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LIBERTY BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

THESIS PROJECT APPROVAL SHEET

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GRADE

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MENTOR, Dr. Frederick C. Smith

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## ABSTRACT

### THE WEEK BEFORE JUDGEMENT

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This dissertation study proposal is two-fold: (1) to present the basic principles, which underlie the methods of interpretation, and to demonstrate that these principles determine one's eschatological position. This dissertation research will demonstrate that the grammatical-historical principles of hermeneutics are the only sensible methods to be used to comprehend the Scriptures, and (2) to research, investigate and analyze the events of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials of Revelation, as they relate to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy comparing them with the teachings of Jesus in the Olivet discourse.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **The Need for the Topic**

No other study of the Bible evokes the same allure as the study of eschatology. Attempts to explain the prophecies of the Scriptures are many, yet there continues to be the widest diversity of interpretation. Because the divergence is so wide, the expositor is faced with innumerable hermeneutical decisions before he can begin to grasp the meaning of the passages of Scripture, especially in the realm of prophecy. In discussions on eschatology, the author has been impressed with the tremendous scope of the prophecies in the area of the tribulation and the second coming of Christ. God has given great detail in prophecy of both comings of the Messiah, yet confusion reigns instead of harmony in understanding His coming. This confusion seems to exist because of the diversity in the methods of interpretation. In the author's life, ever since he was exposed to the prophecy of the seventy weeks of Daniel, the need and desire to understand the prophetic Scriptures has been a serious one.

This dissertation study is two-fold: (1) to present the basic principles, which underlie the methods of interpretation, and to demonstrate that these principles determine one's eschatological position. This dissertation research will demonstrate that the grammatical-historical principles of hermeneutics are the only sensible methods to be used to comprehend the Scriptures, and (2) to research, investigate and analyze the events of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials of Revelation, as they relate to

the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy comparing them with the teachings of Jesus in the Olivet discourse.

The rationale is that hermeneutics is the science that teaches the principles, laws, and methods of biblical interpretation. The fact that God has spoken to man in the authoritative writings known as The Bible is the foundation of the Christian faith. God says through Isaiah:

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, my counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure (Isa. 46:9-10).

Without this divine inspiration, mankind would be left to the rather dubious position of human reasoning and knowledge.

The author will clearly demonstrate that there are two basic methods of interpretation by theologians, and that these two methods have produced two completely opposite eschatological positions. This difference in positions has brought confusion and misunderstanding among students of the book of Revelation. According to John F. Walvoord, prophetic hermeneutics has caused much distress for eschatology, more than any other field of theology.<sup>1</sup>

It is not sufficient to say that one school interprets everything literally and the other interprets everything allegorically. The issue is not completely over the validity of grammatical or literal exegesis, neither is it just one of figurative or non-figurative language. Both the amillennialists and the premillennialists agree that the grammatical, historical method is basic to the understanding of the Scriptures. The amillennialists accuse the literalists of denying the poetic and figurative elements. The real issue in

prophetic interpretation is whether prophetic literature can be interpreted by the general method of grammatical exegesis, or is some special principle necessary?

The second purpose, which is really the thrust of the thesis, is to investigate and to analyze the events of the seals, the trumpets and the vials of Revelation as they relate to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. The author will attempt to show that the sixth seal and seventh trumpet occur after the seventieth week, and that all seven vials that happen during the seventh trumpet also occur after the seventieth week. Many have erred in their attempts to give the chronological order and timing of these events by placing all of them in the seventieth week, or in the seven-year period known as the tribulation period.

The tribulation, the day of the Lord, and the seventieth week of Daniel, have a relationship with the seals, the trumpets, and the vials of the book of Revelation, and therefore, will be clearly defined. An analysis of the timing and chronological order of each event will demonstrate the precise detailed account that God has provided of the end time events.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This important truth of the day of the Lord is the consummation of God's final judgment and triumph over sin, including the time element of this great day of judgment, which has been much debated among biblical scholars. The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to present a detailed analysis of the events leading to and encompassing the day of the Lord from a pre-millennial view. This project will cover the time of the

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<sup>1</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, Introduction (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), ix.

seventieth week, and the seventy-five days between the seventieth week and the millennial reign. The church age, the rapture, the marriage supper of the Lamb, the millennial reign, the two battles of Gog and Magog, the portion of the day of the Lord that includes the final judgment at the end of the millennial reign, and the new heaven and new earth will not be treated.

The author will analyze the systems of hermeneutics – the science that teaches the principles, laws, and methods of biblical interpretation. The allegorical system of interpretation will be examined. The literary use of allegory should be distinguished from the method of interpretation known as “allegorizing.” The allegorizing method is characterized by the search for a deeper meaning in the literal statements of a text that is not readily apparent in the text itself. This method often indicates more the speculations of the interpreter than the thought patterns of the original author. Historically, allegorizing originated in Greece (sixth century B.C.), influenced Judaism through Philo at Alexandria (second century B.C.), and entered Christian use through such notables as Origen, Jerome, and Augustine. According to Bernard Ramm, “Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regards the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and more profound sense.”<sup>2</sup> Regarding eschatology, J. Dwight Pentecost says that the allegorical system really perverts the interpretation of the Scripture.<sup>3</sup>

Grammatical-historical exegesis can be used to interpret prophetic literature; there are however, certain fundamental principles that must be followed. First, one must give

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<sup>2</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 21.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 5.

attention to the language of the prophetic passage. The meaning and significance of proper names, events, references to geography, customs, and material culture must be determined. For example, Put, Gomer, Togarmah, and Cush, in Ezekiel 38, are countries that must be identified in order to understand the prophecy. Second, the historical background of the prophet and prophecy must be determined in order to establish the totality of communication of thoughts in which the prophet writes. For instance, the change in political positions in Israel and its surrounding nations give great insight to the prophecy of Isaiah. Third, one must pay diligent attention to the context of the passage. Chapter verses are arbitrary and may be misleading. It is important to look past these divisions and discover the set of circumstances that surround a particular prophetic event or situation. For example, when seeking to understand the timing of when Michael shall stand up in Daniel 12:1, the interpreter must go back to the events of 11:36 and see what is happening to cause Michael to stand up. Fourth, the prophetic writings are not systematic. They are not organized as lecture notes, and two events separated in time may seem to be together in the prophetic sequence. Ramm comments on this when he writes:

The Jewish scholars unable to decipher pictures of Messianic suffering and Messianic glory were not properly prepared for the event of humiliation of our Lord. Only in the pages of the New Testament are these two pictures properly related in terms of two advents of the Messiah (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12 and Hebrews 9:28).<sup>4</sup>

Finally, many passages of prophetic Scripture parallel each other. These passages must be sought out and related without contradiction to maintain the consistency of the whole revelation of God. For instance, does the day of the Lord, the day of Jezreel, the time of Jacob's trouble, and the day of wrath all refer to the same event? All of these

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<sup>4</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 249.

concepts as well as other similar images and symbols occur and according to Ramm “must be reckoned with carefully and intelligently in the interpretation of prophecy.”<sup>5</sup>

The seventy weeks of Daniel’s prophecy, the tribulation, and the day of the Lord, are discussed in part two. Comprehending the prophecy of the seventy weeks, that Gabriel gives to Daniel is the passport to understanding the prophetic Scriptures of the first and second advents of Christ. In, verses twenty-four through twenty-seven of Daniel chapter nine, Daniel is given the comprehensive program of God for the nation of Israel. Walvoord says of the ninth chapter: "It provides one of the most important keys to understanding the Scriptures as a whole. The ninth chapter specifically takes up prophecy as it applies to the chosen people."<sup>6</sup> Walvoord continues:

The long preamble of the twenty-three verses leading up to the great revelation of the seventy weeks is, in itself, a testimony to the importance of this revelation. The stage is now set for Gabriel to reveal to Daniel God's purposes for Israel, culminating in the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom on the earth.<sup>7</sup>

The purpose of the tribulation, which is to prepare the nation of Israel for the kingdom, will be examined thoroughly and compared to the detailed accounting of the events leading to, during, and immediately following the tribulation prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ in the Olivet discourse of Matthew chapter twenty four. In his treatise and also in the book of Revelation, (Rev. 7: 4-8, 12:6, 12-17), Jesus reveals that the purpose of the tribulation is chiefly to affect the Jewish nation. His words, along with the words of Jeremiah and the apostle Paul, show that God will use this time of trouble to bring Israel to the new covenant (Jer. 31:31). Jer. 30:7 states: “Alas! For that day is great,

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<sup>5</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 259.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 201.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

so that there is none like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it."

The tribulation in its relationship to the Antichrist begins with the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel. According to Dan. 9:27, this abomination that makes desolate, takes place when the daily sacrifice is taken away by the Antichrist. The names given to the Antichrist, other than Antichrist, are the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition, the Beast, the Little Horn, and the King. The Apostle Paul speaks of the Antichrist when he writes:

Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (II Thess. 2:4).

The Antichrist will make the covenant for seven years, then break the covenant setting himself up to be God, causing the sacrifices to cease, and murdering the Jews. This Man of Sin, who is controlled by Satan, causes the tribulation to fall on Israel.

The tribulation in its relationship to Satan begins in the middle of the seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; 12:1; Matthew 24:15) with the war in heaven (Rev. 12:7-9). Satan loses the battle and is cast into the earth, no longer having access to heaven. With great wrath he devastates the inhabitants of the earth, persecuting Israel for a time, and times, and a half a time (3 ½ years, Rev. 12:12-14).

The study of the day of the Lord will clearly demonstrate that it (the day of the Lord) is the judgment of God upon the earth. It is a time when He pours out His wrath and establishes His kingdom by force. Among Old Testament prophets, the term often had an eschatological meaning describing a future climatic day of judgment (the day of the Lord of Hosts, Isa.. 2: 12). This day of the Lord was anticipated by Israel as a future

day of Yahweh's visitation. Israel believed this day would inaugurate some hopeful era for the nation of Israel.

There is a wide divergence of opinion in the views of the day of the Lord and the time element within it. This divergence is over two questions: (1) what is the day of the Lord, and (2) what is the time period of the day of the Lord? It is critical to answer these two questions in order to place the seals, the trumpets, and the vials in their proper order.

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary defines the day of the Lord as,

“an eschatological term referring to the consummation of God's kingdom and triumph over His foes and deliverance of His people. This day begins at the second coming of Christ and will include the final judgment. It will remove class distinction (Isa. 2: 12-21), will abolish sins (II Pet. 3: 11-13) and will be accompanied by social calamities and physical cataclysms (Matt. 24: 30- Lk. 21:7-33). It will include the millennial judgment and culminate in the new heaven and the new earth (Isa. 65: 17; 66: 22; Rev. 21: 1).”<sup>8</sup>

Scofield agrees with Zondervan as to the time of the day of the Lord. He says:

“The day of Jehovah (called, also, "that day" and "The great day") is that lengthened period of time beginning with the return of the Lord in glory, and ending with the purgation of the heavens and the earth by fire preparatory to the new heavens and new earth (Isa. 65: 17-19; 66: 22; II Pet. 3: 13; Rev. 21: 1).”<sup>9</sup>

Then there are those that include the tribulation period in the day of the Lord. The study will research, examine, and analyze all the Scripture passages that deal with the day of the Lord to prove it occurs after the seventieth week.

In part three, the seals of Revelation and their relationship to the seventieth week of Daniel will be examined and compared to the Olivet discourse. Some commentaries

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<sup>8</sup> The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 204.

<sup>9</sup> C. I. Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 1349.



place the first six seals in the first half of the seventieth week, but the study will divide the seals showing which seals occur in the first half and which seals occur in the second half. The examination will demonstrate that seals one, two, and three occur in the first three and a half years of the seventieth week, while seal four occurs in the last three and a half years, known as the great tribulation. Seal five, although it occurs in the last three and a half years, is a heavenly scene showing the martyred saints of the tribulation.

A critical part of the study of the seals is to demonstrate that the sixth seal occurs after the seventieth week and ushers in the day of the Lord. Because of the devastating events that are described in the sixth seal there are those who hesitate to take this passage literally; however, the evidence will demonstrate that it should be taken literally.

The study of the seventh seal will reveal that the seven trumpets equate to the six seals. The author realizes that there are commentators who disagree with this view, but after a careful examination, the evidence will show that the first six seals and the seven trumpets parallel each other. It is impossible for the seven trumpets to follow the sixth seal chronologically and occur within the seventieth week when the sixth seal is a vision of the events, which occur after the seventieth week.

The author will attempt to prove that, when compared to the Olivet discourse, trumpets one, two, three and four of Revelation occur before the abomination of desolation. Some commentators place the first four trumpets in the historical Roman Empire. They see these judgments as the ravages of the Goths in the fifth century, which ended in the overthrow of the Western part of the Roman Empire. Others, on the other hand, place the trumpets in the first half of the week and the vials in the last half of the week. None are comparing their positions with the Olivet discourse.

The last three trumpets introduce three woes into the earth. Comprehending these woes in their relationship to the seventieth week is critical to understanding the great tribulation and the day of the Lord. After the fourth trumpet sounded, John says:

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 (Rev. 8:13)!

This study will reveal that trumpets five and six occur in the last half of the week. These trumpets will reveal the wrath of Satan as it is poured out upon the whole earth in his persecution of Israel. When the fifth angel sounds an angel falls from heaven. The identity of this fallen angel is doubtless Satan himself, according to the analogy of Isa. 14:12, Lk. 10:18, and Dan.12:1. The fifth trumpet is a description of a fearful demon host that is to be unleashed by divine permission. This demon host, which is the first woe, has the ability to hurt men who have not the seal of God. Trumpet six announces the second woe, which is the loosing of the four angels that are bound in the river Euphrates, producing a great army by which one third of men will die.

During this same three and a half year period of the fifth and sixth trumpets there are two witnesses of God that testify. At the end of their testimony, they are killed and lie in the streets of Jerusalem for three and one half days, ending the first two woes and the great tribulation. It is at this time that John says: "The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe comes quickly (Rev. 11:14)." The seventh trumpet now sounds and the final chapter that brings the kingdom of God to this earth begins. John explains:

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 forever and ever (Rev. 11:15).

When the sounding of the seventh trumpet is examined in its relationship to the seventieth week and compared to the Olivet discourse, it will prove that both the sixth seal and the seventh trumpet occur after the seventieth week.

Daniel gives insight to the length of days from the beginning of the tribulation to the setting up of the millennial reign. He says the total number of days in this period is 1335 days (Dan. 12:11-13). The author then, will attempt to prove that the seven vials of Revelation are an outpouring of the wrath of God and of the Lamb during the seventy-five days that occur after the 1260 days (three and a half years of tribulation).

To summarize then, the first five seals run parallel with the first six trumpets, all occurring during the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. These events are not divine wrath but the wrath of Satan, because he has lost the battle with Michael and is cast into the earth, no longer having access to heaven. Satan takes out his vengeance on the "woman" (Israel) during the three and a half years of the great tribulation. The study of the seventh trumpet, on the other hand, will show that it is the third series of events and is the outpouring of divine wrath.

God promises blessings on all who read, hear, and keep the words of the prophecy of the book of Revelation. An effort has been made in this study to demonstrate the chronological order of the events of the seals, trumpets, and the vials in their relationship to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, comparing that chronology with the chronology that Jesus lays down in the Olivet discourse. The success of that effort lies in the mind of the reader and how devoted he is to the principles of the grammatical-historical system of interpretation and how accurately he follows those principles.

PART I

ESCHATOLOGY AND THE SYSTEMS OF HERMENEUTICS

## CHAPTER I

### THE ALLEGORICAL SYSTEM

The literary use of allegory should be distinguished from the method of interpretation known as “allegorizing.” The allegorizing method is characterized by the search for a deeper meaning in the literal statements of a text that is not readily apparent in the text itself. This method often indicates more of the speculation of the interpreter than the thought patterns of the original author.

Historically, allegorizing originated in Greece (sixth century B.C.), influenced Judaism through Philo at Alexandria (second century B.C.), and entered Christian use through such notables as Origen, Jerome, and Augustine.

According to Bernard Ramm: “Allegorism is the method of interpreting a literary text that regards the literal sense as the vehicle for a secondary, more spiritual and more profound sense.”<sup>1</sup> When it comes to eschatology, J. Dwight Pentecost says: “the allegorical method is not to interpret Scripture, but to pervert the true meaning of Scripture”<sup>2</sup>

The two basic schools of prophecy, amillennialism and premillennialism are at odds with each other over their divergent and irreconcilable methods of interpretation. The amillennialists choose the allegorical method of interpretation whereas the

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 21.

<sup>2</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 5.

premillennialists choose the grammatical-historical method. The vast doctrinal variations in eschatological study are due to the differences in these two hermeneutical systems. It is obvious that the views of premillennialism and the views of amillennialism cannot both be right. If the difference in the views is caused by the method of interpretation then the problem must lie in the method that is being used. Amillennialism states that the Bible does not predict a period of rule of Christ on earth before the last judgment. The amillennialists believe that the millennial reign of Christ on earth is not literal, as depicted in Revelation chapter twenty, but is now present as the victorious Christ reigns and rules His church from heaven through the Word and the Spirit. The amillennialists believe the premillennial view of a literal millennial reign is wrong because the premillennialists hold a literal view of interpretation. Because the difference lies in the two methods of interpretation, Pentecost says, “The fundamental problem to be studied at the outset of any consideration of Eschatology is that of the hermeneutics of prophecy”.<sup>3</sup> Floyd E. Hamilton realized it was the method of interpretation that determined the difference in the two positions when he wrote:

Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures. That was the kind of a Messianic kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for, on the basis of a literal interpretation of the Old Testament promises. That was the kind of a kingdom that the Sadducees were talking about when they ridiculed the idea of the resurrection of the body, drawing from our Lord the clearest statement of the characteristics of the future age that we have in the New Testament, when He told them that they erred “not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Matt. 22:29) ... the Jews were looking for just such a kingdom as that expected by those premillennialists who speak of the Jews

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<sup>3</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 3.

holding a preeminent place in an earthly Jewish kingdom to be set up by the Messiah in Jerusalem.<sup>4</sup>

Albertus Pietens, a renowned amillennialist, says: “The question of the spiritualization of prophecy . . . is one of the major problems of biblical interpretation, and confronts everyone who makes a serious study of the Word of God.”<sup>5</sup> This difference of literal versus figurative interpretation is the main issue that must be faced at the very outset of the debate among premillennialists and amillennialists. The former reject such spiritualization, the latter employ it; and as long as there is no agreement on this point the discussion is fruitless. Walvoord, a premillennialist says: “The issue, then, between Amillennialism and Premillennialism is the irrespective methods of interpretation, little progress can be made in the study of the millennial issue until this aspect is analyzed and understood.”<sup>6</sup> Walvoord continues by saying: “A proper study of the millennial issue demands, first, an analysis of the methods of interpretation which have produced Amillennialism and Premillennialism. This lays bare the problem and opens the way to see the issue in its true light.”<sup>7</sup>

The allegorical method of interpretation, involving the searching for an abstract or deeper spiritual meaning of the text and ignoring the grammatical-historical meaning,

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<sup>4</sup> Floyd E. Hamilton, The Basis of the Millennial Faith (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1942), 38-39.

<sup>5</sup> Albertus Pietens, The Leader, September 5, 1934 as cited by Gerrit H Hospers, The Principle of Spiritualization in Hermeneutics, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1935), 5.

<sup>6</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1971), 59

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 62.

is explained by S.E. McClelland who says the “allegorical method often indicates more of the thought patterns of the interpreter than that of the original author.”<sup>8</sup>

One of the influences, which encouraged a change away from the literal premillennial view, was Origen’s emphasis upon the manifestation of the kingdom within the soul of the believer rather than in the world. This resulted in a shift of attention away from the historical toward the spiritual. On this issue Feinberg writes:

It can be shown that the reason the early Church was premillennial was traceable to its interpretation of the Word in a literal manner, whereas the cause of the departure from this view in later centuries of the history of the Church is directly attributable to the change in method of interpretation beginning with Origen in particular.<sup>9</sup>

When one uses the allegorical method of interpretation and searches for a deeper hidden meaning in the text that is not readily found or apparent then the literal rendering of the sentence has no meaning. Pentecost explains the method:

In this method the historical import is either denied or ignored and the emphasis is placed entirely on a secondary sense so that the original words or events have little or no significance... In the allegorical method the imagination of the interpreter becomes the authority rather than the literal rendering of the sentence, which is the normal approach in all languages. The interpretation of the passage becomes the presumptuous false prevalent opinions of the interpreter. Pentecost says concerning this method; “the basic authority in interpretation ceases to be the Scriptures, but the mind of the interpreter. The interpretation may then be twisted by the interpreter’s doctrinal positions....”<sup>10</sup>

Joseph Angus and Samuel Green express the same concern as Pentecost.

There is ... unlimited scope for fancy, if once the principle be admitted, and the only basis of the exposition is found in the mind of the expositor. The scheme can

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<sup>8</sup> S.E. McClelland, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology, Edited by Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House), 33.

<sup>9</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, Premillennialism or Amillennialism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1936), 51.

<sup>10</sup> Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 4-5.



yield no interpretation, properly so called, although possibly some valuable truths may be illustrated.<sup>11</sup>

By and large the amillennialists do not interpret prophetic Scripture using the grammatical-historical method or fundamental principles of exegesis, but choose to allegorize passages to fit their doctrinal positions. One example is their insistence on applying prophetic Old Testament passages clearly referring to Israel as to the church.

Ramm cites Davidson on this issue:

Certainly the extreme anti-literal interpretation which considers the names of Zion, Jerusalem, Israel, and the like to be more names for the Christian Church, without reference to the people of Israel, does no justice either to the spirit of the Old Testament and its principle, or to the principles on which the apostle reasons.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Joseph Angus and Samuel G. Green, The Bible Handbook, as cited by J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 5-6.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, footnote 16 (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 254.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GRAMMATICAL HISTORICAL SYSTEM

There are two reasons why prophetic Scripture is difficult to interpret. First, the prophetic language used is ambiguous. It is giving an account of future events showing them in word pictures. The second reason is difficult, because of the large volume of prophetic Scriptures found from Genesis to Revelation. Ramm writes: “To assemble each passage, to thoroughly digest its meaning, to arrange the passage in a prophetic harmony, would involve a prodigious memory, years of exacting work, a masterful knowledge of Biblical languages . . . With such a great body of Scripture to keep in focus all at once, with its inherent complexity, and with the requisite learning to interpret it, it is not surprising that there is such a variety of schools of prophetic interpretation.”<sup>1</sup>

Ramm’s question, as mentioned in the introduction, is the right question. “Can prophetic literature be interpreted by the general method of grammatical exegesis, or is some special principle necessary?”<sup>2</sup> Grammatical-historical exegesis can be used to interpret prophetic literature, however, there are certain fundamental principles that must be followed. First, one must give attention to the language of the prophetic passage. The meaning and significance of proper names, events, references to geography, customs, and material culture, must be determined. For example, Put, Gomer, Togarmah, and Cush, in Ezekiel 38, are countries that must be identified in order to understand the prophecy.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation, Boston, Mass., W. A. Wilde Company, 1950, p. 245

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.,

Second, the historical and cultural background of the prophet must be determined in order to fully understand what the prophet is writing. An example is the change in political positions in Israel and its surrounding nations that give great insight to the prophecy of Isaiah.

Third, one must pay diligent attention to the context of the passage. It is important to look past the chapter and verse divisions to discover the set of circumstances that surround a particular prophetic event or situation. For example, to understand Daniel 12:1 properly and the timing of when Michael shall stand up, the interpreter must go back to the events of 11:36 to pick the context and see the event that is taking place, which is the abomination of the “king” (the Antichrist). Fourth, the prophetic writings are not systematic. They are not organized as lecture notes and two events separated in time may seem to be together in the prophetic sequence, as with the suffering of the Messiah and the reigning of the Messiah (cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12 And Hebrews 9:28), or the resurrection of the saints and the resurrection of the damned (cf. Dan. 12:2; I Thess. 4:13-17 and Rev. 20:11). Only in the light of the New Testament can one know whether two events are separated in time.

Fifth, many passages of prophetic Scripture parallel each other. These passages must be sought found, then related without contradiction to maintain the consistency of the whole revelation of God. For instance, does the day of the Lord, the day of Jezreel, the time of Jacob’s trouble, and the day of wrath all refer to the same event? All of these concepts and other similar images and symbols occur and according to Ramm “must be reckoned with carefully and intelligently in the interpretation of prophecy.”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 259.

Another matter to be considered is the possibility of double fulfillment and double sense; there is a difference between the two and there has been misunderstanding in interpreting prophetic Scripture that can be attributed to the failure to distinguish double sense from double fulfillment. Beecher defines this issue as: “One which regards an event as occurring in a series of parts separated by intervals, and expresses itself in language that may apply indifferently to the nearest part, or to the remoter parts, or to the whole—in other words a prediction which, in applying to the whole of a complex event, also applies to some of the parts.”<sup>4</sup>

In the Old Testament the rule to be followed, for literal interpretation, is linked directly to the restoration of the nation of Israel. Davidson enumerates four views in this regard: “(1) those who assert that God’s dealings in Christianity are completely personal so a restored national Israel is unthinkable; (2) those who believe in Israel’s conversion but not restoration; (3) those who believe in a conversion and restoration but with no special prominence for Israel; and (4) those who believe in a conversion of Israel, a restoration of Israel, and a millennial preeminence of Israel.”<sup>5</sup>

Unless the meaning is spiritualized away by the interpreter, it is clear from many unfulfilled Old Testament Scriptures that Israel has a restoration in a future millennial age. The premillennialists teach that the promises made to Israel are fulfilled in Israel, while the amillennarians believe that the prophecies made to Israel are fulfilled in the church, which makes the millennium on earth unnecessary.

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<sup>4</sup> C.F. Beecher, The Prophets and the Promises, as cited by Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 252.

<sup>5</sup> Davidson, The Restoration of the Jews, as cited by Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 255.

The question must be asked then, when should one allegorize and when should one use a literal interpretation of prophetic passages? Someone once said that when the literal makes sense, seek no other sense, lest it result in nonsense. The interpreter should always consider the literal meaning of a prophetic Scripture as his controlling guide; for the literal sense is the foundation of the interpretation of any passage of Scripture. It is the only way for an interpreter to move in reality and not among imagination. Bernard Ramm speaks expressly on this point when he writes: "Therefore, interpret prophecy literally unless the implicit or explicit teaching of the New Testament suggests typological interpretation."<sup>6</sup>

One of the arguments against the literalists is their insistence that the prophecies of the first coming of Christ were all fulfilled literally. Ladd objects to this position when he writes.

One of the chief arguments for interpreting the Old Testament prophecies concerning the end is that the Old Testament prophecies about the first coming of Christ were literally fulfilled. This, however, is an argument, which must be closely examined. The fact is that the New Testament frequently interprets Old Testament prophecies in a way not suggested by the Old Testament context. Let us take first a very simple illustration. Matthew 2:15 quotes from Hosea 11:1 to prove from Scripture that Jesus must come from Egypt. This, however, is not what the prophecy means in the Old Testament. Hosea says, "When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son." In Hosea this is not a prophecy at all but a historical affirmation that God had called Israel out of Egypt in The Exodus. However, Matthew recognizes Jesus to be God's greater son and deliberately turns a historical statement into a prophecy. This is a principle which runs throughout biblical prophecy. The Old Testament is reinterpreted in light of the Christ event.<sup>7</sup>

To be sure, Hosea 11:1 is giving a historical affirmation of the nation of Israel being called out of Egypt, but this definitive statement of history is presented to Matthew

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<sup>6</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 266.

<sup>7</sup> George Eldon Ladd, edited by Robert G. Clouse, The Meaning of the Millennium, Inter, (Downers Grove: Varsity Press, 1972), 20-21.

as a prophecy concerning the Christ child who is called out of Egypt. This explicit teaching, from Matthew concerning the passage in Hosea, is exactly what Ramm is speaking of, and only when considerable reasoning is given for extending beyond the literal meaning, can one be justified in adopting an interpretation which is not literal. The direct inspiration of the Holy Spirit relating this information to Matthew is a substantial reason. Ladd continues with what he calls "a more significant illustration."

The New Testament and the Christian church see a prophecy of the sufferings of the Messiah in Isaiah 53. Matthew applies this prophecy to Jesus, (Mt. 8:17), although he does not refer to the sufferings to be endured by the servant. However, Philip interprets the sufferings of the servant to the Ethiopian eunuch as referring to Jesus, (Acts 8:30-35). How can anyone avoid recognizing that Isaiah 53 is a prophecy of the sufferings Jesus experienced? "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Isa. 53:5-6). Here is another illustration of the New Testament interpreting the Old Testament in light of the Christ event. "The simple fact is, in its Old Testament setting, Isaiah 53 is not a prophecy of the Messiah."<sup>8</sup>

In this second illustration, Ladd makes the point that nowhere is the Messiah considered to be a suffering servant. That fact is only discovered in the light of the New Testament. If Ladd's argument is correct, then why did the Jewish Rabbis recognize the suffering servant of Isaiah as Messianic prophecy? Rachmiel Frydland expresses this point perfectly when he writes:

"There are two very distinct lines of prophecy in the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. One line portrays him as an humble suffering - saviour. The other line of prophecy depicts him as a conquering king-redeemer. These two competing functions of the Messiah are recognized in Talmudic and other Jewish sources . . . Zechariah was said to have prophesied concerning "Messiah Ben Yoseph" (9:9) . . . There is little doubt that the Talmud interprets the verse to refer to the Messiah. It is quoted three times in the Babylonian Talmud, and always with a Messianic connotation" . . . "Many Jewish commentators agree that Isa. 42:11, is a passage that refers to the Messiah . . . One Targum paraphrases it, "Behold my servant, the

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 21

Messiah, I will draw Him near, my chosen one in whom my Memra (Logos) is well pleased...."<sup>9</sup>

Frydland says that "Many Jewish commentators agree that Isa.42:11, 'Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains,' is a passage that refers to the Messiah."<sup>10</sup> Frydland continues to show other Old Testament passages as prophecies of the suffering Messiah. One Targum paraphrases it, "Behold my servant, the Messiah, I will draw Him near, my chosen one in whom my Memra (Logos) is well pleased..."<sup>11</sup>

A very similar passage by Isaiah focusing on the servant motif is Isaiah 61:1. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound." The Midrashim support the view that Isaiah speaks of the Redeemer in this passage.<sup>12</sup>

Frydland says that, in regard to the last three verses of chapter fifty-two and in chapter fifty-three of Isaiah, there is a fuller description of the Messiah. These scriptures, however, are not included in the Haftora, (prophetic), readings in the synagogue. But, they are nonetheless considered to be important cannon in Jewish literature. Concerning these chapters, Fryland quotes Rabbi Mosha Alshekh, a well-known sixteenth century

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<sup>9</sup> Rachmiel Frydland, What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah, second edition (Cincinnati: Messianic Publish Company, 1942), 52.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>12</sup> Rachmiel Frydland, What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah, second edition, (Cincinnati: Messianic Publish Company, 1942) 52.

rabbinic scholar: "(Our) Rabbis with one voice, accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of King Messiah."<sup>13</sup> The Targum continues on Isaiah 53:5, "And He will build the Temple that was polluted because of our sins."<sup>14</sup> According to Jewish religious tradition, only the Messiah was to build the Temple.

Not all Jewish interpretation is unanimous in presenting these verses in Isa. 52 and 53 as Messianic. There is enough, however, to show that Ladd's claim, that these passages in their Old Testament settings are not prophecies of the Messiah, is unsubstantiated. Pentecost expresses it well when he writes: "While it is recognized that the Old Testament is anticipatory, and the New unfolds the Old, the fullness revealed in the New is not revealed through the allegorization of what is typified in the Old, but rather through the literal fulfillment and the unfolding of the literal truth of the types."<sup>15</sup>

The key to interpretation of all prophetic Scripture is to remember that Jesus Christ is the centrality. He is the key to the interpretation of the Scriptures. Jesus says of Himself in answer to the Jews: "Search the scriptures: for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me (Jo. 5:39). Ramm says "Millennialism degenerates into cultism whenever prophetic interpretation ceases to be dominantly Christological."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Drivers & Knobbier, Isaiah 53 According to Jewish Interpreters, (Oxford), (reprinted, KTAV), as cited by Rachmiel Frydland, What the Rabbis Know About the Messiah (Cincinnati: Messianic Publishing Company, 1942), 53.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>15</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 14 - 15.

<sup>16</sup> Bernard Ramm, Protestant Biblical Interpretation (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1950), 267.



PART 2

THE TRIBULATION, DAY OF THE LORD, AND SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL

## CHAPTER III

### THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIBULATION

To comprehend the tribulation, it is important to define and explain carefully the terms that God uses to describe it and the purpose for which He will allow the tribulation to occur in the end times. What does tribulation mean? How is it used in the Scriptures? Are there other terms that refer to the tribulation? These and other questions must be answered for one to understand this great doctrine.

Tribulation is the general term in the Bible used to denote the suffering of God's people. The term is derived from the Latin *tribulum*, which was an agricultural tool used for separating the husks from the corn. The grain is beaten until it is separated from the husk. The Greek word is *thlipsis*, a noun, from the verb *thlibo* meaning to crush, press, compress, squeeze, or afflict.

In a figurative manner the word means pressure from evils, affliction, or distress. Jesus uses the word tribulation in John 16:21, to show the travail of a woman in labor. Tribulation may be produced by various causes such as famine, captivity, and poverty. Christians will experience tribulations. As a matter of fact, the apostle Paul said that Christians would glory in their tribulations (Romans 5:3). John MacArthur, in commenting on what Paul writes, said:

Christians not only should rejoice in tribulations because those hardships are evidence of faithful living which is blessed and rewarded, but also because of the spiritual benefits they produce. Tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint. Our afflictions for Christ's sake produce ever-increasing blessings. It

should not seem strange, then, that God's children are destined for affliction in this life (I Thess. 3:3).<sup>1</sup>

The Bible uses the word tribulation in a technical sense to refer to the period of time in the history of the world that would affect the nation of Israel. The term tribulation is found in the Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:21-29; Mark 13:19,24) to refer to the period of the last half of the seventieth week. There are three other terms that refer to this same period, the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), the time of the end (Daniel 12:9), and the overspreading of abomination (Dan. 9:27). Other terms such as the day of the Lord, the day of God's vengeance, the great day of His wrath, the hour of His judgment, the end of this world, and the indignation, have been suggested by some to also refer to the tribulation, but that is misleading because all those terms refer to a period, which occurs after the tribulation (see the chapter on the day of the Lord).

Sometimes God recompenses sin with tribulation (II Thess. 1:6), and sometimes God uses the tribulation, which he allows a person or nation to experience, to accomplish his sovereign purpose. Such is the case with the nation of Israel.

God promises to give Israel a new heart that would contain His law, a heart that would know God. This covenant would be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. Jeremiah had prophesied the promise of this New Covenant some five hundred and eighty years before the Messiah came:

Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the Covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them out of the land of Egypt, which my Covenant they break, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the Covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; after those days saith the Lord. I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more

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<sup>1</sup> John MacArthur Jr., The New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1991), 282.

every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more (Jer. 31:31-34).

This covenant would come through the Messiah. Since Israel should have recognized her Messiah but did not, God promises to bring blindness upon her as a nation:

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it. Saying, if thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side. And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation (Lk. 19:41-44).

He speaks of this blindness through the apostle Paul:

I say then, have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid; but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. For I would not brethren that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my Covenant unto them, when I will take away their sins (Ro. 11:11, 25-27).

Paul's statement that Israel would be saved and that Jeremiah's prophecy should be fulfilled after "the fullness of the Gentiles be come in," is strong evidence that the purpose of the tribulation ("the time of Jacob's trouble") is to prepare Israel for her Messiah. "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved out of it" (Jer. 30:7).

There are many Old Testament Scriptures that demonstrate the purpose of God in the tribulation for the nation of Israel (Deut. 4: 30, Jer 30: 7, Ezek. 20: 37, Dan. 12:1, Zech. 13: 8-9). An excellent illustration of this purpose is Ezekiel 20: 37: "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant." Of

this passage in Ezekiel, Scofield says: “The passage is a prophecy of the future judgment upon Israel, regathered from all nations. . . . The issue of this judgment determines who of Israel in that day shall enter the land for kingdom blessing.”<sup>2</sup>

God plans to use the tribulation to fulfill the covenant He has made with Abram (Gen. 12:1-3), which has three provisions: (1) God promised Abram land. (2) He promised him descendants. (3) He promised to bless him and to bless all the families of the earth through him. Pentecost states “God's purpose for Israel in the tribulation is to bring about the conversion of a multitude of Jews, who will enter into the blessings of the kingdom and experience the fulfillment of all Israel's covenants.”<sup>3</sup>

In the Olivet discourse (Mt. 24) and also in the book of Revelation (Rev. 7: 4-8, 12:6, 12-17) Jesus bears out the fact that the purpose of the tribulation is chiefly Jewish. His words along with the words of Jeremiah and the apostle Paul show that God will use the tribulation to bring Israel to the new covenant. Jeremiah says: “Alas! For that day is great, so that there is none like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7). Paul says:

For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins (Rom. 11:25-27).

The duration of this period of tribulation is three and one half years, beginning with the abomination of desolation in the middle of Daniel’s seventieth week (Dan. 9:27). In Matthew 24:15, 21 Jesus says; “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of

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<sup>2</sup> C. I. Scofield, The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 861.

<sup>3</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, Introduction Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 238.

desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand:) For then shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be.”

There is a misconception held by those who believe that the tribulation is the entire seventieth week of Daniel. Pentecost attempts to clarify the issue when he writes:

While it is recognized that Daniel gave notice that the seventieth week was to be broken into two parts (Dan. 9:27) and while the Lord, speaking of this same period, spoke of the latter half of it as “great tribulation” (Matt. 24:21), yet nowhere in the Scriptures is this period divided into two unrelated parts, each with a different characterization. . . . The unity of the seventieth week of Daniel in the program for Israel prevents us from dividing it into two separate parts.<sup>4</sup>

Pentecost accuses those who hold the position that the tribulation is only the last half of the week, of separating this period into two separate unrelated parts. In the author’s opinion, his view is inaccurate. Those who view the tribulation as the last half of the week have not separated the week into two unrelated parts as Pentecost accuses, but have merely recognized the clarification, that the Scriptures do not classify the first half of the week as the tribulation.

In his zeal to verify his point, Pentecost makes another mistake by claiming that the time covered by all the seals refers to the tribulation period. He uses the reference of Rev. 7:14 as his “final evidence” referring to those who have come out of “great tribulation.” Pentecost says, “This seems to indicate clearly that the time covered by the seals is considered a part of the tribulation period” (seventieth week).<sup>5</sup> The saints referred to in Revelation 7:14 do not necessarily support Pentecost’s view. They merely refer to those who were martyred during the last three and one half years (see the chapters

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<sup>4</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, Introduction Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 184-85.

<sup>5</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, Introduction Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 185.

on the seals). Pentecost is hard pressed to prove his point. Scofield gives a far better explanation of Rev. 7:14 when he writes:

The great tribulation is the period of unexampled trouble predicted in the passages cited under that head from Psa. 2:5 to Rev. 7:14 and described in Rev. 11 – 18. Involving in a measure the whole earth (Rev. 3:10), it is yet distinctively “the time of Jacob’s trouble” (Jer. 30:7), and its vortex Jerusalem and the Holy Land. It involves the people of God who will have returned to Palestine in unbelief. Its duration is three and a half years, or the last half of the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27 note).<sup>6</sup>

Another misconception is the belief that the tribulation is the wrath of God upon Israel. Again Pentecost holds an inaccurate view when he says . . . “that the trumpet in Revelation 11:15 sounds at the end of the time of wrath, just prior to the second advent.”<sup>7</sup> Revelation 11:15 is referring to the seventh trumpet which Pentecost says sounds at the end of the “time of wrath,” referring to the seventieth week. There are two issues here. First, does the seventh trumpet sound after the week has ended, or just prior to the ending of the week? The evidence in the book of Revelation indicates that the seventh trumpet sounds after the two witnesses have been resurrected and ascend up to heaven (11:11-15). The two witnesses testify for the entire week (11:3), and then at the end of the week, the witnesses are killed (11:7-8). This indicates that the tribulation, which is only 1260 days, is over. Second, is the last half of the week the “time of wrath, as Pentecost postulates?” To assume that because there is great devastation occurring on the earth, it is the “time of God’s wrath” is unfounded in light of (12:12). The evidence indicates that the tribulation is not God’s wrath; it is the time of Satan’s wrath, because he has been cast out of heaven (the first woe).

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<sup>6</sup> C. I. Scofield, The Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 1337.

<sup>7</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, Introduction Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 190.

The implement of the fourth trumpet (8:12) brings to completion the first succession of trumpets that deal with aspects of the physical world. Before the second series of trumpets sound, John hears an angel flying through the midst of heaven announcing three woes on the inhabitants of the earth (8:13) because of the three angels that are yet to sound. The sounding of the fifth trumpet introduces the first woe (9:1-2), which is a star (Satan) fallen from heaven with the key to the abyss. Walvoord believes this occurs in the “great tribulation.”<sup>8</sup> When Satan is cast into the earth (12:10-12), he persecutes the Woman (Israel) for three and one half years (time of the tribulation). The sounding of the sixth trumpet brings the second woe (9:13-15). It is during these first two woes that the two witnesses testify for 1260 days (11:3), ending the great tribulation. They are then killed and three and one half days later resurrected (11:7-12). Then the announcement is made that the second woe is past and the third woe is coming quickly (11:13-14). The first two woes are the great tribulation. It is in this period that all the martyrdom of the saints occurs. The wrath of God does not begin until the third woe.

The key to understanding the “time of wrath” and when it occurs is the exegesis of the seventh trumpet (11:15) and the seven last plagues (15:1). The sounding of the seventh trumpet brings the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven (11:15). This is done through the last woe, which are the seven bowls. Johnson says that “the third woe . . . is never fulfilled by the seventh trumpet, unless, that is, the content of the seventh trumpet is the seven bowls, which is also the third woe.”<sup>9</sup> The angel flying through heaven clearly indicates that trumpets five, six, and seven are the three woes; trumpets

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<sup>8</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 163-64.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981), 491.



five and six, the first two woes are the great tribulation, during which the two witnesses testify. Trumpet seven is the establishment of the kingdom of Christ on earth through the third woe, which is the wrath of God.

The purpose of the tribulation is God's way of chastening Israel, to bring her to a recognition of her Messiah, preparing her for the kingdom.. The wrath of God is to judge the earth, bring vengeance on those who have persecuted and martyred His saints during the tribulation, and establish his kingdom on earth. A detailed account of the events leading to, during, and immediately following the tribulation is prophesied by the Lord Jesus Christ, in his Olivet discourse of Matthew 24.

According to Dan. 9:27, the antichrist will make a covenant for seven years, then in the middle of the week, break the covenant causing the abomination of desolation takes place. Other names given to the Antichrist are the "Man of Sin," the "Son of Perdition," the "Beast," the "Little Horn," and the "King." Of this "king" (Antichrist) Daniel Writes:

And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. . . . And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him (Dan 11:36-37, 45).

Paul calls the Antichrist the "Man of Sin" and Son of Perdition (II Thess. 2:3) when he describes his actions: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God (II Thess. 2:4)." His behavior actually begins the tribulation that brings Israel to the Messiah. The origin of Antichrist's action however, is caused by another incident,

that is, the war in heaven. It is recorded in Daniel 12:1, where Daniel prophesies that Michael shall “stand up the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” Walvoord says that this event with Michael is “undoubtedly the same event as in Revelation 12:7-9.”<sup>10</sup> It would appear then, that Satan’s war with Michael and Antichrist setting himself up as God, are the two events that initiate the tribulation.

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<sup>10</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ (Chicago: Moody Press, 1966), 192.

CHAPTER IV  
THE SEVENTY WEEKS OF DANIEL

The key to understanding prophetic Scripture and especially the tribulation is to understand the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy. In Daniel 9: 24-27, he is given the comprehensive program for the nation of Israel. Of the ninth chapter Walvoord says: "It provides one of the most important keys to understanding the Scriptures as a whole. The ninth chapter specifically takes up prophecy as it applies to the chosen people."<sup>1</sup>

The introduction to the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy is his prayer in the first twenty-three verses of chapter nine. From reading the prophecy of Jeremiah, Daniel realizes that the seventy years that Israel was to serve Babylon was virtually accomplished. The time of the vision was 538 B.C., and Daniel had been carried off to Babylon some 67 years before (605 B.C.) by Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel prayed for Israel to be restored and Jerusalem to be rebuilt. It was during this prayer that Gabriel reveals to Daniel God's purpose for Israel and the time of the coming of the Messiah; and "culminating in the second coming of Christ to establish His kingdom on the earth."<sup>2</sup>

Walvoord summarizes the last four verses dealing with the seventy weeks:

The prophecy as a whole is presented in verse 24. The first sixty-nine sevens is described in verse 25. The events between the sixty-ninth seventh and the seventieth seventh are detailed in verse 26. The final period of the seventieth seventh is detailed in verse 27.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 216.

<sup>3</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 216.

It is necessary to observe the important factors given in Daniel's prophecy. First, the entire prophecy deals with Daniel's people, Israel, and the holy city Jerusalem (24). Second, there are two princes mentioned: Messiah the prince (25), and the prince that shall come (26). Third, the time period of seventy weeks (24), which is divided into three periods of seven weeks, sixty-two weeks, and one week (25, 27). Fourth, the seventy weeks begin with the commandment to go forth and restore and build Jerusalem (25). Fifth, Messiah the prince shall come at the end of seven weeks and sixty-two weeks (25). Sixth, Messiah shall be cut off after the sixty-two weeks. The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the people of the second prince who is to come (26). Seventh, the seventieth week will begin with the establishment of a firm covenant between the prince that shall come and the nation of Israel (27). Eighth, in the "midst" of the seventieth week, the prince will cause the sacrifice to cease and precipitate an abomination that makes desolate until the consummation is poured out upon the desolator. According to verse 24, God will have accomplished six important results at the completion of the seventy weeks.

1. "to finish the transgression"
2. "to make an end of sins"
3. "to make reconciliation for iniquity"
4. "to bring in everlasting righteousness"
5. "to seal up the vision and prophecy"
6. "to anoint the Most Holy"

### The Meaning of the Weeks

Before one can understand the amazing prediction foretold by Gabriel through the prophet Daniel, he must first understand the use of the term weeks. The Hebrew word is *shabua*, which means seven; therefore, it should be read as "seventy sevens are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city" (more accurately "sevens of years").<sup>4</sup> Thus, the twenty-fourth verse of Daniel's ninth chapter simply asserts that seventy weeks of seven years each, or 490 years are decreed upon Israel and Jerusalem. There is substantiating evidence from the context and from other Scriptures to show that these weeks are sevens of years. Laban uses this term (*shabua*) when he explains to Jacob that he must serve him for seven years in order to marry his daughter Rachel. Laban says: "Fulfill her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou shalt serve with me yet seven other years" (Gen 29:7).

Historically, the Jews had a week of years for their crops. This biblical week of years was a way of life for every Jew. They were to till and sow the land for six years. In the seventh year, they were not to till the land. The seventh year was to be a Sabbath rest for the land. It was a part of the Law of Moses.

Six years thou shalt sow thy field, and six years thou shalt prune thy vineyard, and gather in the fruit thereof; but in the seventh year shall be a Sabbath of rest unto the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: thou shalt neither sow thy field, nor prune thy vineyard. That which groweth of its own accord of thy harvest thou shalt not reap, neither gather the grapes of thy vine undressed: for it is a year of rest unto the land (Lev. 25:3-4, KJV).

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<sup>4</sup> Alva J. McClain, Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, pp. 12-15, as cited J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 243.

McClain says that Daniel knew that the “Babylonian captivity had been based on Jewish violation of the divine law of the Sabbatical year.”<sup>5</sup> Not only does this historical year of rest of the land substantiate that Daniel’s prophecy demands an interpretation of a week of years, but the context of Daniel supports this interpretation. For if the weeks were taken to mean literal weeks, then the passage would make no sense. Biederwolf states that “four hundred and ninety years are to elapse before any perfect deliverance is to come, . . . and the nation re-established in everlasting righteousness. This is an amplification of the seventy actual years of Jeremiah which had made only an initial and imperfect fulfillment.”<sup>6</sup>

Not only is the week a week of years, but the prophetic year in Scripture is 360 days. McClain explains that the first argument is “historical. According to the Genesis record, the Flood began on the seventeenth day of the second month (7:11), and came to an end on the seventeenth day of the seventh month (8:4).”<sup>7</sup> If one calculates from the seventeenth day of the second month to the seventeenth day of the seventh month, his calculation will be five months. Moses also records the exact number of days as one hundred and fifty (7:24; 8:3), making it apparent that the first recorded months in Jewish history calculated at thirty days per month. The second argument, McClain says is “Prophetical . . . the Jewish persecution . . . begins in the ‘midst’ of the seventieth week and continues to the ‘end’ of the week, the period is obviously three and one-half years. .

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<sup>5</sup> Alva J. McClain, Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, p. 5, as cited J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 242-43.

<sup>6</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1972, p. 217.

<sup>7</sup> Alva J. McClain, Daniel’s Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, p. 5, as cited J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 243-44..

. . . Dan. 7:24-25 speaks of . . . the same persecution fixing the duration . . . in the Aramaic, three and a half times.' . . . Rev. 13: 4-7 speaks of the . . . persecution lasting forty and two months. . . . this period is further defined . . . as a thousand two hundred and three score days.”<sup>8</sup>

### **The Terminus a Quo (The date on which the seventy weeks begin.)**

The ability to understand the entire passage is found in the phrase of verse twenty-five, "from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." From the date, therefore, of the command to go forth and build Jerusalem begins the seventy sevens (490 years).

There were four commandments or decrees that were issued from different kings. Most Theologians take the starting date of the seventy weeks of Daniel from one of these four. Walvoord lists them as:

1. The decree of Cyrus to rebuild the temple. (II Ch. 36: 22-23, Ezra 1:1-4, 6: 1-5)
2. The decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus. (Ezra 6: 6-12)
3. The decree of Artaxerxes. (Ezra 7: 11-26)
4. The decree of Artaxerxes given to Nehemiah authorizing the rebuilding of the city. (Neh. 2: 1-8)<sup>9</sup>

Some commentators have advocated other starting points, but their value is minimal when contemplating a literal fulfillment of the prophecy. Of the four that Walvoord mentions only one, that of Artaxerses Longimanus, meets the criterion that

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<sup>8</sup> Alva J. McClain, Daniel's Prophecy of the Seventy Weeks, p. 5, as cited J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 243-44.

<sup>9</sup> John F Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 225.

Daniel 9:25 requires; that is the restoring and rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem. The other three edicts refer solely to the rebuilding of the temple. The Persian king, Artaxerses began his reign in the year 444 or 445 B.C. and according to Nehemiah, it was the twentieth year of his reign that the decree went forth (Neh. 2:1-8). According to Walvoord, "Most scholars, whether conservative or liberal, accordingly accept 445 BC as the date for Nehemiah's decree."<sup>10</sup>

Daniel's prophecy states that from the going forth of the command unto Messiah, the Prince would be "seven weeks and threescore and two weeks" or sixty-nine weeks. The seventy weeks are divided into seven sevens (49 years), sixty-two sevens (434 years), and one seven (7 years). Biederwolf says that "in the seven weeks . . . Jerusalem was to be rebuilt 'in troublous times' . . . Sixty-two weeks thereafter Messiah was to come."<sup>11</sup> The question then is when did Messiah the Prince come? The prophet Zechariah sheds light on the issue, (Zechariah 9:9): "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

Of all the theologians who have studied the problem of the seventy weeks of Daniel's prophecy, no greater interrogation has been made than that of Sir Robert Anderson. In his book, *The Coming Prince*, he reckons the chronology and the date of the sixty-nine weeks can be ascertained. He maintains that from the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince is "an era . . . of . . . 483 prophetic years reckoned from the 14<sup>th</sup> March, B.C. 445 . . . and the 6<sup>th</sup> April, A.D.32 . . . The interval

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<sup>10</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 227.

<sup>11</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 222.



contained exactly and to the very day 173,880 days, or seven times sixty-nine prophetic years of 360 days, the first sixty-nine weeks of Gabriel's prophecy.<sup>12</sup>

The problem with Anderson's assertion is that Christ was crucified in A.D. 32. It is impossible to ascertain the exact year of the crucifixion of Christ. On the other hand, no one is able to declare with certainty that Anderson's calculations are impossible. What is certain, according to Daniel 9:25-26, is that at the end of sixty-nine weeks "Messiah the Prince would come and that after sixty-nine weeks he would be cut off" (crucified). Anderson's conclusion is certainly within the context of the passage in Daniel.

### **The Gap between the Sixty-Ninth and Seventieth Week**

The dilemma now is whether the seventieth week followed immediately after the sixty-ninth week. There are some that maintain that the seventieth week immediately followed the sixty-ninth week, placing the cutting off of the Messiah during the seventieth week. There are several problems with the seventieth week continuously following the sixty-ninth week. One is the statement found in the middle of Daniel 9:26, which says "the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary." Historically the city was not destroyed until AD 70, almost forty years after the sixty-ninth week ended. Walvoord explains that "Although some expositors, like Young, hold that the sacrifices are caused to cease by Christ in his death which they consider fulfilled in the middle of the last seven years, it is clear that this does not provide in any way for the fulfillment of an event thirty-eight years or more after the end of the

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<sup>12</sup> Sir Robert Anderson, The Coming Prince (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1972), 124-28.

sixty-ninth seven.”<sup>13</sup> Young and others who hold the continuous fulfillment view are hard pressed to explain how an event happening thirty-eight years after the sixty-ninth week, which, in their explanation, actually happen after the seventieth week. Another problem with the continuous fulfillment theory is the unfulfilled promises. If the seventy weeks are fulfilled then six promised actions must also be fulfilled. The first promise was "to make an end of sins." The fourth promise was to “bring everlasting righteousness,” Keil says it is “called everlasting, corresponding to the eternity of the Messianic kingdom . . . The fourth expression forms the positive supplement of the first: in the place of the absolutely removed transgression is the perfected righteousness.”<sup>14</sup> This promise will not be fulfilled until the Messianic kingdom is established. It is reasonable to conclude, therefore, that there is a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. A third consideration is the closing portion of verse twenty-six where it implies the city will be destroyed and the downfall will be like a flood and that desolations are determined unto the end of the war. Walvoord says:

Because of the reference to "the end" twice in verse 26, it would be contextually possible to refer this to the end of the age and to a future destruction of Jerusalem. . . The same expression of an overflowing flood is used to denote warlike hosts who annihilate their enemies in Daniel 11: 10, 22, 26, 40 and in Isaiah 8:8. This seems to be a general reference to the fact that from the time of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, trouble, war, and desolation will be the normal experience of the people of Israel and will end only at "the consummation" mentioned in verse 27, that is, the end of the seventieth seven.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 230

<sup>14</sup> C.F. Keil, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), 343.

<sup>15</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 231.

### The Covenant for One Week

The major difference of opinion among conservative Bible scholars has been between amillennial and premillennial interpretations. Nowhere has this interpretation been shown more clearly than in verse 27. The literal fulfillment of verse twenty-seven requires a futuristic interpretation, which demands a gap between the sixty-ninth and seventieth week. No matter how one tries there is no adequate literal fulfillment in history of the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. Walvoord cites four views that have been advanced:

1. The Liberal view that the seventieth seven is fulfilled in events following the Maccabean persecution just as the preceding sixty-nine sevens were; 2. The view of Jewish Scholars that the seventieth week is fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70; 3. The view that the seventieth week of Daniel is an indefinite period beginning with Christ but extending to the end, often held by amillenarians such as Young and Leupold; 4.) that the seventieth seven is seven literal years beginning with the public ministry of Christ and ending about three and a half years after His death.<sup>16</sup>

Walvoord continues to say:

Each of the four views which claim fulfillment largely in the past have their supporting arguments, sometimes presented at length. But they have one common failure, which is the Achilles' heel of their interpretation: none of them provides literal fulfillment of the prophecy.

Ultimately, the question facing every expositor is what interpretation gives the most natural and intelligent exposition of the text. If it is not necessary to consider this literal prophecy, and the time units are not literal, a variety of interpretation immediately becomes possible. If the expositor desires to follow the text meticulously, however, there is really no alternative but to declare the entire seventieth seven future, for there has been no seven-year period fulfilling the events of prophecy, however labored the interpretation. This is usually conceded by those who make the last seven years an indefinite period which allows for still future interpretation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 232.

<sup>17</sup> John F. Walvoord, Daniel (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 232-34.

Daniel chapter nine, verse 27 begins the seventieth seven. "And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." This verse establishes a firm covenant being made for one week. There are some expositors in trying to prove this passage has already been fulfilled in the past, take the word "week" to be the subject of the sentence. Biederwolf describes their views as follows:

1. The one week shall make the Old Testament Covenant (adherence to the faith in Jehovah and to the theocratic law) hard (grievous) for many.
2. The one week shall conform many in the covenant through tribulation and the trial of their faith.
3. The one week shall confirm a covenant to many through the seductive arts of Antiochus Epiphanes.
4. The one week (especially by the death of the Messiah) shall lead to the conclusion of a new, strong and firm covenant with many.<sup>18</sup>

The preferential reading of the text is to make "he" the subject of the sentence. The "he" then, refers to "the prince that shall come" of verse twenty-six. Biederwolf comments on the "he" of verse twenty-seven. "It would seem that "he" here must refer to the same person as does "the prince that shall come" in verse 26, and the reference in verse 26 must therefore be determined by the content of this verse 27 as well as by its own content.... It would seem therefore that the reference in both verses must be to the Antichrist who is yet to come."<sup>19</sup> Of the prince who is to come, Keil writes: "That

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<sup>18</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 223.

<sup>19</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 223.

ungodly prince shall impose on the mass of the people a strong covenant that they should follow him and give themselves to him as their God."<sup>20</sup>

There are other views expressed by expositors regarding the "he" of verse 27. Some believe the reference is to Antiochus Epiphanes, and that the prophecy was fulfilled in the second century BC. Some believe "he" is the subject and refers to Christ. Keil says, "Havernick, Hengstenberg, and Auberlen. regard the Messiah as the subject, and understand by the confirming of the covenant, the confirming of the New Covenant by the death of Christ."<sup>21</sup> The difficulty with these interpretations is that neither Christ nor Antiochus fulfilled a seven-year period of time in history required by the language of Daniel's prophecy. Biederwolf well states the issue when he writes:

It would seem evident therefore that "the prince that shall come" and the "he" cannot refer to Antiochus Epiphanes, because, as Strong remarks, "the language was not fulfilled in any sense by Antiochus who aimed at the suppression of Jehovah's worship and virtually left the city and the sanctuary untouched"; nor can it refer to Christ, the Messiah. . . because it was not His people, (verse 26) that destroyed the city and the sanctuary, nor is it without extreme difficulty that we can think of Him making a covenant for a week, (seven years). His was and "everlasting covenant." Once more, it can hardly refer to Titus..., because while verse 26 might be true of him, verse 27 can in no sense be said to be so. It would seem therefore that the reference in both verses must be to the Antichrist who is yet to come.<sup>22</sup>

According to the prophecy, the one who makes the covenant, in the "midst" of the week, will cause "the sacrifice and oblation to cease." There are some who refer this cessation of sacrifice and oblation to the death of Jesus Christ on the cross, but His

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<sup>20</sup> C. F. Keil, Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, Vol. III, 1991), 367.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 365.

<sup>22</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 223.

expiatory sacrifice could not have fulfilled Daniel's prophecy because the sacrifices did not cease until the Roman soldiers destroyed the temple many years later in AD 70.

The expression the "overspreading of abominations" can be rendered as: "on the wings of abomination he comes desolating." Keil says that on wings "signifies not acts of abomination, but objects of abomination, things causing abomination, and is constantly used of the heathen gods, idol-images, sacrifices to the gods, and other heathen abominations."<sup>23</sup> This is the event that Jesus Christ referred to as the abomination of desolation, (Mt. 24:15). See also Dan. 12:11. Keil also observes about Matthew twenty-four:

Then He speaks of the signs, which immediately precede the end, namely, of the abomination of desolation in the holy place of which Daniel prophesied. With this period of tribulation would commence such as never yet had been, so that if these days should not be shortened for the elect's sake, no one would be saved, (verses 15-28). To this he adds, in conclusion, the description of His own parousia, which would immediately follow this great tribulation (verses 29-31).<sup>24</sup>

Keil, then summarizes the seventy weeks:

Let us now, after explaining the separate clauses, present briefly the substance of this divine revelation. We find that the verses 25-27 contain the following announcement: From the going forth of the word to restore and build Jerusalem to the appearance of the Messiah seven weeks shall pass away; after that, during threescore and two weeks the city shall be restored and built up amid the oppression of the times; but after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah shall be cut off, so that to Him nothing remains, and the city together with the sanctuary, shall be destroyed by the people of a prince who shall come, who shall find his end in the flood; but the war shall continue to the end. Since destructions irrevocably decreed, that prince shall force a strong covenant for one week on the mass of people and during half a week shall take away service of sacrifice, and, borne on

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<sup>23</sup> C. F. Keil, Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, Vol. III, 1991), 371.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p 387.

the wings of idol-abominations, shall carry on a desolating rule, till the firmly decreed judgment shall pour itself upon him as one desolated.<sup>25</sup>

So, Daniel's prophecy of the seventy weeks, outline the Chronology of Israel's future, beginning with the command to restore and build Jerusalem, taking in the first advent of Christ and the grotesque actions of the Antichrist to the consummation and Second Advent of Christ.

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<sup>25</sup> C. F. Keil, Commentary on the Old Testament, Volume IX (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, Vol. III, 1991), 373.

## CHAPTER V

### THE DAY OF THE LORD

Among Old Testament prophets, the term day of the Lord often had an eschatological meaning describing a future climatic day of judgment (the day of the Lord of hosts, Isaiah 2:12). Bruce said of the day of the Lord that it is "the day when Yahweh was expected to vindicate Himself."<sup>1</sup> This day of the Lord was anticipated by Israel as a future day of Yahweh's visitation. It was a major theme of prophecy running throughout the Old Testament and continuing into the New Testament that would inaugurate some hopeful era for the nation of Israel. But as Amos 5: 18-20 makes clear, this visitation would also bring great loss and suffering for Israel. George Ladd writes:

The future holds disaster rather than security. Jerusalem would be destroyed (Amos 2:5) and foreign powers would raze Israel (3: 9-11). Other prophets confirmed this same picture (Isaiah 2: 12; Zechariah 14: 1). Joel writes that "the day of the Lord is near-- it will come like destruction from the Almighty." (1: 15, NIV). Zephaniah in particular gives this theme increased attention when he describes the coming catastrophe (1: 7, 14) and employs images descriptive of an impending battle (1: 10-12, 16-17; 2: 5-15).<sup>2</sup>

He continues to say that the day of the Lord "will be a day of universal judgment (8:8-9; 9:5) when at last salvation and genuine hope will come to Israel."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> F.F. Bruce, Eschatology, in Baker's Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1961), 188.

<sup>2</sup> Walter A. Elwell, Evangelical Dictionary of Theology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 295.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 295.



There is a wide divergence of opinion of the scope of the day of the Lord. Some assign the day of the Lord to only the period of the seventieth week of Daniel. The

Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary defines the day of the Lord as:

An eschatological term referring to the consummation of God's kingdom and triumph over His foes and deliverance of His people. It begins at the second coming and will include the final judgment. It will remove class distinction (Isaiah 2: 12-21), abolish sins (II Peter 3: 11-13) and will be accompanied by social calamities and physical cataclysms (Matthew 24: 30- Luke 21: 25-27). It will include the millennial judgment and culminate in the new heaven and the new earth (Isaiah 65: 17; 66: 22; Revelation 21: 1).<sup>4</sup>

By its definition Zondervan says the day of the Lord is not part of the tribulation.

Scofield agrees with Zondervan as to the time of the day of the Lord. He says:

The day of Jehovah (called, also, "that day" and "The great day") is that lengthened period of time beginning with the return of the Lord in glory, and ending with the purgation of the heavens and the earth by fire preparatory to the new heavens and new earth (Isaiah 65: 17-19; 66: 22; II Peter 3: 13; Revelation 21: 1).<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand Ironside includes the tribulation period in the day of the Lord.

He writes:

When at last the day of Grace is ended the day of the Lord will succeed it. . . . The day of the Lord follows (the rapture). It will be the time when the judgments of God are poured out upon the earth. It includes the descent of the Lord with all His saints to execute judgment on His foes and to take possession of the kingdom ...and to reign in righteousness for a thousand glorious years.<sup>6</sup>

Pentecost begins the day of the Lord at the beginning of the seventieth week and continues it through the millennial judgment. He says: "Thus, it is concluded that the day of the Lord will include the time of the tribulation. Zechariah 14: 1-4 makes it clear that

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<sup>4</sup> The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 204.

<sup>5</sup> C. I. Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible (New York: Oxford University Press, 1945), 1349.

<sup>6</sup> Harry A. Ironside, James and Peter (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1947), 98-99.

the events of the Second Advent are included in the program of the day of the Lord. II Peter 3:10 gives authority for including the entire Millennial age within this period.”<sup>7</sup>

The difficulty in studying the scope of day of the Lord is that many of the theologians have included eschatological events as part of the day of the Lord, which are not part. This wide divergence in the scope of the day of the Lord makes it difficult to determine its true extent. For instance, Willmington in identifying the tribulation period writes:

The names for this period are no less than twelve:

1. The day of the Lord. This title is used more frequently than any other. See, for example, Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Joel 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obadiah 15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zechariah 14:1; Malachi 4:5; Acts 2:20; I Thessalonians 5:2; II Thessalonians 2:2; II Peter 3:10. A distinction should be made between the day of the Lord and the day of Christ. The day of Christ is a reference to the Millennium. See I Corinthians 1:8; 5:5; II Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 1:6, 10; 2:16.
2. The day of God's vengeance (Isaiah 34:8; 63:1-6).
3. The Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jeremiah 30:7).
4. The seventieth week (Daniel 9:24-27).
5. The Time of the end (Daniel 12:9).
6. The great day of His wrath (Revelation 6:17).
7. The hour of His judgment (Revelation 14:7).
8. The end of this world (Matthew 13:40, 49).
9. The indignation (Isaiah 26:20; 34:2).
10. The overspreading of abominations (Daniel 9:27).
11. The time of trouble such as never was (Daniel 12:1).
12. The tribulation (Matthew 24:21, 29).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 230.

By a careful study of the names and scriptures that Willmington has listed, it is not difficult to see that he has described two different events. Willmington's numbers 1, 2, 6, 7, 8, and 9 are describing the day of the Lord, while his numbers 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, and 12 are describing the tribulation period. Even though these two events are significant, and in close proximity to each other, they are not the same. The tribulation is the permissibility of God allowing Satan to pour out his wrath upon the earth to bring Israel to an acceptance of her Messiah. The day of the Lord, on the other hand, is the wrath of God and the Lamb against all ungodliness poured out in judgment upon the inhabitants of the earth immediately after the tribulation (Matthew 24:29). Rosenthal demonstrates how expositors include the tribulation with the day of the Lord. He writes:

Writers frequently simply assume that the day of the Lord begins with the tribulation period. For instance, David Cooper, who describes the entire seventieth week as the great tribulation, has written, "The 'day of the Lord' is the great tribulation, which is thus designated in various passages of the Old Testament." In point of fact, nowhere in the Old Testament is the day of the Lord ever designated as the great tribulation made synonymous with the whole of the seventieth week of Daniel. The error of such logic is that it assumes that the day of the Lord commences when the seventieth week of Daniel begins. But a careful examination of the biblical data will clearly indicate that it does not!<sup>9</sup>

### **The Usage in the Old and New Testament**

Because the term day of the Lord is referred to repeatedly in both the Old and New Testaments, its usage in these passages of Scripture must be carefully examined and understood. The day of the Lord is found nineteen times and is recorded in eight of the Old Testament prophetic books. The term appears in three of the New Testament

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<sup>8</sup> H. L. Willmington, Willmington's Guide to the Bible (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1984), 834.

<sup>9</sup> Marvin J. Rosenthal, The Pre-Wrath Rapture of the Church (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990), 115-16.

writings, namely, Luke, Paul, and Peter (Acts 2: 19-20; I Thessalonians 5: 2-4; II Peter 3: 9-10). There is one questionable passage in II Thessalonians 2: 1-3, which many expositors believe should read day of the Lord; this passage will be discussed later.

The first prophet to use the term was Obadiah. He wrote: "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the nations: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head" (Obadiah 15). In the context of the prophecy of Obadiah the judgment of the day of the Lord is in response to the various nations' treatment of Israel.

Israel thought that the day of the Lord would be a time of deliverance for them and judgment for the rest to the nations only, however, Amos warns them, when he writes: "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness, and not light, as if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not Light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it (Amos 5: 18-20)?"

Joel also prophesies of the day of the Lord as he proclaims:

Alas fear the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come . . . Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain. Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is near at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, like the morning spread upon the mountains; a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations . . . The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble; the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining: And the Lord shall utter His voice before His army; for His camp is very great; for He is strong, who executeth His word; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible, and who can abide it? . . . And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 1:15; 2: 1-2, 10-11, 30-31).

Of all the definitions of the day of the Lord, Zondervan and Scofield seem to have the most accurate. Both agree that it begins with the return of the Lord. Joel is plain when he says that the cosmic disturbances must come before the day of the Lord (Joel 2:30-31). He says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31). John's language is almost identical to that of Joel's, he says, "And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood" (Rev. 6:12b). Jesus, in describing His coming does not mention the moon turning to blood; He simply says, "the moon shall not give her light" (Mt. 24:29). Isaiah's description of the day of the Lord is almost identical to that of Jesus'. He writes, "For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (Isa. 13:10). John calls the day of the Lord, "the great day of His wrath" (Rev. 6:17) and describes the cosmic disturbances that must come before the Lord returns and his wrath is poured out (Rev. 6:12-14). John adds description to the day of the Lord when he says that the men of the earth "hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains" (Rev. 6:15). It is the same portrait of the day of the Lord that Isaiah paints: "And they shall go into the caves and the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth" (Isa. 2:19).

Jesus refers to His Return as: "the son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mt. 24:30). The evidence seems to indicate that there are two eschatological occurrences that must happen before the second coming. They are the great tribulation (Mt. 24:21) and the cosmic disturbances (Mt. 24:30).

It would seem then that the coming of the Son of man and the day of the Lord are the same event, and that it will take place immediately after the tribulation, when the sun is darkened, the moon doesn't shine, the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Matthew 24: 29-30).

There is no doubt that the Lord Jesus is coming to judge the earth and set up His kingdom, which is the great and terrible day of the Lord. Before he was crucified Jesus spoke to Caiaphas saying: ". . . Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, here after shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26: 64). Jesus was quoting the prophet Daniel who said of Him: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Daniel 7: 13-14).

Zechariah, who gives the details of the Lord's return on the great day of the Lord said: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem

on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south" (Zechariah 14: 1-4).

Malachi prophesied that before the day of the Lord comes God would send a messenger to call the nation of Israel to repentance. He wrote: "Behold, I will send you Elijah, the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord; And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4: 5-6). If Elijah is one of the two witnesses that John prophesied about then Malachi's prophecy has provided details of appearing, which would be during the tribulation, for that is when the witnesses testify. It is also before the day of the Lord.

The Lord is a just God. Moses wrote that "if any mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe" (Exodus 21:23-25). The writer of Hebrews said that "the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward" (Hebrews 2:2). The saints that are martyred during the tribulation cry out for divine justice (Revelation 6:9-11). God manifesting his wrath and pouring out his vengeance on the ungodly during the day of the Lord demonstrates that justice.

Summarizing then, from the prophets' descriptions of the day of the Lord in the above verses show:

1. It is a time when God arises to shake terribly the earth (Isa. 2:19,22)
2. It is a time of destruction from the Almighty (Isa. 13:7; Joel 1:15)

3. It is a time of divine wrath and fierce anger (Isa. 13:13; Zeph. 1: 15; 2
4. It is a time when God will punish the world for its evil, and the wicked for their iniquity (Isa. 13:11)

It is a time when God's indignation and fury will be directed against the nations (Isa. 34:1-2; Zeph. 1:14-2:3; Zech. 14:3; Oba. 15)

6. It is a time when God's vengeance will be revealed (Isa. 34:8)
7. It is a time of darkness in the heavens (Isa. 34:4; Joel 2:31; 3:14; Isa. 13:9-10)
8. It is a time of fire from the Lord (Joel 2:3, 5:30; Zeph. 1:18; 3:8).

### **The Relationship of the Day of the Lord to the Tribulation**

One of the difficulties that has brought confusion into the study of the "day of the Lord" is a term closely related to the "day of the Lord," which is the term day of Christ. The day of Christ is the period of time when Christ will gather His saints from off the earth and reward them according to their works (I Thess. 4: 13-18; I Cor. 3:11-15; Rom. 14:10; II Thess. 2:1-3). It is initiated by "our gathering together unto him" (II Thess. 2:1-3). The problem of whether the text of II Thess. 2:2 should read the day of the Lord or the day of Christ as the Authorized Version has it is a problem for textual critics.

In order to comprehend this argument, one must understand the basis of Westcott and Hort's theory of textual criticism. They taught that the Byzantine text had been officially edited by the fourth century church, and was not accurate; and therefore, they concluded that the oldest manuscripts were the most reliable. Time, however, has worked to Westcott and Hort's disadvantage. There has been no historical evidence that has demonstrated that any editing of the Byzantine text has occurred. This lack of evidence seems to a discredit to their theory. Hodges and Farstad speak to this issue.



Since the latter nineteenth century the theory has been held by some scholars that this traditional text for the New Testament had been officially edited by the fourth-century church. Recent studies have caused significant changes in this view, and a growing number of scholars now regard the Received Text as far more reliable, than previously thought.<sup>10</sup>

Robinson and Pierpont are far more thorough in their presentation of the case for the superiority of the Byzantine Text. They say:

In view of the transmissional history suggested, the fallacy of the 'older is necessarily better' argument should already have been made clear. Going beyond the contents of the earliest manuscripts, however, the editors would stress (following Burgon and many other critics) that it is not the age of the manuscript itself, but the quality and antiquity of the text it contains which is the real item of value.<sup>11</sup>

Should the text read day of Christ or day of the Lord? The answer lies in the manuscript evidence.

### **The Evidence for the Oldest Manuscripts**

There are several ancient manuscripts that read the "day of the Lord" in II Thessalonians 2:3. Three of the more familiar are the Vaticanus, the Siniaticus, and the Alexandrinus, all of which are from Egypt and date from the fourth and fifth centuries. On the other hand, there is a majority of manuscript evidence for the reading "day of Christ" in this passage. The evidence of the majority of manuscripts is overwhelming. For all of the Greek manuscripts that have been found, render II Thessalonians 2:3, "day of Christ," except for a few minority that have already been mentioned. Since the majority of

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<sup>10</sup> Hodges and Farstad, The Greek New Testament According to the Majority Text Preface (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), vi-vii.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice A. Robinson, William G. Pierpont, The New Testament in the Original Greek According to the Byzantine / Majority Textform (Atlanta: The Original World Publishers, 1991), 13.

manuscripts and the reading of the Authorized Version, support the term "day of Christ," it should be considered the more reliable rendering.

What is the distinction then, between these two terms? The expression "day of Christ," always refers to Christ's blessings and rewards for his people and is found in the following passages: I Cor. 1:8, 5:5, II Cor. 1:14, Phil. 1:6, 10, 2:16, II Thess. 2:2.

Scofield makes this distinction between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord."<sup>12</sup> The distinction that Scofield makes, is not observed by many expositors, and that lack of observance has resulted in confusion. Biederwolf says that the "Preponderating authority is against the reading of the Authorized Version, "day of Christ."<sup>13</sup>

When one speaks of the tribulation period, he is usually referring to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy. There is no Scriptural evidence however, to demonstrate that the tribulation comprises the entire seventieth week. On the contrary, the evidence shows that the tribulation encompasses only the last half of the seventieth week. The tribulation, also referred to as "great tribulation" (Mt. 24:21), "the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), and "a time of trouble" (Dan. 12:1) begins in the middle of the seventieth week, when the king (antichrist) shall exalt himself above God. Daniel wrote of this event: "And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done" (Dan. 11:36). He continues in 12:1: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince

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<sup>12</sup> C. I. Scofield, The Scofield Reference Bible, the second footnote (New York, Oxford University Press, 1965), 1212.

<sup>13</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 482.

which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." Jesus called it "great tribulation" when he said: "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be" (Mt. 24:21). This last half of the seventieth week is a time when Satan pours out his wrath on the inhabitants of the earth (Rev. 12:12-17). Some scholars believe the tribulation and the day of Christ are two separate events that take place in the same time frame. Pentecost, who believes that the day of the Lord and the tribulation are the same, says of the day of Christ:

It thus appears that two separate programs are in view when these two expressions are used although not two separate time areas. They can be made to refer to the same event. In each case in which day of Christ is used it is used specifically in reference to the expectation of the church, her translation, glorification, examination for reward.<sup>14</sup>

The real difficulty is not between the day of Christ and the day of the Lord; most scholars make that distinction. The real difficulty is that most scholars do not make the distinction between the day of the Lord and the tribulation, though this difference is very real and must be made. Joel makes it plain that the cosmic disturbances occur before the day of the Lord (Joel 2:30-31), and Jesus makes it clear that the cosmic disturbances take place after the tribulation (Mt. 24: 29-30).

To summarize then, the tribulation is the wrath of Satan and the Antichrist upon Israel and the saints of God. On the other hand, the day of the Lord is the wrath of God upon the Antichrist and the ungodly, which will be to avenge the saints who have been martyred for their refusing the mark of the beast during the tribulation.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 232.

PART THREE

THE SEALS, THE TRUMPETS, AND THE VIALS OF REVELATION IN RELATION  
TO THE SEVENTIETH WEEK, AND THE DAY OF THE LORD, AND COMPARED  
TO THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

## CHAPTER VI

### THE SEVEN SEALED SCROLL (REVELATION 5:1-14)

Before one can understand the importance of the book and the opening of the seals, he must comprehend the scene in which John has been placed. He is standing before God, who is holding a book, seated upon His throne in heaven. The importance of the book is indicated by the fact it is in the right hand of God and it is written on both sides of the parchment, making it an opisthograph. It was extremely uncommon in John's day to find scrolls written on both sides. Occasionally some were found but, such double-sided writing was for private unmarketable use. Furthermore, the seven seals fixed on the edges of the scroll demonstrate that it is an original document. Sealed documents were kept hidden and only the owner could open the seals and disclose the contents of the document.

Much speculation and conjecture of the scholars has gone into the contents of the book. The gamut of the contents has run from the Old Testament, to the Old Testament and the New Testament combined, to the divorce decree from God written against the Jews, to the sentence designed against the enemies of the church, and finally to Christ himself. A far more satisfying explanation of the contents is that the scroll holds the future events of the end of the age. Biederwolf comments on the scope of the contents, when he writes:

A true explanation is that which refers it to that part of the Apocalypse, which deals with what is to follow. But as to how much of what is to follow scholars are again

at widest variance. Does it refer to Chapter 6 only, or to Chapters 6 to 8 or to Chapters 6 to 11 or to Chapter 6 on to the end?<sup>1</sup>

The most acceptable concept is that the scroll contains the prophecy of the end of the age, including the salvation of God's people and the judgment of the wicked. The context of Revelation seems to support Biederwolf.

Phillips on the other hand disagrees with Biederwolf when he says:

The scroll is the title deed of earth. Two considerations lead to this conclusion. In the first place, the call having gone forth for an applicant to come and take the scroll, John wept because no man was found worthy to do so. The sphere of man is evidently in view. Furthermore, when the seals on the scroll are eventually broken, disasters overtake the earth. The right to rule the earth is now to be decided at the throne of God once and for all.<sup>2</sup>

Phillips poses the thought that:

Many would be willing to take the book and rule the earth.... But the question was not, who is willing? but, who is worthy? The ranks of the living and the dead, those on earth, those in heaven, and those in hell, are combed for a worthy king, but not a single one is found. Abraham is not worthy neither Isaac nor Jacob, neither Enoch nor Elijah, neither David nor Solomon, neither Peter nor Paul nor James nor John nor Jude. A deep silence descends upon the scene, as every voice is hushed and the angels themselves cease to sing.<sup>3</sup>

Phillips assumes that because God holds the title deed to the earth, the scroll is that title deed. No doubt Phillips is right when he says that there are many who would be willing to rule the earth. There is also no doubt that Satan is trying to overthrow God in order that he might rule the universe. None of this however, is confirmation that the scroll is the title deed. This scroll does, however, prove God's foreknowledge and council for the final resolution of human history, the overthrow of evil, and the establishment of

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<sup>1</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 561.

<sup>2</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Neptune: New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 87-88.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, p. 88

his kingdom on earth, the same as it is established in heaven. God challenges the entire universe with the question, “Who is worthy to open the book?” The problem that no man could be found worthy to open the book and look thereon causes John to weep. Phillips says: “There stood the aged apostle, amid scenes of grandeur that defy description, weeping with salt tears running down his weather beaten face, weeping in shame for all the sons of Adam’s ruined race, not one of whom was worthy to take up the challenge from the throne.”<sup>4</sup>

John’s weeping brings a response from one of the elders telling him to “weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof.” (verse 5). These two phrases, “the Lion of the tribe of Judah” and “the Root of David”,<sup>5</sup> describing the Old Testament prophecies of the conquering Messiah demonstrate the totality of the Old Testament messianic prophecy. The first phrase shows that He exercises the power and authority of a ruling king. The latter shows He is of the royal household of David, the son of Jesse. Ladd writes concerning this promised triumphant messianic king:

‘With righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked’ (Isaiah 11:4). This verse is a vivid summary of the Old Testament promise of a divinely endowed messianic King who will be so mightily equipped that he will destroy all evil, deliver God’s people from their afflictions by evil powers, both spiritual and political, and establish a new order on earth in which peace, righteousness, and blessedness reign. . . . ‘They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain (Jerusalem), for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse

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<sup>4</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 88.

<sup>5</sup> The Lion of the Tribe of Judah refers to the messianic prophecy in Genesis 49:9-10; The Root of David, refers to the messianic prophecy in Isaiah 11:1

shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwelling shall be glorious' (Isaiah 11:9-10).<sup>6</sup>

John realizes from the word that is rendered "hath prevailed" (verse 5) that the Messiah has already won the victory. John's attention is fixed on the mid-point between the throne and the twenty-four elders, where he sees a Lamb standing "as it had been slain" (verse 6).

The battle to overthrow the kingdom of God and who would rule the earth was enjoined in the Garden of Eden, when Satan tempted Eve. When God addressed the issue he said to Satan: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15). Satan was scheming to take the book and win, but the battle was over and the victor had already been crowned. In eternity the victory has always been God's, for the Lamb was slain from the foundation of the world. In time however, the events of Jesus conquering the enemy and being crowned as victor had not yet taken place.

It was at the time of the triumphal entry in Jerusalem that Jesus would inaugurate His kingdom on earth. This entry was not sanctioned by the Romans. This entry was sanctioned by the people of Israel in honor of the Son of God. This entry heralded the last week of Jesus' earthly ministry. Within this week, there would be three occasions where Jesus would be hailed as a conquering hero. He was received as victorious at His entry (Mt. 21: 1-11), ridiculed as victorious at his execution (John 19:1-7), and regaled as victorious at his exaltation (Lk. 24:1-6).

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<sup>6</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 83-84.



At His triumphal entry the people waved palm branches and cried, “Hosanna to the son of David” (Mt. 21:8-9). Hosanna is derived from two Hebrew words (Yasha and Anna), which means, “Save us now, we beseech.” This cry was not so much directed toward salvation in a spiritual sense, but rather in a political and military sense. By the inter-biblical period between the Old and New Testaments, the concept that Messiah-Ben- Joseph (son of Joseph) would come and destroy their enemies and establish a military and political kingdom was promoted by the Rabbis.

There were two elements to Jesus’ entry: first, the inauguration of the kingdom that John the Baptist had introduced (Matthew 11:12-15). The Jews viewed Jesus’ entry with the purpose that he would re-establish the Davidic kingdom. Jesus was of the house and lineage of David. Through his adoption by His earthly father Joseph He became the direct heir to the throne of David. Jesus was therefore, the legitimate king of Israel. In the history of time Jesus’ kingdom had been inaugurated at His triumphal entry, however He had not yet conquered the enemy and the kingdom had not yet been consummated. The second element of his triumphal entry was the fulfillment of prophecy. Daniel gave the time of Messiah’s entry when he wrote:

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times (Dan. 9:25).

Zechariah gave the method of Messiah’s entry and told how he would come when he wrote:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9).

So Jesus inaugurated His kingdom, at His triumphal entry, on time and in the way Daniel and Zechariah had prophesied that He would, but Jesus had not yet consummated or conquered it. The time of conquering and consummating His kingdom came at His crucifixion.

This victory was won while Christ was on the cross. There are two passages of Scripture that demonstrate the power in which this victory was won. The first is where Paul writes:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil.2:5-11).

The second is Hebrews 2:9 where the writer says: “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.”

There are two kinds of crowns in the Bible: one is a royal crown (diadem) and the other is a crown of victory (*stephanos*). At Jesus’ crucifixion, the Romans put a purple robe upon him. For the Romans, a purple robe was only worn at a triumphal entry. Next, the Romans placed a crown of thorns on His head. The Bible uses the word *stephanos* for crown to show that the soldiers were mocking Jesus as their conquered king. They were calling him a loser not a victorious winner. As they were torturing him, they did not realize, at that moment, he was winning the victory over sin, death, and hell.

Jesus conquered sin on the cross because He had no sin. As He died on the cross, He satisfied God's demand for sin. Isaiah writes concerning this victory over sin when he said

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities (Isa. 53:10-11).

Paul also speaks concerning this victory over sin when he writes: "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Jesus conquered death at his resurrection. He told the Jews that he had power over death when he said "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19b). Speaking of his life, Jesus said: "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). Paul writes of this conquering death when he said:

For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. 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. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-57).

Finally, Jesus destroys Satan and fulfils God's prophecy in Gen. 3:15 as He crushes the head of Satan. John says this was Jesus' purpose, when he writes: "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (Jo. 3:8b).

Summarizing then, Jesus conquered sin and crushed the head of Satan destroying the works of the devil, on the cross. He conquered death at His resurrection, ascended to

heaven and was given a victor's crown, where John now stands and witnesses as the Lamb takes the book and opens the seals. As the first five seals are opened there is a disclosure of events that reveal the evil seeds that men have sown, which will bring ruined to the world. The breaking of the sixth seal brings the end of the age and the second advent of Christ. Since the opening of the seventh seal discloses no specific event like the first six seals, it may be concluded that the contents of the scroll compose the material found in Revelation 7:1- 22:21.

## CHAPTER VII

### SEALS ONE, TWO, AND THREE, IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SEVENTIETH WEEK

The previous chapter placed attention on John standing in the presence of God, who is holding the sealed book in His hand, and focused on the central truth that only the Lamb, by virtue of His sacrificial death, can loose the seals and open the book. This chapter focuses on what John saw in his vision: the actual breaking of the seals and the opening of the book. The book contains the establishment of the kingdom of God, the gathering of the saints into the kingdom, and the judgment of God upon the demonic powers that have murdered His people.

Where one places the seals in their relationship to the seventieth week is critical to understanding God's final program. Some place all the seals after the seventieth week begins. Some place the first four seals before the seventieth week, which they claim happens during "the beginning of sorrows." Biederwolf expresses the position that the first four seals and "the beginning of sorrows" occur before the seventieth week when he writes concerning the first seal:

The Futurists make the image a personification also of a false Christ, and see here a picture of the Antichrist during the last days proclaiming peace indeed but a false peace upon the earth. Most Futurists place this as well as the other seals after the Rapture but Moorehead, who thinks we have here a picture of 'triumphant militarism', places this seal and the three following ones during 'the beginning of sorrows' (Matthew 24:5-14) before the Rapture, 'before', he says, 'Daniel's Seventieth Week begins its course.'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Willam E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 572.

Jesus gives insight to the events that take place during the seventieth week in his Olivet discourse, however, even here there is a wide variance of opinion as to when the events occur. Chafer says:

These events...do not constitute a sign of the end of the Jewish age... though they are the characteristics of the unforeseen intervening or intercalary age.... This extended Scripture (Matthew 24:9-26) presents Christ's own message to Israel regarding the great tribulation.<sup>2</sup>

According to Scofield, the passage has a double interpretation, partly applicable before the seventieth week and partly applicable to the seventieth week. He says in his notes:

Verses 4 to 14 have a double interpretation: They give (1) the character of the age—wars, international conflicts, famines, pestilences, persecutions, and false Christs (cf. Dan. 9:26).... (2) But the same answer (vs. 4-14) applies in a specific way to the end of the age, viz. Daniel's seventieth week... All that has characterized the age gathers into awful intensity at the end.<sup>3</sup>

English, on the other hand says that “verses four through fourteen refer to the first half of that week, the beginning of the end; and verses fifteen to twenty-six relate to the latter half of the week, the great tribulation, and then shall the end come.”<sup>4</sup>

The best view however, suggest that verses four through eight outline the first half of the seventieth week and verses nine through twenty-six describe the second half of the seventieth week. Pentecost says:

There seems to be evidence to support the view that the first half of the week is described in verses 4-8. The parallelism between verses 4-8 and Revelation 6 seems to indicate that the first half of the tribulation is here described.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, Year), 116-17

<sup>3</sup> C. I. Scofield, Scofield Reference Bible, London: Oxford Press, 1945), 1033.

<sup>4</sup> E. Schuyler English, Studies in the Gospel According to Matthew, (New York: Our Hope, 1943), 173

<sup>5</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 278.

Gaebelein agrees with Pentecost on this view. He writes:

If this is the correct interpretation... then there must be a perfect harmony between that part of the Olivet discourse contained in Matthew xxiv and the part of Revelation beginning with the sixth chapter. And such is indeed the case.<sup>6</sup>

Pentecost and Gaebelein are correct. When one compares the seals of Revelation chapter six with the Olivet discourse the harmony is easily observed. Johnson also says the seals parallel the passages of the Olivet discourse and places the events of the last days into three periods: (1) the period of false Christs, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and death, called “the beginning of birth pains”...; (2) the period of the great tribulation... and, (3) finally, the period “immediately after the distress of those days,” when the sun moon and stars will be affected and Christ will return. . . . This parallel to major parts of Revelation is too striking to be ignored.<sup>7</sup>

The opening of the first seal reveals a man on a white horse who went forth conquering. The controversy has been over the identification of the rider of the white horse. Does he represent Christ or the Antichrist? Most of those who hold to the Synchronous Historical view, see this rider as the triumphant image of Christ. Those who hold to the Futurist view see this man as the Antichrist who establishes a kingdom and makes a covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27, Matthew 24:5, Revelation 6:1-2). Walvoord says “he is Satan’s masterpiece and the counterfeit of all that Christ is or claims to be. He is therefore cast in the role of a conqueror...”<sup>8</sup> Walvoord then adds:

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<sup>6</sup> Arno C. Gaebelein, The Gospel According to Matthew, II , (Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1916) 182.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985) 472.

<sup>8</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) 126.

In biblical times it was customary for a conqueror to ride in triumph on a white horse. In the symbolization of Revelation 19 Christ Himself is pictured as riding on a white horse leading the armies of heaven to the earth. To hold that the rider in 6:2 is Christ Himself however, is out of order chronologically, for Christ comes on a white horse not at the beginning but at the end of the tribulation.<sup>9</sup>

Although the dispute over the identity of the rider of the white horse cannot be completely settled because of the presuppositions that one may have, the evidence seems to point to the Antichrist of the tribulation. The context of the passage shows Christ as the one opening the seals. The fact that He is opening the seals, and the parallelism of the other three horses, which are instruments of judgment would not be in harmony with Christ being the rider of the white horse. Moreover, the Lamb and His wrath does not appear until after the opening of the sixth seal.

The opening of the second seal reveals a man on a red horse who takes peace from the earth (compare Revelation 6:3-4, Matthew 24:6-7a). If the rider on the white horse is the Antichrist going forth conquering, then the breaking of the second seal brings forth “wars and rumors of wars” (Matthew 24:6). It can be concluded then that the conditions of the earth are not as peaceful in the first three and one half years as every one seems to believe. Walvoord writes:

If the first seal is a period of peace, as some have held, though this seems to be contradicted by the fact that the rider of the first horse conquers, in any case when the second seal is broken, military warfare breaks out and peace is taken from the world. The constant tension among nations and the ambitions of men have their climax in this period before Christ comes. Though “wars and rumors of wars”... are characteristic of the age, it is evident that warfare occupies a large place in the consummation of the age with a resultant great loss of life.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971) 126-27

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 128-29.



The opening of the third seal reveals a man on a black horse who had balances in his hand, indicating famine (compare Rev. 6:5-6, Mt. 24:7b-8). The picture seems to indicate a time when life will be reduced to the barest of necessities, which in most cases is usually the result of war. The situation reveals that one would need to spend a day's wage for a loaf of bread with nothing left to buy any thing else. Johnson observes this condition when he writes:

In the rider's hand there is a "pair of scales." A voice is heard interpreting its significance in economic terms: "a quart of wheat... and three quarts of barley for a day's wage".... This amount suggests food prices about twelve times higher than normal... and implies inflation and famine conditions (Matthew 24:7). A quart of wheat would supply an average person one day's sustenance. Barley was used by the poor to mix with the wheat. The expression "Do not damage the oil and wine" is less clear. Some view oil and wine as luxuries not necessary for bare survival and the rich would have them while the poor were starving.... Others take oil and wine as showing the extent of the famine, since a drought affecting the grain may not be severe enough to hurt the vines and olive trees.... Moreover, oil and wine are staple foods in the East, both in dearth and in prosperity.... So in this view the third seal brings poverty and partial, though not severe, famine.<sup>11</sup>

To summarize then, the first seal reveals a man on a white horse who is the Antichrist coming to conquer and establish his kingdom. The second seal reveals a man on a red horse who takes peace from the earth. The third seal reveals a man on a black horse who brings forth famine upon the earth. These first three seals occur in the first three and one half years of Daniel's seventieth week and are in harmony with, and run parallel to Mt.24:4-8 of the Olivet discourse.

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<sup>11</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985) 474.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SEALS FOUR, FIVE AND SIX OF REVELATION IN RELATIONSHIP TO THE SEVENTIETH WEEK AND COMPARED WITH THE OLIVET DISCOURSE

#### **The Fourth Seal**

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

When the fourth seal is opened, a dramatic portrait of horrific death upon the world is unveiled. John introduces the scene with the words “I looked and behold,” an expression that exhibits alarm in him. John describes a man riding a “pale horse,” a yellowish green horse or the paleness of a deceased person. The color of the horse equates well with the rider for his name is death, and hell or hades follows him. He has been given power to kill one-fourth of the inhabited world’s population. His instruments of destruction are the sword, hunger, and the beasts of the earth.

The strained nature of the historical school of interpretation, that the rider of the first horse is the true minister of the Gospel, the second rider represents the succession of Roman rulers in the early Christian centuries, the rider of the third horse represents the excessive taxation of Rome, and the fourth rider represents the Roman rulers who caused famine and executed those who opposed them, has no real merit or support from the text.

Although those who hold the historical view are inadequate in their interpretation, Walvoord observes one justifying point from their exegesis. He quotes McIlvaine who says:

It is in these words that we find our Seer's interpretation of the first seal . . . it would be very surprising that no one seems ever to have thought of reading this closing statement as a paragraph by itself, and consequently as referring, not exclusively to the last, but to all of these four seals . . . Here, then, according to the Seer's own interpretation, this rider upon a white horse, with a crown and bow, and called forth by the lion-like living creature, is the symbol of the plague of the wild beasts. . . all the members of a class must be of the same sort, so that they can be obtained by one principle of analysis; and a judgment or scourge; consequently, in the remaining one, that of the first seal it must be a judgment or scourge; otherwise the laws of thought are violated in the classification.<sup>1</sup>

The destruction of one fourth of the world's population depicts the greatest devastation ever recorded in the history of mankind. The population of the world today is approximately eight billion people. To annihilate one fourth would mean that two billion people would die. Geographically two billion people would equate to the entire Western Hemisphere. It is clear from the magnitude of this kind of devastation how much Satan hates God, and without God's intervention, how far Satan would go to destroy the whole human race. Jesus expounds on this destruction:

For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he has but a short time (Mt. 24:21-22, KJV; Rev. 12:12b, KJV).

This fourth seal occurs in the last three and a half years of Daniel's seventieth week. It is a time of unprecedented persecution for Israel. Daniel prophesied of this period:

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<sup>1</sup> John F. Walvoord, John F. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 130-31.

And at that time shall Michel stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book (Dan. 12:1).

Jeremiah speaks of this event when he says, “Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even a time of Jacob’s trouble, but he shall be saved out of it” (Jer. 30:7).

If the ultimate signature of the great tribulation is unprecedented distress, then the fourth seal accurately illustrates this horrific period. The wars and famines that are expressed in the second and third seals do not qualify as the destructive powers to destroy one fourth of the world’s population. Walvoord says that “though the book of Revelation itself does not state specifically what event begins the great tribulation, the characteristics unfolded in the fourth seal would indicate the great tribulation is under-way at that time.”<sup>2</sup>

### **The Fifth Seal - The Saints Under the Altar**

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, how long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow-servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled (Rev. 6:9-11).

After witnessing the devastation of the fourth seal, John now sees the slain souls of the tribulation. These saints had been martyred for contending for the Word of God. What Jude admonishes all saints to do, “earnestly contend for the faith” (Jude 3), will in the great tribulation bring an agonizing slaughter for all who accomplish it. These

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<sup>2</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago, Moody Press, 1978), 132.

tribulation saints will experience torture and great affliction because of their stand for the Word of God and for the testimony they maintain.

Even now the world despises the Jews and all that stand with Israel. Based on the testimony of the Law of Moses, the Jews have a right to their homeland in the Middle East. Just as Haman and Hitler murdered millions of Jews, the Antichrist will produce the greatest period of atrocities the world has ever known. During this reign of terror the world's hatred for Christians and Jews will be greatly manifested, resulting in torture and death for the followers of Christ.

The martyrs of this great persecution will inquire of God with a prayer. "How long, O Lord," before our blood is avenged. The answer from God is that they must wait a little while until the rest of their "fellow-servants" are slain. John says that they are "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people. . . . These are they that came out of great tribulation" (Rev. 7:9ff). They are those who refused to worship the image of the beast and therefore death was inflicted upon them (Rev. 13:15). They are also referred to as "those who have been beheaded" (Rev. 20:4). Walvoord says that "martyrdom in those days will be as common as it is uncommon today."<sup>3</sup>

These saints demonstrated their faithfulness not only by their willingness to die for Christ, but also by not seeking their own vengeance. They were asking God to fulfill His promise to avenge His people. The apostle Paul taught: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Rom. 12:19).

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<sup>3</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago, Moody Press, 1978), 134.

The white robes that these saints are wearing create a question that has been discussed among theologians: do saints have a body in heaven before their mortal bodies are resurrected? According to Revelation 20:4, these saints are not raised from the dead until after the tribulation. Some believe that saints are given temporary bodies in heaven prior to their resurrection, while others believe that only the spirits of those who have died are in heaven. This passage seems to indicate that the martyred dead have some kind of a body because they are given white robes. It is not the mortal body that Christians have now because “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God” (1Cor. 15:50). Neither can it be the resurrected body of flesh and bones that Christ received after his own resurrection (Lk. 24:39). It suggests that there is a temporary body suited for souls in heaven and replaced by their redeemed bodies at the resurrection. Ladd believes that the white robes may be a “symbol of blessedness and rest, even though the state of final and perfected blessedness awaits the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body.”<sup>4</sup>

These martyred saints under the throne, introduce another question. Does this martyrdom cover the entire seventieth week, or are they slain in the last three and a half years (the great tribulation)? Those who support the view that the martyred saints were killed over the entire seventieth week point out two classifications: those who were slain and already under the throne, and those who are yet to be slain. Those that hold the entire seventieth week view, believe the saints under the altar are those who were slain in the first three and a half years. The rest were slain in the last three and a half years. They,

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<sup>4</sup> George Eldon Ladd, The Revelation of John, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 106.

who hold this view maintain that confirmation, for the entire seventieth week view, is found in the utterance of verse 11, “for a little season.”

For those, on the other hand, who hold the view that the martyrdom takes place in the last three and a half years, Walvoord observes:

There is no reason, however, why the last three and a half years could not have the same distinction, namely, certain martyrs at the beginning as contrasted to martyrs at the end. The ultimate decision depends on more weighty matters namely, whether there is unprecedented tribulation prior to the fifth seal as seems to be clearly indicated in this context, and the fact that the book of Revelation never speaks of a seven-year period, only of a period of three and a half years, forty-two months, or a similar designation. The ultimate decision depends upon what evidence is considered decisive.<sup>5</sup>

Walvoord’s observation has much merit because Jesus says the tribulation does not begin until the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place, which comes in the middle of the week (Mt. 24:15). John agrees and says that the Gentiles will tread the holy city under their feet for forty-two months. It is in this same three and a half years that God’s two witnesses proclaim the truth for twelve hundred and sixty days protected by the power of God (Rev. 11:2ff). These two witnesses will be discussed later in the chapter dealing with the fifth and sixth trumpet.

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<sup>5</sup> John F Walvoord The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1978), 135.

### **The Sixth Seal – The Day of Wrath**

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every boundman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand (Rev. 6:12-17)?

When the sixth seal is broken John witnesses the final day of the Lord described so often by the Old Testament prophets. The catastrophic scene of distress for the inhabitants of the earth is threefold: (1) the great earthquake and the cosmic disturbances that affect the sun, the moon, and the stars, (2) the shaking of the earth, and (3) the fear that grips mankind. John's language in describing these events is equivalent to the chronicle that Joel gives. "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31). Again "The day of the Lord is near. . . . The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:14-15). Haggai writes, "Once again in a little while I will shake the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land" (Hag. 2:6). Isaiah says of the day of the Lord, "the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine" (Isa. 13:10). Portraying the day of the Lord in another place Isaiah wrote, "All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll, all their host shall fall as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree" (Isa. 34:4). Concerning the fear of men during this period of judgment Isaiah wrote, "And they shall go into the holes of the



rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth” (Isa. 2:19). At the opening of the sixth seal, the description of fear given by John is almost identical (Rev. 6:14-15).

The Lord Jesus Christ in his Olivet discourse describes the cosmic disturbances at His coming in language similar to that of Joel 3:14-15 and Isa. 13:10 when he declares:

Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory (Mt. 24:29-30).

Daniel spoke of this coming of the Lord when he wrote:

I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, gauges, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:13-14).

The taking of the kingdom will be by force with great power. This taking of the kingdom is called the day of the Lord and it is the great day when His wrath is poured out in judgment upon the earth. The kingdom is taken immediately after the tribulation when the sixth seal is broken. It will be preceded by earthquakes, by cosmic disturbances, and by fear upon all mankind. The details of this judgment are provided in the seven vials that proceed forth from the sounding of the seventh trumpet.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE INTERLUDE BETWEEN THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH SEAL

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, Saying, hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel (Rev. 7:1-4).

Between the sixth seal and the opening of the seventh seal there is a break, due to a change in the emphasis of the subject matter. John now witnesses the divine restraint of the affliction to be poured out on the earth. No harm is to be unleashed upon the earth until the servants of God are sealed. This seal is to be placed in their foreheads. One hundred and forty-four thousand are sealed, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.

There are two positions regarding the identification of the ones who are sealed. The first, those who believe the passage should be taken literally and that it refers to 144,000 Jewish Christians who have been sealed during the great tribulation (to protect them from the persecution of the Antichrist). The literalists believe that Antichrist will make a seven year treaty with the nation of Israel, only to break it in the middle of the “week of years” (Dan. 9:27) and then under the power of Satan attempt to destroy those Jews (Rev. 12:13-14). Walvoord speaks for those who hold that these are literal Jews from the twelve tribes when he says:

Though the Bible distinguishes true Israelites from those who have forsaken their heritage, the term ‘Israel’ is never used outside the descendants of Jacob himself. The remnant of Israel as portrayed here in the book of Revelation should not therefore be taken as meaning the church. It would be rather ridiculous to carry the typology of Israel representing the church to the extent of dividing them up into twelve tribes as was done here, if it was the intent of the writer to describe the church. It is rather a clear indication of God’s continued purpose for the nation Israel and their preservation through this awful time of trouble.<sup>1</sup>

Johnson also supports the literal view, he quotes Peter Richardson who says: “Strong confirmation of this position (i.e.. that Israel refers to the Jews in the NT) comes from the total absence of an identification of the church with Israel until A. D. 160; and also from the total absence, even then, of the term ‘Israel of God’ to characterize the church.”<sup>2</sup>

Richardson continues to say that “reference to the Twelve Tribes (vv. 5-8) would most naturally be understood to refer to the ancient historic Israel and not the church.”<sup>3</sup>

The decision as to determine the identity of the term Israel should be reached on the basis of exegesis and usage. The prevalent idea that the church is the true Israel is not sustained by any explicit reference in the Bible. Israel is a term used to refer to the ethnic descendants of Jacob.

Ladd supports the second view, which identifies the 144,000 as spiritual Israel (the church). He suggests the following reasons:

There are certain irregularities in the list of the twelve tribes of Israel. As a matter of fact, John’s list agrees with no known list of enumeration of the twelve tribes of Israel. Many interpreters insist that these twelve tribes must be interpreted literally and therefore designate literal Israel. However, when interpreted literally, the twelve tribes do not represent actual Israel. A brief survey of several of the Old Testament listings will make this clear.

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<sup>1</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 143

<sup>2</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 479

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 479

Revelation 7	Genesis 49	Ezekiel 48
Judah	Reuben	Dan
Reuben	Simeon	Asher
Gad	Levi	Naphtali
Asher	Judah	Manasseh
Naphtali	Zebulun	Ephraim
Manasseh	Issachar	Reuben
Simeon	Dan	Judah
Levi	Gad	Benjamin
Issachar	Asher	Simon
Zebulun	Naphtali	Issachar
Joseph	Joseph	Zebulun
Benjamin	Benjamin	Gad

The prophecy in Ezekiel 48 tells of the final salvation of Israel and the eschatological division of the land of Palestine. If John means to relate the eschatological salvation of Israel, we would expect him to follow the list of Ezekiel; but this he does not do. The irregularities in John's list are these: the tribe of Dan is altogether omitted; the tribe of Ephraim is also omitted, but it is included indirectly because Joseph was the father of both Ephraim and Manasseh. This means that in reality, the tribe of Manasseh is included twice.<sup>4</sup>

Ladd's observation that Manasseh is listed twice may or may not be correct, but that does not mean that the 144,000 are not actually 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. When John refers to Joseph, he may be referring to Joseph's seed, Ephraim, just

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<sup>4</sup> George Eldon Ladd, The Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 114-15.

as Ezekiel refers to David as the Lord's servant when Ezekiel means David's son Jesus Christ (Ez. 34:23).

One should consider Ephraim and Manasseh as they were being blessed by Israel. It is possible that Jacob, because God had chosen him (the younger) over his brother Esau, was determined to repeat the same blessing to his younger grandson Ephraim, when he blessed Joseph's sons that day, saying, "In thee shall Israel, bless, saying, 'God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh': and he set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Gen. 48:20). Jacob blesses both sons, but he desires more for Ephraim the younger than for Manasseh. When Joseph sees what his father is doing he is displeased and says:

Not so, my father: for this is the first born; put thy right hand upon his head. And his father refused, and said, I know it, my son, I know it: he also shall become a people, and he also shall be great: but truly his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his seed shall become a multitude of nations (Gen. 48:18-19).

In blessing both of Joseph's sons, it is possible that Israel has made two tribes out of the tribe of Joseph instead of one.

If Ladd is correct when he says Ezekiel 48 is a description of the division of the land in the future kingdom, of which, Manasseh has secured a place. And if it is also true when Ladd says that, if John is referring to the actual tribes, then Manasseh has been counted twice (his own listing and once in Joseph). This evidence in and of itself is still not sufficient to prove that the 144,000 are a representation of the Church. It could be that in the omission of Dan and the inserting of Joseph by John in Revelation that God has removed the tribe of Dan from receiving a part of the land and replaced him with Joseph, making the double blessing that Jacob intended for Ephraim to actually be conferred on Manasseh. On the other hand, it could be that John is referring only to the tribe of Ephraim, when He uses His father's name Joseph to do so.

There is precedent in Scripture for such an exchange of names (Ez. 34:23). Because of the numerous incompetent shepherds in Israel's past, Ezekiel prophesies that there will come one Shepherd whom the Lord will set up. Ezekiel calls David this shepherd, but he is not referring to David. Instead Ezekiel is referring to Christ, David's son. Feinberg comments on this matter:

Twice it is stated that He will feed them. This is not a gathering of all believers into the church through Christ. The reference to God's servant David is to be understood as David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The verb set up (v. 23) does not imply the resurrection of David himself, but the appointment of another. . . . If this were the literal David, it is strange that there is no introductory word concerning his resurrection.<sup>5</sup>

In trying to arrive at a decision on whether the 144,000 are the twelve tribes of Israel or whether they represent spiritual Israel (the church), Biederwolf found himself leaning toward the view that confirms them as spiritual Israel. He says: "Although even in the moment of the decision we find ourselves wondering whether after all the reference may not be to Jewish believers only, as the naming of the tribes would seem to indicate. It must not be overlooked that the tribes are also mentioned by name in 21:12, not indeed so written in this book of Revelation but so written upon the gates of the city of God."<sup>6</sup>

Biederwolf also says that "the decision of this matter one way or the other does not bring us into conflict with any other part of the Revelation, and is therefore not a matter of vital importance."<sup>7</sup>

In his statement, Biederwolf is revealing the lack of evidence for viewing the 144,000 as spiritual Israel (all believers). He is then saying that it does not matter which

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Feinberg, The Prophecy of Ezekiel. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1976), 198.

<sup>6</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 584.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 584.

view one chooses. Biederwolf, like all who interpret, would be on stronger ground had he followed the basic principles of interpretation (see the chapter on grammatical historical interpretation). The interpreter should always consider the literal meaning of a prophetic Scripture as his controlling guide. For the literal sense is the foundation of interpretation for most passages of Scripture. It is the only way for an interpreter to look at the matter realistically and not just be using his imagination. The rule here is sound. When the evidence is not sufficient to compel one to reject grammatical historical exegesis, then one's choice of interpretation must remain with the normal meaning of the words.

One more matter needs to be considered concerning the 144,000 as the actual descendants of the twelve tribes of Israel, and that is the undeniable account that Israel plays in and around the tribulation. Before the tribulation begins, God seals the 144,000 in their foreheads to protect them from the trouble that is about to befall the world. The tribulation begins with the war in heaven involving Michael and his angels as they join in battle with Satan and his angels. Michael prevails and Satan is cast out of heaven into the earth, no longer having access into the presence of God to accuse the saints (Rev. 12:7-9). At this same time, the Antichrist sets up his abomination of desolation (Dan. 12:1; Mt. 24:15, 21). Because Satan no longer has entrance into heaven before the throne of God, Satan realizes his time is short. Having great wrath Satan persecutes Israel. Because of this persecution Israel flees into the wilderness where she is protected by God (Rev. 12:12-14). It may be that the 144,000 are the saints of Israel that are hidden in the wilderness or at least some of those saints.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SEVENTH SEAL AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE TRUMPETS

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour (Rev. 8:1)

Following the interlude after the sixth seal, the opening of the seventh and final seal takes place. This action prepares the way for the seven trumpets. In heaven, the praises of the angels ordinarily heard without interruption ceased. There was absolute silence for half an hour. The silence would demonstrate to those in heaven, the importance of the great tribulation, and following, the great battle of the day of the Lord that would lead to the setting up of the Kingdom (Millennial Reign).

With the opening of the sixth seal the sign of the coming of the Son of Man appears, but with the opening of the seventh seal there seems to be a stepping back from the coming of the Son of Man to the beginning of the seventieth week.

And I saw the seven angels which stood before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. 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. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 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. And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound (Rev. 8:2-6).

While there are different opinions concerning the timing of the seven trumpets, the evidence points to the trumpets as running parallel with the first six seals. Phillips says, "that the great tribulation proper, really begins with the later trumpets. During the



earlier trumpets, conditions on earth are made ripe for the coming of the Beast.”<sup>1</sup>

Pentecost says, “It would seem as though there might be a parallelism in the seven trumpet judgments and the program of the seventieth week.”<sup>2</sup>

Just as the seals parallel the signs of the approaching end times spoken of in Jesus’ Olivet discourse, the trumpets also bear a similar resemblance. The Olivet discourse falls into three periods: first the period of false Christs, wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, and death, called “the beginning of sorrows” (Mt. 24: 6-8); second the period of the great tribulation (Mt. 24:21); finally, the period immediately after the tribulation, when the sun, moon, and stars will be affected and Christ will return (Mt. 24:29-30). Seals one, two, and three, fall into the first period. Seals four and five fall into the second period, and the sixth seal falls into the period after the tribulation.

Just as the seals have a pattern, there is a distinct observable pattern in the unfolding of the trumpets. The first four trumpets are distinguished from the last three trumpets, which are addressed as woes. The events that occur under the first four trumpets seem to parallel the program of the first half of the seventieth week. The seventieth week begins with wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes (Mt. 24: 6-7), which corresponds to the first four trumpets (Rev. 8: 7-12). There are two events that occur in the middle of the week; they are: (1) the war between the angels of Satan and the angels of Michael, which expels Satan from heaven (Rev. 12:7-12; Dan. 12:1); and (2) the abomination of desolation that is set up by the Antichrist (Mt. 24:15, Dan. 9:27). Both of these events bring on the fifth and sixth trumpets (Rev.

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<sup>1</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 119.

<sup>2</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things To Come. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978), 362.

9), which are the first two woes. The seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15), on the other hand, which is the third woe depicts the events that come after the seventieth week and is associated with the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12ff), the seven vials (Rev. 15-16) and the second coming of Christ. (Mt. 24: 29-30). Ladd comments on the division of the trumpets:

The plagues of the trumpets are in two groups: the first four involve natural catastrophes; the last three plagues fall directly upon man. A similar division is found in Mt. 24:4-8 and 24:13-22. The first four plagues are all partial in their effect, affecting only a third of nature. These preliminary judgments are designed to bring men to repentance (Rev. 9:20).<sup>3</sup>

### **The First Trumpet**

The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up (Rev. 8:7).

There are some who hold that the catastrophes of the trumpets are not to be taken literally, but their position is hardly to be taken seriously (see chapter on The Grammatical Historical System). The first trumpet destroys a third part of the earth's foliage and green vegetation, which pictures an actual catastrophe falling upon the physical world. Possibly the fire means an electrical display in a fierce thunderstorm. Concerning the literalness of the passage, Walvoord writes:

The tendency on the part of the expositors has been to read into this judgment a symbol of divine chastening rather than literal hail and fire. The obvious parallel, however, is found in the tenth plague in Exodus 9:18-26. In as much as in the account of Exodus there was literal hail and fire, and the result of the judgment here is the burning up of the third part of the trees and all the green grass, there is no solid reason for not taking this judgment in its literal sense.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> George Eldon Ladd, The Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 126.

<sup>4</sup> John F. Walvoord. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 153.

The devastation that results from the first trumpet will be tremendous and this plague is only the beginning. There are six more trumpets left to sound.

### **The Second Trumpet**

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; 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 (Rev. 8:8-9).

As in the first trumpet there are some who allegorize the meaning of this plague. Smith says the second trumpet “relates to the invasion and conquest of Africa, and afterward of Italy.”<sup>5</sup> Gaebelien says, “The sea here is typical of nations . . . signifying probable revolution . . . the result will be . . . destruction of life and commerce which is represented by the ships.”<sup>6</sup> Walvoord says, “To make the mountain a form of human government, the sea the Roman Empire, and the ships that are destroyed the church or organized religion, is to read into the passage far more than justified.”<sup>7</sup> Some make the ships that are destroyed organized religion. The expositor must decide whether this passage should be interpreted literally or symbolically. There are perfectly reasonable explanations that convey a literal interpretation. For instance, the burning mountain could be a gigantic meteorite hitting the earth. Walvoord expresses this idea when he writes:

It is not impossible, however, to suggest a reasonable literal interpretation. It is earlier indicated in the sixth seal that the stars from heaven fall and that there are

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<sup>5</sup> Uriah Smith. The Prophecies of Daniel and the Revelation. (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1944), 479.

<sup>6</sup> Arno C. Gaebelien, as cited Biederwolf, William E. The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 594.

<sup>7</sup> John F. Walvoord. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 155.

various disturbances of this character during this period. It may be that the great mountain, instead of being a symbol of a government, . . . is actually a large object falling from the heavens.<sup>8</sup>

There is also a parallel between the plague of the second trumpet and the plagues of Egypt. Just as Aaron stretched his rod over the rivers of Egypt and they turned to blood, so this great object that is cast into the sea has the same effect. A third part of sea was turned to blood, a third part of the creatures in the sea die, and a third part of the ships are destroyed.

Whether it is a meteorite or some other natural phenomenon, a literal interpretation is perfectly feasible. It is important for one to remember that these events are the beginning of sorrows, which are occurring in the first half of the seventieth week. (Mt. 24: 5-8).

### **The Third Trumpet**

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: 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 (Rev. 8:10-11).

The previous plague was aimed at the sea and salt water; this plague however, is aimed at fresh water. One third of the rivers and springs of the earth's fresh water supplies become bitter. The star's name is "Wormwood," which refers to a bitter herb (*Artemesia absinthium*) from the Near East. Wormwood is mentioned in several places in the Bible (Jer. 9:15; 23:15; Lam. 3:15, 19; Amos 5:7). In Jeremiah, wormwood seems to be a symbol of divine judgment.

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<sup>8</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 154.

It seems that many expositors in their attempt to supply a sufficient explanation to the meaning of this “great star” have produced no clear understanding at all. Those who interpret it symbolically all agree that the star is some personage. Biederwolf says the Consecutive Historical School refers the “great star” to Atilla, Lyra refers it to Pelagius, Luther refers it to Origen, Bengel refers it to Arius, and Laurentius refers the star to Gregory the great.<sup>9</sup> Phillips says: “But a disaster affecting the water supply of mankind hardly seems a sufficient explanation of what happens under this trumpet. The events described must probably be taken symbolically, even though interpreters have varied widely in seeking to identify the fallen star.”<sup>10</sup> Phillips continues:

The clue to the interpretation is in Revelation 12:12, where we read, ‘Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.’ The earlier part of the chapter tells how, in his original fall, the devil, the great red dragon, cast a third part of the stars (i.e., his angels) out of heaven. With Satan’s fall from heaven, recorded parenthetically in Revelation 13, a new woe is to be added to the horrors taking place on earth.<sup>11</sup>

The difficulty with the interpretation of the third trumpet lies in the meaning of who or what the “great star” is. Phillips assumes the “great star” of the third trumpet to be a personage that is Satan. It is not clear however, whether John intended the star to be a personage or a heavenly body. The problem with making the “great star” Satan, as Phillips does, is that Satan is not cast into the earth until his war with Michael, which occurs in the middle of the seventieth week (Dan 12:1). That event is described at the sounding of the fifth trumpet, which is the first woe (see [fifth trumpet](#)).

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<sup>9</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 595.

<sup>10</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 120-21.

<sup>11</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 121.

Ladd, who accepts the star as literal says, “The sounding of the third trumpet sees a great blazing meteor fall from heaven poisoning a third of the rivers and fountains of waters.”<sup>12</sup> Walvoord says: It seems preferable, however, to view this with a reasonable literalness, as in the case of the second trumpet. The star seems to be a heavenly body or a mass from outer space, understandably burning as it enters the atmosphere of earth, and falling with contaminating influence upon the rivers and waters.”<sup>13</sup>

Whether it is to be taken symbolically or whether it is a literal heavenly body, it is certain that a third of the earth’s fresh water supply will be affected.

### **The Fourth Trumpet**

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 (Rev. 8:12).

The effects of the sounding of the fourth trumpet are comparably different from the first three trumpets in that it relates to the heavenly bodies – the sun, the moon, and the stars instead of the land, the sea, and the fresh water supply. John sees a third part of the sun, a third part the moon, and a third part of the stars darkened. Because of the difficulty of logically understanding how this phenomenon could literally happen many expositors make it symbolic. Phillips who hold a symbolic interpretation regards this prophecy as predicting a disruption of human government over one third of the earth. He says that this great upheaval of human government “gives the Beast his chance to seize

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<sup>12</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 127.

<sup>13</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 155.

control of Western Europe. . . . ‘the little horn’ as the Beast is called . . . takes advantage of conditions on earth . . . to seize complete control of the revived Roman Empire.”<sup>14</sup>

Biederwolf says that “the Allegorical interpreters are guilty . . . of the most aimless and arbitrary play of interpretation, i.e., the troubling of the Church by . . . political disorders.”<sup>15</sup>

Those who hold a literal position believe that since it affects the sun, moon, and stars, it is referring to either a loss of time or a loss of light. Walvoord says that “it is probably preferable to interpret this literally as extending to a disruption of light from heaven as a solemn warning of other judgments which were yet to fall upon the earth.”<sup>16</sup> Walvoord quotes J. B. Smith who observes “the progress – one third of the green trees and grass, one third of marine life and shipping, one third of the waters, and one third of the heavenly bodies. Food is destroyed; distribution is crippled; water supply is limited; production is hampered.”<sup>17</sup> Light is essential to all forms of life, both plant and animal, therefore, with the disruption of light so often taken for granted, God is manifesting His power and sovereignty.

### **The Three Woes**

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 (Rev. 8:13).

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<sup>14</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 122.

<sup>15</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 664.

<sup>16</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 156.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

The implement of the fourth trumpet brings to completion the first succession of trumpets that deal with aspects of the physical world. Before the second series of trumpets sound, John hears an angel flying through the midst of heaven pronouncing three woes on the inhabitants of the earth because of the three angels that are yet to sound. These last three trumpets will be far worse than the first four, because they fall into the period of the “great tribulation” and beyond.

### **The Fifth Angel – The First Woe**

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. 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 (Rev. 9:1-2).

The sounding of the fifth trumpet introduces the first woe, the details of which are described in the first twelve verses of chapter nine. The fallen star that John sees has the key to the bottomless pit, which indicates that this star refers to a person instead of a heavenly body such as a literal star or meteorite. In the Greek, the word “fall” is in the perfect tense which signifies a completed action indicating that the star had fallen and stood complete at the sounding of the trumpet. John uses the perfect tense because it is emphatic; it emphasizes that there would be no recovery from this fall. The passage itself offers no enlightenment as to the identity of this person. It is possible however, that the fallen star is the result of the warfare between Michael and Satan, where the devil is cast into the earth no longer having access to heaven (Rev. 12:7-9). Walvoord takes the position that the star is Satan when he writes:

This act of God, probably at the beginning of the great tribulation, terminates the ability of Satan to accuse the brethren in heaven as he has been doing through previous ages. The first verse of chapter 9 does not record the fall itself, but rather



the star is seen as already fallen from heaven to the earth. It would seem likely, therefore, that the person referred to as the star is none other than Satan himself.<sup>18</sup>

In his notes Biederwolf agrees that it is a fallen angel, when he writes: “A star from heaven – Not a good angel . . . for his description and his work refute this, but an evil angel . . . doubtless Satan himself according to the analogy of Isa. 14:12; Lk. 10:18.”

With the star (Satan) having fallen from heaven, at the sounding of the fifth trumpet, the events that caused him to fall need to be examined. As mentioned earlier, there are two events that occur in the middle of the week: (1) the war between Michael and Satan and their angels (Rev. 12:7-12), which expels Satan from heaven, no longer giving him access into the presence of God, and (2) the abomination of desolation that brings devastation by the Antichrist (Mt. 24:15, Dan. 9:27). According to Daniel 11:36, the Antichrist “shall exalt, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods.” At the time the Antichrist exalts himself Michael and his angels attack Satan and his angels. Satan and his angels lose this war in heaven; therefore, Satan having great wrath is cast into the earth. Satan’s great wrath is the catalyst that causes the “great tribulation.” This “great tribulation” begins when the man of sin is revealed (II Thess. 2:4) and Satan is cast into the earth (Dan 12:1, Rev. 12:7 ff, Mt. 24:21).

### **Satan Frees The Demons**

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. 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. And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five

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<sup>18</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 158-59.

months and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. And in those days shall men seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them (Rev. 9:3-6).

The method of interpretation is critical when it comes to understanding who these locusts are, proceeding from the smoke of the bottomless pit. The consecutive historical school has totally missed the exegesis because they did not see the locusts as a representation of the hordes of demons loosed upon the earth. The historical school refers the locusts to the followers of Islam, the Saracens or Arabs, who devastated the eastern part of the Roman empire. Uriah Smith, who holds to the historical school wrote that “swarms of Saracens, like locusts, overspread the earth, and speedily extended their ravages over the Roman Empire from east to west. The hail descended from the frozen shores of the Baltic . . . and the locusts (the fit symbol of the Arabs) issued from Arabia, their native region. They came as destroyers, propagating a new doctrine, and stirred up to rapine and violence by motives of interest and religion.”<sup>19</sup>

The argument here is not over whether the locusts are to be taken literally or symbolically, for all agree that John is using figurative language. The context demands a symbolic interpretation due to the genre, apocalypse, and the way the locusts are described. The issue is over how the symbol of the locusts is to be interpreted. The Historical School insists that the locusts represent men taking part in events of past history, whereas the Futurists sees the locusts as demonic beings participating in events of the end time. These locusts are not figures of speech and to be true to the apostle John’s thought one cannot leave the interpretation to the reader’s imagination. The locusts are superhuman inhabitants of the abyss; they are of a plutonic nature, living by

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<sup>19</sup> Uriah Smith, Daniel and the Revelation. (Nashville: Southern Publishing Association, 1985), 497.

devilish instincts and equipped with hellish powers. Arthur S. Peake states that “they are not heretics, or Goths, or Mohammedans, or the mendicant orders, or the Jesuits, or Protestants, or Saracens or Turks, but they are uncanny denizens of the abyss . . . equipped with infernal powers”.<sup>20</sup> The fifth plague consists of a host of demonic locusts, which attack the bodies of men but do not kill them. With divine force these demons are restrained or else they would destroy all flesh. This plague constitutes the first woe, which brings the announcement of two more woes (Rev. 9:12).

### **The Sixth Trumpet – The Second Woe**

And the sixth angel sounded and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 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 (Rev. 9:13-15).

With the sounding of the sixth trumpet there is a description of disasters that brings death to a third of mankind. Four angels that were bound in the river Euphrates, which was recognized as the border where east meets west, were loosed. Ladd says that “the fact . . . that they were bound indicates that they were evil angels who could not carry out their desires until they were released.”<sup>21</sup> Walvoord believes they are unholy angels. He says “the four angels in chapter 9 . . . are described as bound at the great river Euphrates. There is no instance in Scripture where holy angels are bound.”<sup>22</sup> This second

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<sup>20</sup> Arthur S Peake, The Revelation of John. (London: Primitive Methodist Publishing House, 1985), 181.

<sup>21</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 136.

<sup>22</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 165.

woe that John describes is set in time as to a definite hour of a definite day of a definite month of a definite year.

### **The Two Hundred Million Man Army**

And the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them. And thus I saw the horses in the vision and them that set 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. 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. For their power is in their mouth, and in their rails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt (Rev. 9:16-19).

Some hold that the army should not be taken literally, because its number is so vast. Johnson quotes General Harrison who says, “The actual raising and transporting of an army of the size spoken of in v. 16 completely transcends human capability.”<sup>23</sup>

Considering China’s capability today, however, it is not impossible to produce a military force of such magnitude. Walvoord, who believes this army is a literal force says:

“Considering the millions of people in the Orient, the literal interpretation is not impossible . . .”<sup>24</sup> This army may have a connection with the invasion depicted in the pouring out of the sixth vial (Rev. 16:12-14). Even though there is no direct statement as to the origin of this army, the fact that the angels were bound in the Euphrates river, implies that the army may come from the East. Walvoord says, “Unless the vials and the trumpets coincide as some believe, these are two different events, possibly two different phases of the same operation. Chronologically the trumpets involved closely succeed one

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<sup>23</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 494

<sup>24</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 166.

another and their judgments seem to fall like trip-hammer blows as the great tribulation comes to a close.<sup>25</sup>

When General Custer led the seventh cavalry against the Sioux, at the battle of Little Big Horn, the horses they used were literal horseflesh. In November 1965, when General Hal Moore led the seventh cavalry into battle against the Peoples Army of North Vietnam, the horses they used were helicopters. Many believe that John is describing modern day warfare in Rev. 9:16-19. Walvoord interprets John's description as "a scene in which modern warfare is under way."<sup>26</sup>

There are some however, that do not accept this army as an actual human army. Nor do they accept the size as an actual count of 200 million. They believe that it is a demonic host. Ladd says that "the size of this demonic host is inconceivable . . . They could not be counted Johnson states that "it seems better to understand the vast numbers and description of the horses as indicating demonic hordes. . . . The emphasis . . . is on their fully demonic character . . . showing no mercy to man, woman, or child."<sup>27</sup>

Whether the army is held to be demonic or human, or the size of the army is held to be the literal number mentioned, will not change the devastation the earth will face, even to the slaying of a third of mankind. It will be catastrophic. It is probable that this army will be engaged in battles until the second coming of Christ. The fifth and sixth trumpets bringing these two great woes during the second half of the seventieth week

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<sup>25</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 166.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 167.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor's Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 494

demonstrate the horrific period known as the great tribulation. In light of the magnitude of these two woes, no one would survive without God's divine intervention.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE MEASURING OF THE TEMPLE AND THE TWO WITNESSES IN THEIR RELATION TO THE SEVENTIETH WEEK OF DANIEL

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. 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. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth (Rev. 11:1-3).

#### **The Measuring of The Temple and The Two Witnesses**

The method of interpretation in Revelation chapter eleven is critical to one's understanding of the great tribulation. When considering the time periods of forty-two months or twelve hundred and sixty days or three and one half years, one should realize that the periods are doubtless of the same length. The concern is whether these periods should be taken as identical periods. Those of the Consecutive Historical School, who allegorizes the forty-two months date the "times of the Gentiles" from the Babylonian exile or from the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, and continue the period down to the Second Coming of Christ. Their position is that each day represents a year and therefore 1260 days become 1260 years. The historical school, however, is not able to agree on the commencement of the 1260 years, the times ranging from A.D. 1, A.D. 455, A.D.533, A.D. 576, A.D. 606, and finally A.D. 608. The problem with allegorical exegesis is clearly seen in the different starting points for the 1260 years. The interpreter has moved away from the normal meaning of the days to the opinion of the expositor. The interpreter should always consider the literal meaning of a prophetic Scripture first, as his

controlling guide; for the literal sense is the foundation of interpretation of most passages of Scripture. It is the only way for an interpreter to look at the matter realistically and not just be using his imagination. Biederwolf holds to this philosophy when he says that 11:1-3 “is to be interpreted literally and that it refers to the last half of the seventieth week, the days of the Antichrist.”<sup>1</sup>

Biederwolf’s view follows the context; it refers to the great tribulation when the Gentiles shall tread under their feet the holy city forty-two months. Grammatical historical exegesis is to regard the terms of this passage as normal. To allegorize or change the meaning is to destroy the meaning of the passage. For instance, the great city is identified as the actual city of Jerusalem. The time periods are literal time periods. The two witnesses are two distinct individuals. God’s two observers, who prophesy twelve hundred and sixty days, are of consequential importance during the great tribulation.

Then there are those who would change the date of the writing of Revelation to A.D. 64 in order to place the writing before the destruction of Jerusalem. Changing the date allows them to believe that John was instructed to measure a temple that was still in existence in his day. That would enable them to view the prophecies of Revelation as contemporary to John’s day; they could then date the prophecies from the Babylonian captivity or the destruction of the Temple by Titus in A.D. 70. The best evidence as to the date of the Revelation, according to Johnson, “rests primarily on the early witness of Irenaeus (185) who stated that the apostle John ‘saw the revelation . . . at the close of

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<sup>1</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 611.



Domitian's reign' (A.D. 81-96). (Contra Haerases 5.30.3; ANF, 1:559-60)."<sup>2</sup> Most date the writing of Revelation around A.D. 95-96 long after the destruction of the Temple.

The late date of Revelation is good evidence that John saw a future Temple that would be rebuilt. There are several passages of Scripture that suggests the Temple would be in the end time. In the Olivet discourse (Mt. 24:15), Jesus refers to the "abomination of desolation" that Daniel had prophesied would take place in the Temple during the middle of the seventieth week. The apostle Paul alludes to this abomination of the Antichrist when he wrote: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God shewing himself that he is God" (II Thess. 2:3-4). Since this abomination did not occur before the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, the temple must be rebuilt in the time of the Antichrist.

It is during this "abomination of desolation" that begins in the middle of the seventieth week and continues through the three and one half years of the great tribulation that the two witnesses of God prophesy with great power. There are some who would place the two witnesses in the first half of the week, however, Walvoord makes an observation that implies that their ministry is in the last half of the Week. He says that "From the fact . . . that the two witnesses pour out divine judgments upon the earth and need divine protection lest they be killed, it implies that they are in the latter half of the seven years when awful persecution will afflict the people of God, as this

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<sup>2</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor's Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 406.

protection would not be necessary in the first three and one-half years.”<sup>3</sup> There is another indication that the witnesses prophesy in the last half of the Week. Their prophesying occurs during the first two woes (fifth and sixth trumpets), which happens in the great tribulation.

### **The Identity of The Two Witnesses**

There has been a variety of suggestions as to the identity of the two witnesses. Some propose that they are Elijah and Enoch, while others say they are Elijah and John the Baptist, or Elijah and Moses. Biederwolf says, “The early Church almost universally believed in the literal fulfillment of this prophecy . . . They all accepted Elijah as one of the witnesses, and most thought the other to be Enoch.”<sup>4</sup> The only person listed among the witnesses that is prophesied to return before the day of the Lord is Elijah. Malachi prophesied of the coming of Elijah when he wrote: “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Mal. 4:5). Jesus taught that Elijah would come (Mt. 17:11).

There are two reasons that some believe that Enoch is one of the witnesses. First, Enoch did not die. Those that use this reason cite Hebrews 9:27, which states, “It is appointed unto men once to die.” Two, Enoch prophesied that “the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all” (Jude 14-15). Walvoord adds strong evidence that the argument – that because Enoch did not die, he is one of the witnesses – is invalid when he observes, “that the entire living church at the time of the

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<sup>3</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 178.

<sup>4</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 613.

rapture will go to heaven without dying.”<sup>5</sup> Biederwolf adds to the argument by saying, “the deeds of the two witnesses seem to link them more closely with Moses and Elijah than with Enoch and Elijah.”<sup>6</sup> Another reason Enoch may not be one of the witnesses is the fact that he was not Jewish and had nothing to do with Israel. He lived hundreds of years before Abraham and was never identified with the nation of Israel. If not Enoch, then could Moses be one of the two witnesses? He certainly was Jewish and he was endowed with supernatural power to inflict judgment, namely turning water into blood, and smiting the earth with plagues (Ex. 7-11). Moses was with Jesus and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-4) talking about the Lord’s death. The argument against Moses being one of the witnesses is that he has already died once, which raises the question, can he die again? It might be well to remember that Lazarus died and was raised and died again (Jo. 11:14, 38-44). From a pure reasoning standpoint, the arguments, for Moses and Elijah being the two witnesses, seem to far outweigh the arguments for Enoch being one of the two witnesses.

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<sup>5</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 179.

<sup>6</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 613.

### **The Work and Power of the Two Witnesses**

And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire shall proceed out of their mouth, and devour their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 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 (Rev. 11:3-6).

No matter how much persecution God's people are experiencing, no matter how many of His saints are being martyred, God will not abandon His testimony to the earth. He places two witnesses on the earth to prophecy the word of God to the whole world. The description of these two witnesses and the location of their ministry (Jerusalem) however, seems to indicate that they are sent to testify to Israel that Jesus is the Messiah. It is evident that they are proclaiming Jesus as the Christ by the phrase that is used in verse 8 (where their Lord was crucified). The sin of Israel as a nation was in its rejecting Jesus as Messiah; that fact is now being broadcast from Jerusalem to the whole world. The mention of the two olive trees and the two candlesticks indicates that these two witnesses receive their power from God's Spirit, for they "are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zech. 4:2-6).

No one can harm these two witnesses throughout their 1260 day ministry of the great tribulation. Anyone attempting to annihilate them during this period will be destroyed.

### The Death of The Two Witnesses

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. 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. 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 out in graves. 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 (Rev. 11:7-10).

After the forty-two months of the great tribulation, their ministry is over and God permits the beast to kill them. This is the first reference to the “beast.” Only one other reference is the beast described as ascending from the “Abyss” (17:8). He literally (*polemon*) makes war with the two witnesses. This war possibly mirrors Daniel 7:21: “As I watched, this horn was waging war [polemon, LXX] against the saints and defeating them.” Most agree that the beast refers to the “man of sin,” the “Antichrist,” the “little horn;” this “little horn will be against the Most High and against the saints of the Most High. The saints will be given into the hand of the Antichrist for “a time, and times, and the dividing of time” (Dan. 7:25). Some believe that the “little horn” refers to Antiochus Epiphanes (the Seleucid king). Ladd says that the “little horn” had an initial fulfillment in Antiochus . . . but it refers ultimately to the eschatological Antichrist.”<sup>7</sup>

And they “shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified.” There are some that view the “great city” as Babylon. They say the “great city” is “a designation that refers to Babylon throughout

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<sup>7</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 156.

the rest of the book (16:19; 17:18; 18:10; 16, 18-19, 21).”<sup>8</sup> Johnson who holds this view says, “John’s use of the word “city” from the very first occurrence in 3:12, is symbolic . . . Here the “great city” is clearly more than merely Jerusalem, for John says it is figuratively called Sodom and Egypt . . . The Spiritually discerning will catch the threefold designation of this city. It is called Sodom . . . The second designation is Egypt . . . The third designation is the “great city” . . . where also their Lord was crucified.”<sup>9</sup> Johnson, then adds Rome to the list and finally concludes that John may have “at least five places all seen by John as one – Babylon, Sodom, Egypt, Jerusalem, and Rome . . . Wherever God is opposed and his servants harassed and killed, there is the great city.”<sup>10</sup>

Several questions have been raised by Johnson’s exegesis. First, to say that the “great city” in 11:8 is a reference to Babylon, because all the other references to the “great city in the rest of the book, refer to Babylon is not quite accurate. There is much speculation over the identity of the “great city” in 16:19. The views range from Rome, Babylon, and Jerusalem (see the discussion on the seventh vial). Second, He says that John’s first use of the word city in 3:12 is symbolic. In 3:12, the city refers to the “new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven.” The new Jerusalem is not a symbolic city; it is a real city built by God and placed on the new earth (Rev. 21:1-2, 10-21). Third, Johnson is correct in his observance of the city being “spiritually” call “Sodom and Egypt.” It could be that “Sodom and Egypt” means the city where the saints were martyred under the evil and oppressive authority of the Antichrist. Biederwolf says that

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<sup>8</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1985), 506.

<sup>9</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, (1985), 506.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 506.

“Sodom . . . and Egypt are not to be thought of in their individual relations . . . but together as representing entire enmity to God and his servants.”<sup>11</sup> Fourth, John says it is the city “where also our Lord was crucified,” (some of the manuscripts say “their Lord”). Those that believe the city is Babylon or Rome usually spiritualize “crucified.” The difficulty with spiritualizing “crucified,” according to Biederwolf, is “the past tense of the verb.”<sup>12</sup> The best exegesis is to take the normal meaning of the words and even Johnson says, “At first glance, it seems apparent that John is referring to the actual city of Jerusalem where Christ died. This allusion seems obvious”<sup>13</sup>

Instead of hearing the testimony of these two witnesses and repenting, the wicked will hate them and rejoice when the Antichrist kills them. The wicked will not just rejoice, but John says they will “make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth.” (Rev. 11:10).

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<sup>11</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 615.

<sup>12</sup> William E Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 615.

<sup>13</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 506.

In spite of the supernatural signs provided by these two witnesses, in spite of the devastation of the first two woes from the sounding of the fifth and sixth trumpets, the vast majority will refuse to repent. John records this spiritual condition of the world when he wrote:

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: Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts (Rev. 9:20-21).

### **The Two Witnesses Resurrected**

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. 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 (Rev. 11:11-12).

The merrymaking over the death of the witnesses is short lived because after three and a half days God raises them from the dead and fear falls on those that see it. An even greater astonishment overcomes those who witnessed it when they hear the voice from heaven saying “Come up here.” As the world watches, they ascend into heaven. There are those who do not believe that this event could be taken literally because they believe that it is impossible for the world to view a single event happening in the city of Jerusalem. Their argument however, is discredited because of satellite television.

It is important for one to note that with the completion of the 1260 days of the ministry of the two witnesses, the great tribulation is brought to an end and the third woe has not yet begun. These two prophets have completed their purpose, and the world does not repent.



### **The Announcement of The Third Woe**

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. The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly (Rev. 11:13-14).

The chronological clock is now three and one half days past the seventieth week of Daniel's Prophecy. The two witnesses have been resurrected. According to the Scriptures, a great earthquake destroys a tenth part of Jerusalem and seven thousand men are slain. Because of their fear, it is recorded that the remnant "gave glory to the God of heaven." Walvoord says that "the reference to 'the God of heaven' . . . is a familiar phrase in the Old Testament where it is used to distinguish the true God from pagan deities."<sup>14</sup> This final facet of the sixth trumpet has brought the Second Woe to an end. The coming Third Woe, which is contained in the seventh trumpet is now declared. The coming of the Lord and the end of the age is drawing near.

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<sup>14</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 183.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SEVENTH TRUMPET AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE SEVENTIETH WEEK, AND THE DAY OF THE LORD

As Jesus was praying one day, his disciples asked him to teach them to pray. His response was “When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth” (Luke. 11:2). With the sounding of the seventh trumpet God is bringing to pass His kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Just as every kingdom that has ever existed has been established by force, so the kingdom of God in earth will be established by force.

#### **The Sounding of the Seventh Trumpet**

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. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshiped God, 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. 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 (Rev. 11:15- 18).

With the sounding of the seventh trumpet, there is a great chorus of voices announcing that Christ is in control of earthly kingdoms and will take up His reign on earth forever. There is thanksgiving and worship in heaven from the twenty-four elders because God has taken His great power and reigned. The nations, on the other hand, are angry because God’s wrath has come; that God will now destroy His enemies, which are

destroying the earth. Walvoord concludes that “the wrath of men is impotent; the wrath of God is omnipotent. The wrath of men is wicked; the wrath of God is holy.”<sup>1</sup>

The seventh trumpet introduces the wrath of God (the seven vials). To understand the wrath of God in its relationship to the seventieth week, one must understand that the day of the Lord and the wrath of God are synonymous. The day of the Lord is a term referring to the consummation of God's kingdom and triumph over His foes and deliverance of His people (see chapter on day of the Lord). It begins at the second coming and will include the final judgment. Several Old Testament prophets reveal the time of the day of the Lord. Joel says: “And I will show wonders in the heavens and the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come” (Joel 2:30-31). Jesus, when explaining to His disciples the signs of His coming says the cosmic disturbances will happen “immediately after the tribulation” (Mt. 24:29ff). John says these signs appear when the sixth seal is opened (Rev. 6:12ff). In addition John says the Gentiles will tread the holy city under foot, forty-two months (time of the tribulation). One difficulty arises when commentators try to place the “wrath of God” within the three and one half years (forty-two months) of the tribulation. This great and terrible day of God's wrath (the day of the Lord) does not occur until after the two witnesses are resurrected, which occurs three and one half days after the tribulation. There is a seventy-five day time interval between the tribulation (1260 days) and the setting up of the kingdom. During this seventy-five days the seven vials are poured out. Daniel sheds light on these seventy-five days when he writes:

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<sup>1</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 185.

And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days (Dan 12:11-13).

John gives the duration of the great tribulation as 1260 days (forty-two months) Rev. 11:2-3). Jesus says the tribulation begins, in the middle of the Week, when the “daily sacrifice” is taken away (Mt.24:15, 21). Daniel, without giving any details of the tribulation, lists two time periods, 1290 days (verse 11), and 1335 days (Verse 12). When one compares Daniel’s timetable of the tribulation with John’s timetable, there seems to be a discrepancy in the number of days. A second look, however, reveals that John only deals with the tribulation itself; whereas Daniel’s timetable goes from the beginning of the tribulation to the setting up of the kingdom when he receives his inheritance (Verse 13). The angel explains to Daniel that he will rest and stand in his lot at the end of the 1335 days.

### **The Seven Last Plagues – The Day of The Lord**

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God (Rev. 15:1-2).

Chapter 15 introduces a preparatory interpretation of the seven last plagues of God. It is connected to chapter 16 which gives the details of these last seven judgments preceding the second coming of Christ. The seven seals present the chronological order of events in the book of Revelation. All the events of the seven trumpets are contained within the seventh seal, and the seventh trumpet contains the events of the seven vials.

The whole package of events forms a “dramatic crescendo” leading up to the Second coming of Christ, which follows immediately after the pouring out of the seventh vial.<sup>2</sup>

John sees the saints having harps of God, who have emerged triumphant over the beast. They stand on a sea of glass designed to reflect the glory of God. Some believe that this sea reflects the Word of God with all its promises to the saints.

### **The Song of Moses and the Song of The Lamb**

And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest (Rev. 15:3-4).

The martyred saints in chapter five that were under the altar crying out for vengeance, now can see their vengeance; they are now singing two hymns of praise, “The song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb.” Tradition holds that “the song of Moses “refers to the song sung by Moses and the Israelites, of their triumph over Pharaoh; when they crossed the Red Sea (recorded in Exodus 15).

### **The Temple in Heaven Opened**

And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with gold girdles. And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth forever and ever. And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled (Rev. 15:5-8).

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<sup>2</sup> John F Walvoord. The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 225.

The number seven in scripture shows completeness and in this instance the seven angels with the seven last plagues represent the completion of God's wrath. God is now about to reveal the details of what he introduced in the opening of the sixth seal (Rev. 6:12-17). Verse 17 expresses the summation: "For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand."

The seven vials full of the wrath of God are now given to the angels. Each angel receives a vial. Walvoord says, "The extent of the divine judgment is indicated by the word 'full' indicating the devastating character of this divine judgment."<sup>3</sup> This divine judgment comes from the heavenly temple; that is the temple not made with men's hands. The writer of Hebrews states that "Christ did not enter into the holy places made with hands . . . but into heaven itself" (Heb. 9:24). He also said that the one "who hath trodden under foot the Son of God . . . and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace" would have nothing to look forward to except "Judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries . . . Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Heb. 10: 26-30). The angels coming from the Temple in heaven demonstrate that the judgments are proceeding from a holy God whose patience has ended. The sanctuary is filled with smoke revealing the glory and power of God. It is a doomful sign for blasphemous sinners who have forsaken repentance.

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<sup>3</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 230.

### **The Seven Vials – The Wrath of God Poured Out**

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth (Rev. 16:1).

The seven angels are now commanded to pour out their vials containing the wrath of God. Some hold that the vials run parallel to the seals and the trumpets, particularly the trumpets. Walvoord observes:

The seven vials . . . have often been compared to the seven seals and to the seven trumpets, especially the latter. One form of interpretation has been to view the vials as merely an enlargement on the trumpet judgments corresponding numerically to them.<sup>4</sup>

There are many similarities between the trumpet and the vial judgments. They both deal with the earth, the sea, rivers and fountains of water, the sun, darkness, the Euphrates River, lightnings, thunders, and a great earthquake. Although similarities many times are impressive they do not demonstrate identity. Walvoord observes that “a careful study of the seven vials as compared to the seven trumpets will reveal numerous differences.”<sup>5</sup>

When Walvoord says the vial judgments are not the same and occur after the trumpet judgments, he is correct. Though many have concluded that the two series are the same, the similarities of the trumpets and the vials are clearly not identical in every detail. Johnson agrees with Walvoord, he says: “The striking parallelism between the order of these plagues (The vials) and those of the trumpets . . . may be merely literary.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 231.

<sup>5</sup> John F Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 231.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Johnson, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 549 (parentheses mine).

Many place the vial judgments in the last half of the seventieth week, placing the seals and the trumpets in the first half of the week. The difficulty with positioning the seals in the first three and a half years of the seventieth week is that Jesus places the sixth seal after the tribulation (Mt. 24:29). The same difficulty lies with placing all the trumpets in the first three and a half years, especially the fifth and sixth trumpets, which are the first two woes. The fifth trumpet occurs in the middle of the week when Satan is defeated by Michael and is cast into the earth (see chapter on trumpets).

### **The First Vial – The Grievous Sore**

And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshiped his image (Rev. 16:2).

There is a multiplicity of allegorical and historical interpretations of this first plague. Biederwolf says Elliott, Faber, Keith, Galloway, and Cuninghame explain “it to prefigure ‘that tremendous outbreak of social and moral evil of democratic fury, atheism and vice, which was speedily seen to characterize the French Revolution.’”<sup>7</sup> Gaebelein, who allegorizes the first plague, says that it is “the breaking out of the internal corruption of the world in its vile and apostate condition.”<sup>8</sup>

The literalists believe that those who had worshiped the beast and received his mark will contract a malignant sore bringing great physical affliction. Just as the enemies of Moses were affected by the boils under the sixth plague of Moses (Ex. 9:10-11), so the enemies of Christ will be struck by these painful malignant ulcers. Walvoord says, “The

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<sup>7</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 657.

<sup>8</sup> Arno C. Gabeleine, as cited by William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 657.



judgment is in the form of a physical affliction of unusual severity bringing widespread suffering.”<sup>9</sup> One action is for certain; there will be no cure or relief from these painful malignant sores, which flow from the first vial.

### **The Second Vial – The Sea became as Blood**

And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man: and every living soul died in the sea (Rev. 16:3).

The two irreconcilable methods of interpretation are clearly seen in the attempt exegete this passage on the second vial. Biederwolf says that most commentators interpret the vial judgments symbolically. They make the sea, the nations in restless state and the vial as designating the moral and spiritual death among the nations.<sup>10</sup> There are some however, who interpret the passage literally, like Ladd, who believes that “all creatures in the sea died”<sup>11</sup> and Walvoord, who believes that the sea “became blood as of a dead man, and every living soul in the sea dies.”<sup>12</sup>

Just like the skin cancers of the first vial that brings great physical affliction to those who worship the beast, the literal exegesis of the second vial, brings the maximum destruction upon the inhabitants of the sea. The analogy is to the first of Moses’ ten plagues in Egypt (Ex. 7:20-25); a plague which killed all the fish in the Nile River. Johnson says, “The second bowl turns the sea into polluted blood . . . all marine life

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<sup>9</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 232

<sup>10</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 657.

<sup>11</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 210.

<sup>12</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 233.

dies.”<sup>13</sup> A similar analogy is found in chapter eight of Revelation where God allows the plagues that occur in the first three and a half years of the seventieth week, to proceed. Jesus describes these plagues as the “beginning of sorrows” (Mt. 24:4-8). Chapter nine of Revelation describes the events of the fifth and sixth trumpets. These events result from the wrath of Satan and occur in the second three and a half years of the seventieth week (see fifth and sixth trumpets). In Revelation chapter sixteen (the tribulation is finished) the day of the Lord is depicted; Satan and Antichrist are now facing God, in His righteous indignation, and the pouring out of His wrath.

### **The Third Vial – The Fresh Water Polluted**

And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments (Rev. 16:4-7).

The fresh water supply of the earth, which is essential to human life, is polluted with blood with the pouring of the third vial just as the sea is in the second vial. There are two angels other than the angel that poured out the vial, mentioned in this passage. One is described as the “angel of the waters” who declares the righteousness and justification of God for this curse upon the rivers and fountains of waters. The angel announces that it is because men have shed the blood of saints. As John is viewing the judgment of God from heaven so are the saints whose blood was shed. The other angel is

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Johnson The Expositor’s Bible Commentary. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1985), 494

heard speaking out of the altar declaring that judgments of the Lord God Almighty are true and righteous.

### **The Fourth Vial – The Heat Wave From The Sun**

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues: and they repented not to give him glory (Rev 16: 8-9).

The method of interpretation comes into play again here as Gaebelein chooses to allegorize the passage, making the sun, the Roman empire. Biederwolf comments, “So far as the grammar goes it could be either ‘unto it’ or ‘unto him’, but the sense of the passage refers it to the sun . . . While some take the sun literally, Gaebelein prefers the symbolical meaning, the government ruling them, i.e. the Roman empire.”<sup>14</sup>

The plague of the fourth trumpet affected a third part of the sun, moon, and stars, resulting in a third part of the day and night being darkened. The judgment from the pouring out of the forth vial however, increased only the intensity of the sun’s heat resulting in a torturous heat upon the men of the earth. In spite of this great curse, which is the half way point of the vials, it is recorded that they repented not. Joel says that in this “great and terrible day of the Lord . . . whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered” (Joel 2:31-32).

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<sup>14</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 658.

### **The Fifth Vial – The Beast’s Kingdom Plunged into Darkness**

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds (Rev. 16:10-11).

The pouring out of the fifth vial brings darkness and pain to the kingdom of the beast. Ladd says that “this plague is poured out directly upon the center of the beast’s power,”<sup>15</sup> indicating that this wrath is directed toward the demonic civilization of the Antichrist. In their suffering the men under this curse gnaw their tongues because of the pain. Walvoord says it is “a description of severe agony. . . . The sores inflicted in the first vial were, in this judgment, aggravated and increased.”<sup>16</sup> Still, in all this turmoil and pain, it is recorded that they blasphemed God and would not repent.

The details of the day of the Lord expressed in the vials throw light on the Old Testament prophets as they gave their descriptions of this great day of Wrath. Joel said it would be “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Joel 2:2). Amos said: “Shall not the day of the Lord be darkness, and not light? Even very dark, and no brightness in it” (Amos 5:20)? Zephaniah said the day of the Lord “is a day wrath, . . . a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness” (Zeph. 1:15). This is a day that Amos said “Woe” to those that desire it (Amos 5:18).

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<sup>15</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 212.

<sup>16</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 235.

### **The Sixth Vial – The Euphrates River dried up**

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. And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon (Rev. 16:12-16).

It seems that what began with the sounding of the sixth trumpet will now extend across the Euphrates into the Middle East. The sounding of the sixth trumpet loosed four fallen angels from the river Euphrates, in order that they might gather from the eastern nations, a two hundred million man army. The pouring out of the sixth vial is directed at drying up the Euphrates river allowing the kings of the east access from the East to the West. Phillips makes an interesting observation when he writes:

The nightmare that has haunted world leaders for generations becomes a reality. The industrial might of Japan is wedded to the manpower and nuclear know-how of China and to all the manpower of the East. The way of the kings of the East is prepared, and at long last the awakened millions of Asia see their way clear to avenge themselves on the hated powers of the West.<sup>17</sup>

The Euphrates River is the boundary between East and West in the ancient world. It is also prominent in Scripture, in that it is the eastern boundary that God promised to Abraham and his decedents, whereas the western boundary was the river of Egypt (the Nile river) (Gen. 15:18; Deut11:24). In its history, the range of Israel's boundaries have never extended from the Nile to the Euphrates Rivers. The closest the boundaries have ever come to these two points was under Solomon's rule, when they were from Gaza on

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<sup>17</sup> John Phillips, Exploring Revelation. (Neptune: Loizeaux Brothers, 1991), 195.

the west to the Euphrates River on the east. The fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham concerning the boundaries will not exist until the millennial reign of Christ.

The seventh trumpet, which introduces the pouring out of the seven vials, displays the wrath of God during the "great and terrible day of the Lord." The drying up of the Euphrates River will allow the nations of the East to crossover and join with other nations of the world for the final assault on Jerusalem, where God will take His kingdom by force. Zechariah says that God "will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle" (Zech. 14:2a). Pentecost says that this great battle of God "is not an isolated battle, but rather a campaign" that "would culminate in the gathering at Armageddon."<sup>18</sup> Walvoord says the word "battle . . . is probably better translated 'War' in contrast to . . . battle."<sup>19</sup>

The three unclean spirits that proceed from the mouth of the Dragon, the beast, and the false prophet do not infer that this is not God's wrath. God uses these demons to gather the kings of world that He might destroy them and their armies at Armageddon. There are those of the postmillennial and the historical views, who have tried to identify the kings of the East. Walvoord says they have advanced "as many as fifty different interpretations . . . and the very number of these interpretations is their refutation."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1958), 5.

<sup>19</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 237.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 235.

### **The Seventh Vial – It is Done**

And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great (Rev. 16:17-21).

The seventh vial is poured out into the air. Nothing is said to explain why it is poured into the air; however, Walvoord suggests the speculation is that “Satan as the prince of the power of the air has already been cast . . .out of the third heaven” . . .and that even though he no longer has access to God, he still has “great power in the atmospheric heavens.”<sup>21</sup> The seventh vial being poured out in the air results in the great violence of the final judgment from God. The great voice crying from the temple, “It is done” attests to the fact that the eschatological wrath of God is completed.

The sound of voices, peals of thunder, flashes of lightning, are mentioned three other times (4:5; 8:5; 11:19). The phrase, “great earthquake,” is mentioned two other times, the seventh seal (8:5), and the seventh trumpet (11:19). According to Ladd, in every case, these are “common manifestations of divine power and glory.”<sup>22</sup> The voices, peals of thunders, and flashes of lightning are the preface to the earthquake, which is the announcement of God’s Judgment. There has never been an earthquake like this since man existed on the earth.

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<sup>21</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 240.

<sup>22</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 217.

With this great earthquake, “every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (verse 20), changing the topography of the whole world. The word means a violent shaking of the earth. Walvoord says, “The earth literally convulses as the times of the Gentiles come to an end.”<sup>23</sup> Isaiah prophesied about this kind of shaking during the day of the Lord when he wrote: And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the Lord, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth (Isa. 2:19). In addition, John spoke about this shaking of the earth when he wrote that “every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains” (Rev. 6: 14b-15).

Verse 19 asserts that “the great city” was divided into three parts and all other cities of the world fell. There has been speculation as to the identity of the great city. Some hold the view that it is Rome, believing Rome to be the great heathen metropolis, while others believe that it is Babylon, because Babylon is explicitly mentioned later in the verse. Still, others understand the great city to be Jerusalem. Ladd says that it cannot be Jerusalem because “Jerusalem has already been overthrown in a great earthquake (11:13).”<sup>24</sup> Actually, in 11:13, Jerusalem was not destroyed; only one tenth of the city fell. Nine tenths of the city is left to be divided into three parts. Some hold that the “three parts” should be taken symbolically to mean that the city was totally reduced to a ruinous state. It is feasible however, that chasms in the earth divided the city into three

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<sup>23</sup> John F. Walvoord, The Revelation of Jesus Christ. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 240.

<sup>24</sup> George Eldon Ladd, A Commentary on the Revelation of John. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 218.



parts. This seventh vial occurs just prior to the Lord's return. It is possible that this great earthquake may occur at the Lord's return, at the very moment Christ sets His foot down on the mount of Olives (Zech. 14:4), causing it to split in two, producing one of the three chasms.

It is conjecture to ascertain which city is meant. The best supposition however, favors Jerusalem because it would be pointless to mention Babylon twice in one verse. Additionally, the identical expression, "the great city," is used of Jerusalem in 11:8. It should also be remembered that at this time in history, Jerusalem is under the control of the Antichrist. Babylon however, did come into God's remembrance to be destroyed. Whether Babylon should be taken symbolically, referring to Rome or, as some believe, Babylon is a city to be rebuilt on the Euphrates River does not change the consequence. Babylon will face the fierceness of God's wrath.

The last action taken from this judgment was the great hail that fell upon men from heaven, each stone weighing about a talent. Biederwolf states that "the weight of a talent is "ninety-six pounds Hebrew; . . . sixty times heavier than known before."<sup>25</sup> There are those however, who claim the hail is only symbolic; that it is only a frightful image to denote the terrible destruction that is to come upon Babylon. Biederwolf quotes Ebrard as saying that "we are assuredly not to imagine that actual, natural hail is meant."<sup>26</sup>

The position of this thesis is to show that grammatical-historical exegesis can be used to interpret prophetic literature and that one should interpret prophecy literally unless the implicit or explicit teaching of the New Testament suggests typological

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<sup>25</sup> William E. Biederwolf, The Second Coming Bible. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972), 664.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 664.

interpretation. There is considerable reason to question those who have taken the position that the hailstones are not literal. They have not given justifiable evidence for their position. There is no reason for not taking the hail literally, along with all the other seven vials of wrath that God is going to pour out upon the earth.

## AUTHOR NOTE

In studying the two basic methods of interpretation by theologians, one realizes that these methods are irreconcilable and that they have produced variant eschatological positions. The author has attempted to show that grammatical-historical principles of hermeneutics are the only sensible methods to be used to comprehend the Scriptures. An effort has been made to show the relationship of the day of the Lord with the sixth seal, the seventh trumpet and the seven vials. The effort has also been made to present the chronological order of the events of the seals, the trumpets, and the vials in their relationship to the seventieth week of Daniel's prophecy, comparing that chronology with the chronology that Jesus lays down in the Olivet discourse. The success of that effort lies in the mind of the reader and how devoted he is to the principles of grammatical-historical interpretation and how accurately he follows those exegetical principles.

## APPENDIX A

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