev 18), while Sodom reminds us of extreme moral depravity and wickedness (Gen 13:13; Is 1:10, 3:9; Jer 23:14). As the place where Israel was once enslaved and often wished to return to, Egypt symbolizes the lusts, comforts, and temptations of the world. And Jerusalem, *where also our Lord was crucified*, represents spiritual sin—deception, decay, and faithlessness among the people of God. Sadly, Christianity at the end is characterized by the idolatry of Babylon, the sins of Sodom, the worldliness of Egypt, and the spiritual hypocrisy of Jerusalem.

The moral decay and impotence of the Church will last for *three days and a half* (v9). We have discussed the symbolic meaning of 3 ½ already (see page 250), but here it is 3 ½ *days*, not *years*. The 3 ½ days does not correspond to the same time period as the 1,260 days, 42 months, and 3 ½ times as it is not an equivalent expression. The figurative meaning of the number 3 ½ however, should be the same—persecution, suffering, and pilgrimage. This describes the conditions of the faithful few at the end who are still watching for the coming of the Bridegroom with their vessels filled with oil. It is highly unlikely that the 3 ½ days are literal days, for that would quite possibly allow the end-time Church to know the day of the end. All we really know is that the 3 ½ days of the dead Church lasts much less than the 1,260 days of the historical Church represented by the *two witnesses*.

The ill treatment of Christianity by the world is illustrated in that the people of all nations see the corpse of the Church, yet do not even respect her enough to bury her. This means that we should not expect the end-time to see church buildings being torn down and Christians being killed, for the world will look upon their *dead bodies*, meaning that the Church will still be seen. However, the world will *rejoice* because the Church no longer wields the weapons of the *two witnesses*. She has lost the power of God, and even the right to hold up her moral hand in protest of evil and unrighteousness because her own leaders allow sin to flourish within her very walls.

What a sad state of affairs! And yet this very fact is happening before our eyes, documented daily by newspapers and commentators who gloat over the death or split of another denomination. Just in the past few years we have seen the Episcopalians, Lutherans, Anglicans, Presbyterians, and more condone homosexuality and even allow gay ministers in their pulpits. These churches are saying “sin is no longer sin.” Divorce and remarriage has long ceased to be a moral issue, and immorality and hypocrisy are not censored. Those *that dwell upon the earth* are glad to be free from moral responsibility because now they can live in self-indulgence and pleasure. How much longer will God allow the indignation to continue?

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.*
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.*
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.*
14. *The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.*

THE RAPTURE OF THE CHURCH

The dead bodies of the two witnesses do not lie long on the streets. Suddenly the *Spirit of life from God* enters into them and they are resurrected. A voice from heaven compels them upward and in the sight of all they ascend up into heaven in a cloud. Great fear falls on every soul left behind as they see the righteous dead and living rising up into the air. The hour, day, month, and year, long known by God alone has come. It is the day to recompense the works of evil men at the hand of the death angels (9:15). Men will implore

the rocks and mountains to fall on them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb (6:16) for the *time of the dead, that they should be judged* is at hand (v18). The entire world will suddenly know that they have put off salvation one day too late.

An earthquake signals the end. The panic-stricken *remnant* now acknowledge God and call on Him in fear and repentance, but it is too late. The day of grace is past and the door of salvation has swung shut forever. *The second woe is past; the third woe cometh quickly* (v14). The *third woe* is Hell, the unquenchable Lake of Fire.

An earthquake announced Christ's resurrection (Mt 28:2) and it would be natural that the same will announce the opening of the graves and the resurrection of the saints on that final day. In virtually all of the Biblical accounts describing the end of time, a great earthquake shakes the world. Figuratively and literally it will be the greatest earthquake the world has ever experienced. Earthquakes in the OT often figuratively describe great social and political turmoil and unrest (see glossary), an event expressed by the detailed picture of the fall of Babylon in Chapter 18.

In the text before us *a tenth part of the city* falls and seven thousand men are killed (v13). The city evidently is a reference to the four-fold city of verse 8, and therefore represents the entire godless world that has rejected God's plan too long and is now ready for judgment. Only a *tenth* of the city falls, and just 7,000 *names of men*, as the Greek literally reads, are killed. The number is representative of all those destined to die under this judgment. In studying the significance of a *tenth*, we say only that it seems to indicate that which is accepted by God as sufficient for what should justly be the whole. Many of the OT offerings were accompanied by a *tenth deal* of fine flour or something similar. The Lord's tithe was to be one-tenth of one's income, and giving it recognized that God was the rightful owner of it all. Seven thousand carries a similar meaning, seven being the number of completeness and thousand representative of a large number known by God alone (see glossary).

Their enemies beheld them. Recognition and vindication at last. Our society is full of proud, rebellious and selfish people, and we have heard them

make the most defiant and sacrilegious statements against Christ. Recently I saw a newspaper photo of some homosexual demonstrators carrying various posters. One poster read, "God is a jerk." We wonder how long God will permit His creation to scoff and sneer at Him, but the last day is ultimately coming. There will be no unbelievers on that day.

As it was in the days of Noah, *so shall also the coming of the Son of man be* (Mt 24:37). The people of Noah's day laughed him to scorn when he and his family entered the ark of safety, but there was not one unbeliever when the rain began to fall. By then it was too late. The door was shut, and the time of salvation was over. At the return of Christ the whole world will see Him and fear greatly when they see the physical resurrections of the saints and watch them ascend into heaven. It will be a time of pain and terror, especially for those who thought they were ready but suddenly realize with awful certainty that they had only deceived themselves. Yes, every knee will bow and acknowledge that He is Lord (Rom 14:11) on that day. They will give *glory to the God of heaven* (v13), not in repentance unto salvation but in acknowledgement of His authority, power and righteousness.

The resurrection picture of the two witnesses is drawn from Ezekiel 37, where in a vision Ezekiel saw a valley full of dry bones suddenly come to life, *and [stand] up upon their feet, an exceeding great army*. That prophecy was directed to the children of Israel, who at the time of Ezekiel's vision were languishing in Babylon. The captives were saying, *our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off*. But God foretold a great awakening and revival for the children of Israel: *And [I] shall put My spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it* (Eze 37:14). The fulfillment came when Cyrus, king of Babylon, released the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the nation of Israel and worship the God of heaven and earth. The circumstances of Cyrus' decree are almost as miraculous as Israel's previous deliverance from Egypt, but that is another story. The NT children of God now look forward to the day when the miracle of physical resurrection will unite body, soul and spirit to dwell in the land of Canaan with Christ forever.

THE SECOND WOE: THE END OF THE WORLD

Not all students of the Revelation agree that the ascension of the *two witnesses* into heaven is the Rapture of the Church, and that the destruction described in verse 13 is a picture of the end of the world. Therefore we offer the following reasons for believing that this is indeed prophetic of *the last day*.

First and most importantly, remember the words of the Angel in Chapter 10, *And the Angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up His hand to heaven, And sware... that there should be time no longer: 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* (10:5-7). The seventh angel is said to follow quickly the sixth angel (11:14), and manifestly does, for we will see no events at all when the seventh angel sounds, only an elaborate announcement that the end has taken place. This is consistent with the imagery of the seals, for the sixth seal portrays the horrors of the end of the world, followed by the opening of the seventh seal which brings only the announcement of silence in heaven—the mystery of God was completed.

Secondly, we believe this is a description of the end because the overall picture is so similar to other NT passages describing the return of the Lord, and the resurrection of the saints (see page 142). *Behold He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him* (1:7). The call to *Come up hither* is **Anabaino**, and is the common Greek word used to describe those ascending into heaven (see John 20:17; Eph 4:8; Rev 7:2).

Finally, the *day of the Lord* is the logical conclusion for the section of the trumpets. It would be inconsistent for the trumpet series to end much before the end of the world, for all of the other sections of the Book of Revelation end with a description of Christ's return for His Church.

There is however, one point that at first glance may not seem to reconcile with the view that the sixth trumpet concerns the end of the world. Verse 13 indicates that the same hour of the resurrection of the Church an earthquake kills 7,000 men. If this is the end, should not all the wicked die? Under closer

study, the chronology is perfectly accurate, for it is not until the seventh angel *begins to sound* (10:7) that time and the wicked truly shall cease forever. The sounding of the sixth trumpet concerns events just before the end of the world. A great earthquake will kill 7,000 men. This links with the one-third slain by the death angels of 9:18.

We do know that the Rapture of the saints precedes the destruction of the world because Luke 17:29 says, *But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.* Is it stretching the analogy too far to note that verse 13 says the earthquake happened the *same hour* of the resurrection, and Lot left Sodom the *same day* of its destruction? This would leave another 23 hours of time available after the resurrection during which suddenly the world will be destroyed. In other words, the events involving the end of the world as described by the sixth trumpet may not be instantaneous. A similar line of reasoning can be taken from the analogy of the destruction of the old world by the Flood. It is very likely that the floods did not immediately kill the wicked; it may have been days before the last man died.

The judgments involving the earthquake, though describing a part of the final destruction of the world, present the fearful picture that the unbelievers see in terrifying reality as the graves open and the bodies of saints long dead come to life and living people ascend bodily into the clouds. The strong Angel's message is given from the Church's perspective, and therefore does not touch on the final judgment of the wicked as thoroughly as the sixth seal did, but their thoughts and actions at the horrifying realization that they are being left behind is graphically presented.

The two lines of prophecy begun at 9:1 with the sounding of the fifth trumpet meet here at the close of the sixth trumpet. As illustrated below, the fifth trumpet describes the rise of the kingdom of darkness towards the end of the world, and the sixth trumpet introduce the angels of destruction prepared for the Day of the Lord. The inevitable conclusion was withheld while the final message of the strong Angel went out over the earth to His people. Now the record is complete, and the future of the two kingdoms will be announced together at the sounding of the seventh angel.

Four Trumpets Purge the Church

- 1st Trumpet: Fire and hail falls on the earth.
 2nd Trumpet: The burning mountain is cast into the sea.
 3rd Trumpet: A star falls from heaven corrupting the fresh waters
 4th Trumpet: The light from the heavens is clouded.

Fifth & Sixth Trumpets

The Kingdom of Darkness

Satan released from the bottomless pit (9:1-12).
 The angels of destruction punish the wicked (9:13-21).

The Kingdom of Christ

Three messages of the strong Angel to His people (10:1-11).
 The Temple of God on earth becomes the Temple in heaven (11:1-14).

Seventh Trumpet

Eternity is announced, the Temple of God is opened in heaven, and the wicked are judged for Hell (11:15-19).

There is an interesting parallel in the numbering of the seals and trumpets with Christ's last week of earthly ministry. On the fifth day of the week Christ was delivered to His enemies, and on the sixth day He was crucified. On the seventh day He rested in the grave, and then rose again on the eighth day. Five is the number of grace, and six is the number of man. Seven signifies completion and finality while eight is the number of new life and resurrection.

The numbers three and four are also used in a special way in the Revelation, where we see the number seven broken down into groups of four and three several times. The four trumpets on land, sea, fresh waters and heavens are followed by the three woe-trumpets. The seven seals begin with four horsemen and end with three end-time seals. Later we will see the same sequence in the seven last plagues. It is not seen in the seven churches, and significantly so, for that section has two "good" churches, and five not-so-good ones. Two is the number of God's chosen and correctly fits the seven churches. We do not intend to make the interpretation of these prophecies dependent on the meanings of numbers, but our understanding is strengthened by their consistent usage.

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.*
16. *And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God,*
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.*
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.*
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.*

THE END OF THE WORLD

The seventh trumpet brings to an end the visions of the trumpet series. The primary theme of the trumpets is to warn the world of judgments to come, both during the Church Age and at the end of the world. With the sounding of the seventh angel's trumpet the *mystery of God [is] finished* and time shall be no longer (10:7). Appropriately, there is almost no action in the vision, only a lengthy proclamation of what has already taken place. The opening of the seventh seal and the sounding of the seventh trumpet are similar in this regard.

The sounding of the seventh angel brings *great voices in heaven* announcing the abolition of worldly kingdoms forever; henceforth there will be only the Kingdom of Christ, the redeemed Bride of the Lamb. This Kingdom of Heaven will never end, for *He shall reign for ever and ever*. The literal Greek reading of the last half of verse 15 is: *The kingdoms of the world did become*

of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign to the ages of the ages! (YLT). The primary thought is that human achievement and authority has become obsolete and has dissolved, superseded by the heavenly reign of Christ and His saints forever and ever.

Most of the seventh trumpet's announcement is in the form of praise from the 24 elders, who fall on their faces and worship God in thanksgiving and adulation. Their address, *O Lord God Almighty, (kurios theos pantokrator)* occurs only in the Book of Revelation (4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 19:15, 21:22), and once in Genesis 17:1 when God appeared to Abram and changed his name to Abraham. It is the ultimate title of power, dignity, and honor. Only once is God called the Almighty (*pantokrator*) in the NT outside of the Revelation (II Cor 6:18), illustrating the reverential portrayal of God and His Christ in these visions.

The next part of the address, *which art, and wast, and art to come*, also is special to the Book of Revelation (1:8, 4:8, 11:17, 16:5), and describes the eternality of God (see page 39). The symbolic meaning of the 24 elders is given on page 95 of this book.

The words of thanksgiving from the 24 elders are like a chant of praise as they look back on the events leading up to their salvation and entrance into heaven. *You took Your great power and reigned. And the nations were full of wrath, and Your wrath came, and the time of the judging of the dead, and to give the reward to Your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and to the ones fearing Your name, to the small and to the great, and to destroy those [who destroyed] the earth* (MKJV). The elders are speaking of the end of Christ's earthly reign and the rewards of joy and happiness to those who are part of that Kingdom. Their words agree with the Apostle Paul's account of the transforming of the earthly Kingdom Age of the Church into the heavenly eternal Kingdom: *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* (I Cor 15:24-25).

The *angry nations* (v18) allude to the people *and kindreds and tongues and nations* (v9) who rejoiced at the death of the *two witnesses*. Later we read how these followers of the Beast gather themselves against Christ at the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the world (16:14). There the fierceness of the

wrath of God will come in final judgment upon every unfaithful man who has ever lived, for *the time of the dead* has come, and He will *destroy them which destroy the earth* (v18). The word here translated *destroy* is often translated *corrupt* (Luke 12:33; I Tim 6:5), and in Revelation 19:2 the great Harlot is judged because she *corrupt[ed] the earth with her fornication*.

The final verse of the trumpet visions is evocative of victory, rest, and worship. *The Temple of God is opened in heaven*. This is the sanctuary of the *naos* of God, the Holy of Holies. On earth no human eye was permitted to look into this most sacred of places except for the High Priest, and that only once a year. Now the doors are opened and we may see the design and beauty of it all—*the mystery is finished*. Even the *ark of His testament* (or covenant) is revealed in glorious splendor. Surely the open Temple pictures the fullness of understanding and appreciating the design and wonder of God's purpose in developing Man to be with Him. The many questions we have on earth will be answered, and we will know even as we are known (I Cor 13:12). The majesty and power of God will be revealed to us, as portrayed in the spectacular display of *lightnings, thunderings, and earthquakes*. The open Temple symbolizes the accessibility of God in heaven: *Emmanuel*—God with us. We shall forever *see His face and His name shall be in [our] foreheads* (22:4). *And so shall we ever be with the Lord* (I Thes 4:17).

Primary Symbols in Section Three

Trumpets	God's acts of warning and calling to the world
Bottomless Pit	The spiritual realm of Satan and his demons
Fallen Star	Satan as <i>Abaddon</i> —the Destroyer
Locusts	Satan's force of demons
Horses of Fire	God's angels of destruction
Mighty Angel	Christ
Seven Thunders	God's end-time call to the world
The Temple of God	The true Kingdom-saints
The Outer Court	Nominal Christianity
The Two Witnesses	The Spirit and the Word
1,260 Days	The time-length of the Church Age