

Revelation Unleashed

Re-Discovering the Blessed Hope

by

Craig A. Opal

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FORWARD

Here is a well written book that doesn't degenerate from the scriptures. Although the book of Revelation can cause some disagreements in interpretation, Craig maintains a literal interpretation that purports the imminent return of our Lord and Savior. This author leaves the reader with the sobering thought of "You better be ready."

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Thank you, Marisa, my excellent wife, for your love and continuous support. Your very helpful edit and organization work is appreciated beyond words. I love you.

Thank you, mom and dad, for your love, prayers and spiritual guidance throughout the years. Thank you for your Godly example to our whole family. Our Blessed Hope is soon!

I dedicate this book to my dear family and friends. My prayer is that you all make it to Heaven and that none of you will be left behind when the Rapture takes place. I love you all. Let's be ready.

I especially thank you, my Lord and Savior, Jesus for all you have done in my life. Without your love, grace, and mercy, where would I be? I dedicate this book to your glory and to your soon return.

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PREFACE

What is Happening Today?

Have you wondered what is going on in the world today? You can't deny that things are getting worse every year. People from all over the world have noticed the increase in wars, crime, cruelty, uprisings, extreme weather and earthquakes. The Bible says that in the end days people's hearts will fail them for what is happening in the world.

Of course, occurrences like these have been happening for many centuries and are the very signs that Jesus said would be happening before he returns. The conditions in the world will get progressively worse not better. Not one politician or leader can stop it or influence a change to reverse the inevitable.

Jesus also told us that the signs before he returns would increase, multiply and converge together in the same way that a woman experiences birth pains. It was one hundred years ago, that we saw a dramatic rise in wars that have continued to rise decade after decade. However, since the year 2000, there has been another steep increase in all these signs as never seen before.

The fig tree and all the others are ripening as described by Jesus in Luke 21:29. He said we will know his return is near when we see all these signs converging together and with increase. And the generation who sees this going on will also be around to see the end of all things.

Should we live in fear and anxiety? If we are ready in the way Jesus instructs the churches in Revelation, then we should rejoice in the blessed hope of his return. All this trouble in the world just means he is coming soon as he said he would. His word is reliable and true.

What Are We Looking For?

There will not be just one particular sign that will signal his soon return. Instead, we will see many signs, and we will see them

occurring in the world together, with increase and intensity. The world today is looking for the Antichrist, or some other one obvious sign as they seek to project when the world will end, or begin to end.

Many in the church are also looking for the Antichrist or a similar sign as it tries to determine when Jesus will come to rapture it. However, if there was just one obvious sign to look for, then Jesus could not come with the surprise of a thief as the scriptures teach.

This is why Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:36 that no one knows, or will ever know, the exact day or hour of his return. However, as he says in Matthew 24:33, we can know when his return is near. “*So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.*” Matt 24:33 (KJV) We must simply look for **Jesus** and recognize the signs of the times as he told us to do.

Confronting End-Times Misconceptions

Revelation Unleashed will confront traditional teachings on Jesus’ Second Coming with fresh insight. Our approach will be to look at what the Bible says on its own in order to dispel some common misconceptions and errors that have become confused with biblical truth.

Consensus of men has fallen short, because where there is one group of consensus, another comes along to disagree. So we will go straight to the Bible for a “consensus of one”- the scriptures themselves.

Revelation Unleashed will bring you through the book of Revelation with a literal interpretation of the scriptures. Over 300 previous prophecies regarding Jesus’ first coming came true literally as were prophesied. We can fully expect, therefore, that all prophecy regarding his Second Coming will be fulfilled literally as well.

If we take the literal approach, there will be less opinion and less disagreement, as the words of scripture will speak and teach for themselves.

Revelation Unleashed will match other prophetic scriptures into Revelation which will give you a fuller description of the end-time events and their proper order.

We cannot find the order of the end-time events by reading prophetic books, such as, Isaiah, Ezekiel or Daniel, by themselves. It can't be done. Instead, each one was only meant to be a complement to Revelation, not the other way around.

Trying to find order from these books is one reason we have misconceptions regarding the overall order of end-time events. The order of events is already sequentially listed in Revelation starting at the First Seal.

Re-Discovering the Blessed Hope

Does the last Great Tribulation begin at the First Seal of Revelation as we have been taught? What if the First Seal is already open? Perhaps prophecy has been fulfilled deeper into Revelation than we have realized.

In *Revelation Unleashed*, we will discuss why the first five Seals are open *now* and have been for some time. We will see that the evidences in the Seals correspond to the signs that Jesus said would be occurring before his return. We clearly can see these signs are happening today, if we care to recognize them.

What about the Rapture? Does the Rapture, or the *Blessed Hope*, really have to happen before the First Seal is opened, or can it occur sometime after it is opened? What if the Rapture and the Great Tribulation actually commence within seconds of each other at the Sixth Seal?

While it is true that the Rapture will come upon us with the surprise of a thief, it will not be a secret at all. Instead, it will be one of the most public events in world history. The entire earth will mourn at his appearing when they see him in the air as he collects the ones who remained ready.

We will see that the Rapture happens at the Sixth Seal and **still remains a Pre-Tribulation event**. *Revelation Unleashed* will present proof directly from the book of Revelation along with scriptures from Matthew, and others, that the Rapture happens at the Sixth Seal, or perhaps just seconds before the first day of God's wrath begins.

Why This Book, Why Now?

It matters what the Bible truly says about prophecy or any other teaching. For years, I vacillated back and forth between a variety of opinions on the Rapture and other doctrines. I lived my life one foot in the world and one foot in the church, and was happy to believe whatever justified the way I was living.

When I came back to the Lord fully in 2006, I went to the scriptures to find out, once and for all, the truth, and as a result, found what I had missed and where I had been wrong.

At that time, I also heard the late David Wilkerson, who was a respected modern-day prophet, give a prophetic word based on a vision God gave him. I will never forget it. In fact, it was this prophecy that inspired my study of the Book of Revelation and which brought about the writing of this book.

Wilkerson said: ***“AN EARTH-SHATTERING CALAMITY IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. IT IS GOING TO BE SO FRIGHTENING; WE ARE ALL GOING TO TREMBLE. EVEN THE GODLIEST AMONG US.”***

Included in this prophecy was a description of fires and riots that Wilkerson said would engulf the entire planet. Very intrigued, I went to the Bible to see if this prophecy coincided with any scripture and found a match for it at the Sixth Seal of Revelation.

At that time, however, I thought the Sixth Seal would happen far off in the middle of the Tribulation period, not realizing it to be the next major biblical event to take place.

Some may say I am merely on a “soap box” when I talk about what God has put on my heart, but I truly believe this message goes beyond myself and reflects an urgent message God wants people to know.

The Bible says many, even those in the church, will be caught off guard at Jesus’ return. Along with the world, half of the church will be asleep. Satan, as we know, prowls about as a lion that seeks to devour, steal, kill and destroy. **He is seeking in these last days to steal even our preparedness and our urgency to witness to a lost world.**

Being prepared for the return of Jesus is the single most important matter in the life of a real Christian. While some set dates, others, even in the church, scoff and say, “*Where is the promise of his coming?*”

As Christians, we need to realize how close we are to the return of Jesus. We are not waiting for a long list of things to happen. We are not waiting for the Antichrist or the Mark of the Beast. Everything that needs to happen before Jesus returns is in place and happening today. The hope of his return is the next thing to take place and can happen any day.

Now is the time, as never before, for you to get into the book of Revelation and read firsthand what it truly says about the end days. It’s not hard to understand as we’ve been made to think. Please open your Bible as you read here with us. God Bless You.

Craig A. Opal

INTRODUCTION

Biblical Prophecy

An eagle soaring through the heavens cries out: “*Trouble! Trouble! Trouble for those who live on the earth because of the remaining sounds of the trumpets that the other three angels are about to blow!*” Rev 8:13

Talking eagles, a white robed army riding on white horses, prophets who shoot flames from their mouths while summoning plagues to the earth, and demonic locust tormenting people for five months, makes the book of Revelation sound almost “wizard-like.” Although the events described by John the Revelator may sound similar to those described in fantasy classics like the *Chronicles of Narnia* or *Lord of the Rings*, all Bible prophecy is true and will happen exactly as it says it will.

Hundreds of prophecies found in the Bible have already been fulfilled to the letter, some before our own eyes. However, most Christians have been reluctant to read the book of Revelation or other prophetic books in the Bible. With so many conflicting teachings on prophecy today, it is not surprising why some of us have put our hands up in surrender and stay away from these portions of God’s word.

A very popular misconception is that prophecy is only symbolic and difficult to understand. In fact, you may often hear people promote the philosophy: “*Christians win in the end, amen,*” saying this is all we need to know about prophecy. “*After all,*” they say, “*unless you are a theologian, you can’t really know what Revelation is saying.*” But this perspective is not biblical.

We need to find out what scripture says for ourselves, otherwise we leave it up to others to teach us what they say the Bible says, and what they say is important to study. For the most part, biblical teachings on the basics of prophecy are not properly taught

today. The mainstream approach has become to teach only “practical” or “relevant” topics that will apply to our everyday life, as they say.

We hope and pray that the church world-wide will realize that the Bible’s prophetic books do indeed contain very practical and relevant topics for our lives today and for our future readiness when the Lord returns.

The Return of Jesus

Revelation Unleashed will help you rediscover this teaching about the Lord’s return, also called, “the Blessed Hope.” We will look closely at this event where Jesus removes or “raptures” his ready followers.

We will see that the letters to the churches in Revelation are not just to a people long ago, but are especially for the church today, and anyone who will listen. We will discuss the important message from Jesus to the church which is: *“I am coming soon for those who are ready.”*

He is coming for a ready and spotless bride first, but will also hold out mercy for more to be saved later on during the Tribulation period as well.

We pray the insights here will be a wake-up call for some. For others, it may provide more excitement as we present even more solid reasons that Jesus is indeed returning for us soon and before his concentrated wrath on earth begins.

For years, there have been holes in the pre-Tribulation camp’s doctrine for a pre-wrath Rapture, which left us unable to give an answer to some in the mid and post positions. This book will show stronger scriptural proof, for a pre-Tribulation Rapture of the church than we ever had.

This is not a book about who the Antichrist might be. Instead, we will focus on what Jesus said would be important. It is important for us to be watching for the signs he said would precede his return.

The Bible says none can know the day or the hour, but Jesus also said in Matthew 24:33, that we could know when he was “*even at the doorstep.*” These signs are happening today in increasing numbers as never before.

The “birth pangs,” as Jesus called them, are getting closer and closer together, because something new is about to be born. We should look for him on a daily basis and expect he will return for us, as did the early church. They knew they were not to identify the Antichrist. The early church was given one message and it is ours today: Be ready for the Lord’s soon return. Those left behind at the Rapture will know who the Antichrist is soon enough.

As we go through the book of Revelation, chapter by chapter, we will see the loving nature of God as he waits for those he left behind to repent and worship him. You may have heard that there is no hope for those who miss the Rapture, but there is. Those left behind will still have a chance to be saved, but only if they endure to the end through much pain and suffering and finally through martyrdom.

The End from the Beginning

Prophecy gives us hope in a world where there is little to find. *Revelation Unleashed* will also help you rediscover another blessed hope- the promise of Heaven. Prophecy is not only about doom and gloom, but also describes the exciting future of God’s faithful. Jesus said he was going to prepare a place for those who love him. It will be a place of mansions, many rooms and much more.

Heaven will be a real, three-dimensional place where we will live at the end of time and for eternity. This current world is not our home. We are aliens not wanted by this world, its system or its spirit.

Let's think about the possibilities of Heaven for a moment:

...Try to imagine a city and a land so beautiful, that its gates are made from gigantic pearls taller than men. Streets, not just of gold, but so pure is this gold, that they, as well as the rest of the golden city, look like transparent glass. Each base of the city walls are beautifully adorned with every type of precious jewel. Mansions, spires and other unique structures, as far as the eye can see, dot the perfectly groomed landscape. All inhabitants of this happy place dwell in them, and not just their leaders. Incredible Eden-like, perfect gardens, sparkling fountains and other architectural wonders of all shapes and sizes line perfect walkways that lead from one thing of beauty to another.

New streams, rivers, lakes and ponds lead to more new seas and oceans. Each are perfectly crystal clear and are fed from the famed "River of Life," flowing directly from the throne of God down the middle of the transparent golden city. "Trees of Life" also line the river and continually bear fruit. All of these created things and everything in this land, including the inhabitants cry: *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lamb and to the one who sits on the throne who made all things."* Echoes of praise rise up from everyone and everything, not only because of the splendor of this magnificent creation, but also because of what Jesus did to allow them to access this amazing eternity. There is no piece of real estate here on earth that compares. Nothing here on earth today comes remotely close to the glory of even the least in Heaven.

The New Jerusalem is gigantic. It's as tall as it is wide. Revelation says it is 12,000 stadia tall, wide and deep. A stadia is just over one tenth of a mile, so this city is approximately 1,400 miles high and 1,400 miles wide and its length is the same as well. It's a perfect cube.

To put this in perspective, imagine a city from Boston, MA, to St. Paul, MN, then from there down to Texas. Approximately one half

the size of the United States is just the ground floor of the New Jerusalem. I say, “ground floor” because the city is also as high as it is wide. This is unfathomable, but again, imagine Earth's highest point is Mount Everest which is only 5 ½ miles high. This city's height will make Mount Everest into less than a foot hill.

Since God never wastes anything, it is very possible that its height will be filled with levels. How many levels is an unknown, but the possibilities are certainly endless with dimensions as large as these.

In fact, though it's called the “New Jerusalem,” its dimensions alone show it to be more like a new world than just a city. This city or new land is not imaginary, but very real. It will be the capital city of the New World for the holy people of God. The light of the glory of God, which is a perfect light, will illuminate this new world and there won't even be the hint of a shadow to remind anyone of the way things used to be in the old world.

Those who are invited to be in this glorious new kingdom will be like him, with new bodies that will never die or get sick. We will see his face and he will be our God and we will be his people. Everything we do in this place will be for his enjoyment which will also become ours. No more tedious, boring work or work that produces sweat or decay. Perfection will be everywhere and on everyone and everything. No more sin, no more injustice and no more pain. It will be a city and a world in which only the holy people of God and God himself will live and no one else, forevermore...

Heaven is more than a fantasy or a movie, it is a coming reality. It is hard to believe, as we go about our busy lives of planning and doing, that life on earth, as we know it, will end. We need to put our trust and hope in Jesus more and more, especially in these last days. We are closer now to Heaven than we ever have been.

Our Hope is Close

And just like Heaven, Jesus' return is more imminent now than ever as well. He could come at any moment to steal away his ready followers at the Rapture before the final wrath of the Great Tribulation begins. According to scripture, the last Great Tribulation can't begin until the Rapture event occurs first.

Many around the world interested in the end-times also believe we are in the last-of-the-last days. Thousands of these have visited our website, www.realchristian.net. The way they find our site is interesting and reflects the reality of our world. Clearly, growing numbers of people have begun to notice the signs of the times.

The most popular search term which directs them to the site refers to the signs of the Revelatory Seals. They ask, "*How many Revelatory Seals have been broken?*" Why are they asking questions like these? It's because they can see for themselves the evidences of the first five Seals going on all around them. We believe, along with an increasing number of people, that we are not waiting on the first five Seals to be broken because the evidences of these Seals have been witnessed for a very long time.

The signs that Jesus spoke of in Luke 21 and Matthew 24 are the same happenings described in the first five Seals and are exactly what we see going on today. More importantly, since the year 2000, these signs have been on the increase, in intensity, frequency and convergence. After all, Jesus did say that the signs before his return would increase like birth pangs.

We are now deep into the birth pangs phase. Soon, the rest of the events listed in Revelation will be unleashed onto the world. As for the Seals, only the evidences of the Sixth Seal have yet to be seen. We know this for sure because the evidences of the Sixth Seal are very specific and dramatic. When these events actually do take place, the earth will radically change at once. We also will see that the Sixth Seal

describes *the first day* of God's wrath which *begins* the seven year, Great Tribulation period. There will be no mistaking it. Life on earth will never be the same again after the Sixth Seal is broken.

Jesus said He would come at a time when most would not expect him. They won't expect him because life will be considered "normal" when he returns as Luke 17:26 describes. We, in the church, however, are to be looking for the signs of his coming so we will not be unprepared. The signs are those found in the first five Seals and are mirrored in Luke chapter 21, as well as, Matthew chapter 24. While the world thinks little of the **increased** hate, violence, wars, sickness, and injustice, we, who are looking for Jesus, will know these happenings are the signs of his coming. The next thing on the agenda of end-time events is the breaking of the Sixth Seal and with it, the gathering or Rapture of his ready followers into the clouds. This is our Blessed Hope.

Another New Interpretation?

You may be asking, "*Is this another new interpretation of Revelation to add to the already too many?*" The answer is, "no," though it may seem new to some. There are already far too many interpretations as it is, and this has been part of the problem. Whose interpretation do you go with? Which theologian do you believe? Would it be the one with the highest perceived education? Obviously, this can't be the way. There can be only one correct interpretation, the one which has already been stated in the Bible itself.

Revelation Unleashed is a study of Revelation that promotes what is already stated in the scriptures themselves. We will simply look at prophetic scriptures and match them to events in Revelation. Then, you will see and realize yourself how close we are to Christ's return and that the Rapture happens at the Sixth Seal. You will also discover that even at the Sixth Seal, the Rapture still remains a pre-Tribulation event

and will still come as a surprise.

This is not a new interpretation, but a fresh look at the scriptures with a literal lens instead of a “traditional thought” lens.

Holes have existed in traditional pre-Tribulation teaching, although it has always been strong in spirit. The partial problem lies in where pre-Tribbers claim the Rapture occurs in the book of Revelation, causing questions they have been unable to answer.

The Bible certainly presents us with scriptures that prove a pre-God’s wrath and a pre-Tribulation, early escape for some people. Many pre-Tribbers, including myself for a time, have given incomplete arguments to the overall debate because we only knew of some of the scripture that supports the position. We have had some scripture strengths certainly, but we need all of it.

Those who have believed in a pre-wrath Rapture should be encouraged, because there is more solid proof in scripture that we are to be gathered up *before* the Tribulation begins and before God’s wrath as well. We have only missed where it actually occurs in Revelation. We have missed where it occurs in Revelation, because it didn’t conform to preconceived ideas and opinions.

One opposition to the pre-Tribulation view is that it hasn’t been able to point to a place in scripture that shows exactly where the Rapture will occur in the line of end-time events. Because of this lack of specific scriptures, many have been swayed to believe the Rapture will happen midway through, or even at the end of the Tribulation.

However, *Revelation Unleashed* will show that there is a definite place we can point to in Revelation. We will see that the Rapture actually happens at the Sixth Seal. We are living in between the Fifth and Sixth Seals already, but at the same time, the Great “Seven Year” Tribulation has ***not yet begun.***

Why is it important to know this? Besides clarifying a theological discussion, it is important to know where we are in the line of end-times events. It is important to know we are looking for Jesus,

and to obey his warning to be ready. If we think he is coming hundreds of years from now, we may not be ready and may be caught unaware, as will most of the world.

It shouldn't matter if a writer or commentator has studied longer, or perhaps has a higher education than you. Unfortunately, it seems we have come to a place today where scripture isn't enough, and men's ideas and opinions are given more weight than scripture.

We must test what is taught by all Bible teachers with our own reading and study of the scriptures to be sure it is rightly divided. Prophecy teaching, especially in modern times, has been subject to the prophet or the teacher. This goes against scripture. Peter said, ***“Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things.”*** 2 Pet 1:20

This verse is significant because it means there can only be one interpretation of scripture, which is the literal one **and no personal interpretation is acceptable**, unless it's in line with **ALL** of scripture, not just some of it.

This does not mean some “new revelation” or truth can't come forth that was never realized or possibly was done away with for a time. If this new revelation is in line with scripture, then it is of God and ***may be needed desperately***. We have gone with consensus teachings on prophecy, yet many have unscriptural foundations. We have gone with opinions instead of solid scriptural truths. Paul said:

*“So, brothers and sisters, what should you do? When you meet together, one person has a song, and another has a teaching. **Another has a new truth from God**. Another speaks in a different language, and another person interprets that language. The purpose of all these things should be to help the church grow strong.”* 1 Cor 14:26

This gift of giving a “new truth” Paul talks of is not to replace the scriptures, but if it is a truth from God, it will line up with scripture.

This new truth or word should be something scriptural, yet something not realized or practiced by the church today as it once was. We need this spiritual gift in the church today, since humans are prone to blindness and forgetfulness in a very short amount of time.

Let's not forget that while Paul was still alive and in charge of the churches, he had to remind them about truths they had started to abandon. In fact, most of his letters (almost the entire New Testament,) were about correcting errors.

If they strayed in Paul's day, is it possible that perhaps we have done some wandering of our own almost 2000 years later? It would be reckless to think otherwise. Unfortunately, even today, some hold to the line of associational or denominational positions at the cost of true critical thinking regarding scriptural truth.

It is not about being traditional, but scriptural. If the "mainstream" tradition matches the scriptures, we should like it, if it doesn't we should hate it just as God hates sin and anything that drags us away from pure truth. Today, we are fond of diluting pure truth to tickle the ears. We need to get it right with scripture, not right with consensus. Jesus and the apostles were always about confronting the religious traditions of men to see if they lined up with scriptural truth. Usually they didn't.

Some have said, "*If a teaching is new, it can't be true,*" not realizing that the reason a teaching may sound new is because it went so long unpracticed and untaught. Just because something hasn't been talked about or practiced as much as it once was, does not mean it's new.

More important than a perception of newness, a teaching should be evaluated to see if it scriptural. If some teaching from scripture has been "mothballed" for 1900 years, then there is something missing from the "traditional" doctrines.

In the case of the reformed church movement, for example, we need to remember that the church did not start in the 16th century, but

1500 years before. The church reformers of the 16th century may not have gone far enough in reforming to the original. Did they do some good? Of course they did, but partial truth isn't good enough. We need to get it right with scripture by putting aside our denominational opinions, if necessary.

Our Biblical Approach- Literal vs. Symbolic

When we don't take the whole of Revelation literally, we end up picking and choosing where we want to be strict with scripture. This produces confusion and a myriad of interpretations. If a symbol is not explained within the passage or a connecting verse, it must be left as it is and taken literally.

This does not mean that there are no symbols in Revelation. Of course there are, but when there is a symbol, it is usually explained right in the same passage. Therefore, we must resist making our own interpretations. We need to use the interpretation that is the most literal because this is how all previous prophecy has been fulfilled already, word for word.

Also, the book of Revelation is a chronologically sound narration of events to come and should be read and interpreted in the numerical order as John presented it. Too many today take license with this set order which has only caused confusion.

Revelation is the ***final*** master plan. All previous end-time prophecies should be plugged into the text when there is matching language and description. Doing this gives us a more complete picture. Revelation provides the chronology that the other scriptures do not. For instance, Daniel's vision of events that describe the last seven years of the Great Tribulation found in Daniel, chapter 7 through chapter 12, are fulfilled in the book Revelation beginning at the Sixth Seal, not beforehand. For the most part, prophetic writings outside the book of Revelation skip around and do not present the order of end-time

events, instead just provide partial descriptions of them.

John presents a narration of events that clearly build one upon the next. The numbered Seals beginning in chapter six need to be followed sequentially in the numerical order given. The numbers were given for a common sense reason- order! There are some who take these out of order and claim that some events, which occur much later in Revelation, have already occurred, such as the seven thunders or the water turning to blood. However, when these things truly happen, none will have to guess at them, as they will be very obvious for all to see.

Finally, where there is mystery in a scripture, we accept the mystery. We will not try and jam our own interpretation or philosophy in on these scriptures. Where things are clearly stated, we will be dogmatic and very strict with the scriptures, as commanded in Revelation 22:18-19:

“I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.” (NIV)

Holy Spirit: The Reminder of Truth

We have to use common sense when it comes to scripture interpretation, along with the most important approach, the wisdom of the Holy Spirit. To attempt scripture interpretation without the Holy Spirit's help is futile. One could have education, but without the Holy Spirit's education, we have knowledge without spiritual wisdom.

*“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things **and will remind you of everything** I have said to you.” John 14:26 (NIV)*

The original followers of Jesus did not have formal education so valued today. They had much better. Although they were with Jesus for three years, they were only fully equipped after they received the infilling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Without the infilling of the Holy Spirit, they would have continued to be wandering cowards without spiritual wisdom or boldness.

*“I am writing this letter about those people **who are trying to lead you the wrong way.** Christ gave you a special gift that is still in you, **so you do not need any other teacher. His gift teaches you about everything** and it is true, not false. So continue to live in Christ, as his gift taught you.”* 1 John 2:26-27

A connecting verse in John 14:26 says: *“But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, **will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.**”* (NIV)

Luke 24:45-49 also says, *“**Then Jesus opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.** He said to them, ‘It is written that the Christ would suffer and rise from the dead on the third day and that a change of hearts and lives and forgiveness of sins would be preached in his name to all nations, starting at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. **I will send you what my Father has promised, but you must stay in Jerusalem until you have received that power from heaven.**”*

It is the Holy Spirit, also known as the gift, the anointing, the promise, the advocate, the helper and more, who is the teacher of what scripture means, not men. Can we have our own opinions and make our own statements in our own words? Yes, but we should be concerned that it matches original scripture. We personally have to rightly divide scripture. Just as important, we must investigate what others say a scripture teaches.

Above all, you must ask the Holy Spirit to help you, not the biblical commentaries- including this one! We want *Revelation*

Unleashed to encourage you to read the book of Revelation for yourself.

According to the words of John, a blessing is promised for those who read the words of Revelation and do what it says. You should read, pray and search the scriptures from your own Bible as you study the points made here.

Contradictions?

If two scriptures “appear” to contradict each other, they really don’t. God’s word is infallible. All scripture, put together, serves to form a more complete and bigger picture. Both, and all scriptures, are completely true.

Also, one scripture does not hold more weight than another. *“It’s line upon line, and precept upon precept.”* Paul told Timothy: *“**All Scripture** is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* 2 Tim 3:16-17:16

Ignoring a particular scripture because it doesn’t fit with our opinion is dangerous. Without the entire truth, we become vulnerable to false teachers. There is always someone who will try to drag you away from full truth... always.

A simple example of this is when Satan told Jesus to throw himself down from the mountain and said the angels would protect him. It was true, they would have protected Jesus, or he could have even protected himself. But Satan was trying to put God to a foolish test. So Jesus did what we should do, he used another true scripture to combat Satan’s incorrect use of scripture. Jesus told Satan that scripture also says we are not to put God to a foolish test.

When some confront us with scripture on a given subject, make sure the person quoting it has the right motives and uses all scripture that speaks to the subject at hand, not just the few verses they may like.

There are others, just like Satan, who will quote scripture while

at the same time sound spiritual. There are many teachers today who will skip over some scripture and put more attention on the few that they like. This is typical of those set on defending their ideas over scripture, as well as, the ploy of a false teacher.

We also see many more examples of supposed contradictions in the Bible, such as, John 11:28, that says we can't be snatched from Jesus hand. This scripture seems to be at odds with other passages that speak of some who have already had their names erased from the Book of Life, such as, Exodus 32:33. The fact is, both are true, not one over the other.

Some have willfully kept on sinning or returned to a lifestyle of sin and thus have put themselves on a path which could lead them to experience great loss. While others remain in Jesus' care, by living the life he commanded them to live by the Spirit's power, and so they will have eternal security.

Reading the Bible requires balance. When it comes to scripture interpretation, the strict literal interpretation is the best method. It means what it says, and says what it means, with little explanation needed from men.

Original Meaning

Occasionally, we will go back to the original Greek or Hebrew when we find something that may not agree with what men are saying. A great example of this is Revelation 7:14, which is part of the Sixth Seal, where we see a great multitude of people from all around the earth in heaven. An elder asks John who they are and where they have come from? He then answers his own question and says they have "**come out**" of the Great Tribulation.

Some have said this passage reads, they have "*come through*" the Great Tribulation, when the scriptures clearly state in every translation, from the original Greek, KJV and the NIV that they

have “come out” of it, ***not through it***.

We will find out in our study that this great multitude, referred to by the elder, have “come out” at the beginning of the Tribulation period, not the end. If you hold to the “come through” interpretation, you could be left thinking some will not be raptured until after the Great Tribulation is over.

Twisting this scripture causes events to be out of original order which then forces us to believe other things that are not true to the scriptures. This word was changed to fit a pre-conceived idea of when events should take place, instead of simply letting the Bible tell us on its own.

Is it important to distinguish the exact meaning of this word or others? Yes, extremely important. We need to take the word literally without changing its meaning, just as it was placed in the text. If we are not strict with this, it’s up to anyone’s idea.

Major Topics in *Revelation Unleashed*:

- Scriptural proof that the first five Seals have already been broken.
- Scriptural proof of a Sixth Seal, ***pre***-Tribulation Rapture AND why it is about to occur.
- Encouragement to those who are looking for the “Blessed Hope” of Jesus’ return.
- Where we are on the timeline of events as described in Revelation.
- How many professing Christians will likely miss the Rapture.
- How many Tribulation Saints will die at the hands of the Antichrist, but still be saved.
- How Israel and the Jews will be protected and saved by God himself.
- What a person must do if they miss the Rapture.

- Where America could be in end-times prophecy and what may happen to her.
- How the Antichrist is easily identified in scripture (and it's not numerically.)
- Why we are **not** to look for the Antichrist, but Jesus alone.
- What will happen the day of and the day after the Rapture.
- Who the whore, modern-day Babylon, and the revived Roman Empire could be.
- Exactly **where in Revelation's events** Jesus will steal or rapture his ready followers.
- Why there has been so much confusion regarding the book of Revelation.
- How God's mercy is seen throughout almost all of Revelation.
- The difference between Rapture and Second Coming verses and how to easily identify them.
- Misconceptions about the Rapture, the Second Coming, and other biblical topics.

A new world is about to be born, while an old world is about to die. But how close is this coming new world? Who's going? Who's staying? Why did the early church expect Jesus back then? What has to happen before the Rapture can finally take place? What if nothing needs to take place at all, except for the Rapture itself to start the beginning of the end? Could God have simply started all the end-time signs we are seeing now back in the days of the early church? We will seek to address these topics and more in *Revelation Unleashed*.

Chapter 1: How to Be Happy!

Revelation Chapter 1

“This is the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him, to show his servants what must soon happen. And Jesus sent his angel to show it to his servant John, who has told everything he has seen. It is the word of God; it is the message from Jesus Christ.” Rev 1:1-2

Holiness is Happiness

We live in a time when everyone wants to tell us how we can be happy. Unfortunately, their ideas never really deliver. Very often, we are told we can be happy if we buy a certain thing. Some may even tell us that we deserve better and that a divorce from our spouse will make us happy. We are told we can secure our happiness, if we save enough for retirement. But scripture gives us a much different formula and it's one that's actually attainable by the average person, in fact, it's attainable by anyone who really wants it.

Revelation 1:3 is an overview of Jesus' entire message, which gives this happiness formula. *“Blessed is the one who reads the words of God's message, and blessed are the people who hear this message and do what is written in it. The time is near when all this will happen.” Rev 1:3*

But what exactly is Jesus telling us to do in Revelation? I used to think that Revelation was just a book about the impending, so-called, “Apocalypse,” but in actuality, it is much more. Some say we only have to believe, but scripture tells us repeatedly, and especially here in Revelation, that belief is only part of our overall faith.

We see very plainly, here, how one can be happy or blessed, but you actually have to do something to obtain this happiness. With no action attached to belief, faith is dead. Even the demons believe and tremble, as James 2:19 tells us. Of course, we know that faith is an

important ingredient for the Christian life, because of the scriptures that proclaim it. In fact, without faith, it is impossible to please God, as it says in Hebrews 11:6.

Found throughout the entire book of Revelation is the message that faith is completed by action, which is also taught in James. We are not saved by faith alone, as James so clearly states in 2:14-26. The NIV reads: “*You see that a person is justified by what he does **and not by faith alone.**” This is not a new gospel.*

What Jesus is telling us to do in Revelation is simple. Jesus expects holiness from those who call themselves his followers, and he expects us to overcome our sin that he died to defeat.

Overcoming is only possible by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and is a task that ***we can and are expected to do***. If we do not care to listen to that still, small voice, we can be defeated. We must remember that the enemy, Satan, has come to kill, steal and destroy as John 10:10 states. If he could not do it, he would not try.

Be Alert

*“The Lord God says, I am the Alpha and the Omega. I am the One who is and was **and is coming**. I am the Almighty.” Rev 1:8*

As true followers of the Lord, we are to be watching for Jesus’ soon return and not become like the scoffers who are asking, “*Where is the promise of his coming?*” Some of these people are even in the church today. Matthew 24:48-51 describes what we see happening within parts of the Christian community today:

*“But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ and he **then begins to beat his fellow servants** and to eat and drink with drunkards. **The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of.** He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be*

weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

This is a clear picture of scoffers who will be left behind, some of whom will later be thrown into the Lake of Fire. If we are alert, we will find the extremely important words of life throughout the book of Revelation. Being aloof or indifferent to its message can quickly transform us into likeness of the Laodicean church. Jesus had no compliments for this church and was quite disgusted with it 2000 years ago, as he still is today.

Not all Future

Jesus said to John regarding this revelation, *“Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” Rev 1:19*

We must realize that Revelation is not all future. This scripture simply means, not all of Revelation was to be a list of future events. Some were for John's day, such as the Revelatory letters to the churches and some of the Seals, as we will see. The rest would be future events not to be seen in his day.

In fact, the evidences of most of the Seals in Revelation have been felt for the last 2000 years, but even more so today. They did not, and will not just get opened and shut immediately, but will be long lasting in their effects. We will see more detail on this when we come to them in chapter four of *Revelation Unleashed*.

Every Eye Will See Him

*“Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and **all peoples on earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.**” Rev.1:7 (NIV)*

Revelation 1:7 is the first verse in Revelation which describes partially the Rapture event to be fulfilled later at the Sixth Seal. We know this because the language of this verse, *“all peoples will mourn,”*

matches what occurs at the Sixth Seal where everyone is crying out and mourning. There are very few passages in the Bible that show **all the people of earth** crying out and mourning at his appearing, so it is a simple task to put them all together and see how they are speaking of the same event. Although some recent teachings have told us this verse connects with Revelation, chapter 19, we will see why it can't be the case. *"Even those who pierced him"* denotes this will be a supernatural event where Jesus allows even those in Hell to see his coming.

Chapter one in Revelation is only an introduction to the overall message of Revelation as told to John by Jesus. The chronology of the end-time events doesn't start until the numerical Seals, and especially the Sixth Seal which begins the last "Seven Year" Tribulation period.

The Rapture

The term "Rapture" is derived from the Latin word, "raptu," which means, "to be **caught up or gathered.**" In the original Greek translation of the Bible, the word used is, "harpazo," which means, "to be carried off or snatched away."

We also call this the "Blessed Hope" as found in Titus 2:13: *"While we wait for the blessed hope- the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."* (NIV)

This "Rapture" concept is found in passages such as, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 which reads:

*"The Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive **will be gathered up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.** And we will be with the Lord forever."*

Matthew 24:30-31 also reads:

*"At that time, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. **Then all the peoples of the world will cry.** They will see the Son*

*of Man **coming on clouds** in the sky with great power and glory. **He will use a loud trumpet to send his angels all around the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from every part of the world.”***

The language of these scriptures also matches other passages of Revelation, which we will study in more detail.

The pre-Tribulation camp has not been able to provide a specific scripture passage that proves *clearly*, without squeezing or adding it in, that the Rapture occurs before the Great Tribulation.

However, many are now realizing that the Rapture occurs at the Sixth Seal, because it is easy to see that it is described there. But many do not realize that this would still remain a pre-Tribulation Rapture even at the Sixth Seal. This is because the Sixth Seal is where the last Great Tribulation period begins, not beforehand. The people of the earth actually proclaim there, at the Sixth Seal, that the day of God’s wrath has arrived.

Unfortunately, some have taken to placing the Rapture event to passages where it does not belong, such as in chapter 4 of Revelation, and blindly assuming the Great Tribulation starts at the First Seal. This is an easy mistake made by some, including myself for a time. We will look at this more closely when we come to it in our reading and will see why the Rapture is at the Sixth Seal, but will still have the surprise of a thief.

Another huge misconception about the Rapture is that it will be a **secret event**. Nothing could be further from the truth. It will be one of the most public, out in the open events of all time. Of course, it will come as a huge surprise to everyone, even to those raptured. However, it will not be a secret, since scriptures proclaim that every eye will see him at the Rapture event, along with people crying out and mourning at his appearing.

Matching scriptures appropriately is something we need to do. It is the duty of Christians to be students of the word, to rightly divide

and rightly put together similar scriptures when we find them. When we find similar language in other prophetic passages that match, we will put them together to form a more complete picture, with Revelation getting the final word, because it is the final master plan given to us in a numerical and chronological order.

We cannot get a true chronology of end-time events by looking at the prophetic books or scriptures in the Bible, except from the book of Revelation. All we need to do is plug other previous prophecies into Revelation. Then, and only then, will we see things more clearly.

Another common mistake is when Rapture verses like Revelation 1:7, get confused with the second phase of Jesus' Second Coming, as described in Revelation, chapter 19. If we don't separate these two events correctly, we will not have a right understanding of the overall, end-time events chronology.

Rapture Vs. Second Coming

Separating Rapture scriptures from Second Coming scriptures is a simple task when you know what sets them apart. First, we need to remember that the Rapture is when Jesus *takes his bride* (the ready church,) *out of the world before* the last Great Tribulation begins. The Second Coming is when Jesus *comes back to earth with his bride* on white horseback to destroy the Antichrist and his army at the "Battle of Armageddon," which is read in Revelation 19. There will be relatively few left to destroy at this point, since most on earth will have been killed by then, including the holy Tribulation Saints.

We can think of the Rapture as the first phase or the beginning of the Second Coming of Jesus, and the Battle of Armageddon as the second phase of the his Second Coming. The Rapture, however, is really the most important part of his Second Coming because it sets off the entire last seven or so years.

Revelation 1:7, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, and Matthew 24:29-31,

along with others, describe the Rapture of the church in one form or another. In these scriptures, we see descriptions of angels, clouds, mourning and crying out by people. However, Revelation 19, for example, describes the Second Coming of Jesus at the “Battle of Armageddon,” which does not show any mourning, angels or clouds. It only describes armies, battle cries, war, and defeat of the wicked.

The Rapture scriptures do not contain **any warlike language, whatsoever**. Instead, Rapture scriptures describe the snatching away of a large group of people from the face of the earth, who are collected with the help of angels. In addition, there are no angels described at the Second Coming in Revelation 19, only the army of Heaven on white horses, and these are saints, not angels.

For instance, we saw, in Matthew 24:30-31, how Jesus has his angels collect his ready elect into the clouds at the Rapture. Some will identify this as the final phase of his Second Coming at the Battle of Armageddon. However, this portion of Matthew 24 *only describes the Rapture event*.

Just because Jesus, in Matthew, included the description of the Rapture along with the descriptions of other events that will take place during the Tribulation, does not mean they are all one and the same. Not understanding this correctly leaves holes and questions, which is one reason why the pre-Tribulation doctrine has come under more scrutiny lately. Some, including myself for a time, have looked to Matthew chapter 24 and Luke 21 for a **definite order** of end-time events, not realizing that Jesus did not give a definite order in those chapters. Instead, he left that for Revelation to accomplish. In fact, Jesus skipped around quite a bit in both Matthew 24 and Luke 21.

In addition, we should realize there is different language or description given to the Jews in Matthew 24, as opposed to that given in Luke 21, which is for non-Jews, otherwise known as Gentiles. In Matthew 24, Jesus was speaking to the Jews about the Rapture event and some other surrounding events. He describes the Rapture event to

them in verse 29-31, along with other end-time events, such as the desecration of the temple by the Antichrist, which he mentions *before* the Rapture event. However, Jesus does not mention that some can escape it, the way he does for the Gentiles audience of Luke 21:28-36.

This is because most Jews will not be ready to go at the Rapture event, but when it happens, it will instead serve as a sign for them. Today, out of 13 million Jews, only approximately three to four percent are Messianic (those who believe in Jesus as their Savior.) Therefore, most of the world and the Jews will see the Rapture event only as an end-time sign, since they will not be ready for it.

However, as we know, the Rapture is only the beginning of the end. But most of the Jews will have to go through the entire Great Tribulation period, see the desecration of the temple and have to endure to the very end. This is also known as, “Jacob’s Trouble” for the Jews, as prophesied by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 30:7.

The “Trumpet Blower”

*“On the Lord's day I was in the Spirit, **and I heard a loud voice behind me that sounded like a trumpet.** The voice said, "Write what you see in a book and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea." Rev 1:10-11*

Another important distinction that we will look at in more detail is the proper understanding of the various trumpets described in scripture. In the line of Revelation’s events, we read of different times when trumpets are blown and by whom they are blown. Why is identifying these trumpets properly so important? If we confuse when and who blows certain trumpets, we can misplace these prophetic scriptures that include trumpets to the wrong event.

We can see here, in Revelation 1:10-11, that Jesus has the voice that sounds like a trumpet. This is how Jesus can do three things at

once as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17, which is also a partial description of the Rapture event as we just saw: ***“The Lord himself will come down from heaven (1.) with a loud command, (2.) with the voice of the archangel, and (3.) with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be gathered up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.”***

This passage also connects with Matthew 24:29-31, Revelation 1:7, and 1 Corinthians 15:52. These all connect with descriptions at the Sixth Seal where they are fulfilled in the order of end-time events.

1 Corinthians 15:52 reads:

“It will take only a second—as quickly as an eye blinks—when the last trumpet sounds. The trumpet will sound, and those who have died will be raised to live forever, and we will all be changed.”

This “last trumpet” is sometimes confused with the Seventh (and last) Angel Trumpet of Revelation because people doing a quick read of Revelation assume there are no other trumpets being blown during the Tribulation. However, other passages, including some from the Old Testament, describe even more trumpets. In chapter five of *Revelation Unleashed*, we will see why this “last trumpet” of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is a unique trumpet from all others, before it and after it, and why it is described as a “last trumpet.”

The Simplicity of Symbolism

*“I turned to see who was talking to me. When I turned, I saw **seven golden lampstands** and someone among the lampstands who was “like a Son of Man.” He was dressed in a long robe and had a gold band around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like flames of fire. His feet were like*

bronze that glows hot in a furnace, and his voice was like the noise of flooding water. **He held seven stars in his right hand**, and a sharp double-edged sword came out of his mouth. He looked like the sun shining at its brightest time.”

Rev 1:12-16

We need to address the symbols in Revelation, for certainly, there are some. However, the whole of Revelation is not to be understood merely as a symbolic or an allegorical text, if it were, it would be meaningless. **Immediately** after this verse, we see the meaning of the symbols, as Jesus himself tells us in verse 20:

*“Here is the secret of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand and the seven golden lampstands: **The seven lampstands are the seven churches, and the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.**”*

This is a great example of what we see later on in Revelation as well, where Jesus gives us symbols, but most of the time they are explained in the next passage. No guessing needed!

For instance, I have heard some say these angels of the seven churches represent the pastors of these churches. However, when Jesus says they are angels, we must take it literally; otherwise, we will be inserting our own interpretations which we can't do.

We see many times in scripture where angels are taking care of things behind the scenes, such as, spiritual warfare. We see angels at work in Daniel, as well as, in many other passages and events. There are sometimes situations when we don't see clear explanations. In these cases, it is okay to make some connections and guesses, but we cannot be dogmatic, if it is not plainly stated.

However, we should be able to use some plain old common sense at times. For instance, the riders of the horses in the Seals of Revelation, which we will discuss in more detail, are likely angels or spirits of some kind. Traditional teaching has wrongly insisted that the rider on the white horse of the First Seal has to be the Antichrist

without any scriptural proof. With common sense, we can see that the scenario of the riders appears to have more of a spiritual nature rather than a human nature.

Escaping God's Wrath

Positions that take *more faith* to believe in, such as the pre-Tribulation Rapture, have come under heavy criticism lately, even from within the church. It takes more faith to wait for what the Bible describes as the "Blessed Hope," when we are told it will happen without knowing the day or the hour. Besides knowing the many signs Jesus said would signal his soon return, there is not **one particular** sign that will alert us to the day or hour.

Instead, we must wait on the Father's timing. It should be enough for us to read and believe the scripture which shows that some will escape before God's wrath begins, such as, Rev.3:10, Luke 21:36 and others. However, this requires faith and trust that God will do what he said he will. Even detractors of the pre-Tribulation Rapture have a tough time dealing with these two verses because they clearly show some people are escaping God's wrath early. "Escape" means, to not be there physically.

Revelation 3:10: *"You have obeyed my teaching about not giving up your faith. So I will **keep you from** the time of trouble that will come to the whole world to test those who live on earth."*

Luke 21:36: *"So be ready all the time. Pray that you will be strong enough **to escape all these things** that will happen and that you will be able to stand before the Son of Man."*

Those who believe that all Saints must go through some or all of the Tribulation do not need to have as much faith. Instead of looking for Jesus first, they wait for the more obvious signs of the Trumpet Judgments, Bowl Judgments or even the Antichrist. But this was not the posture of the early church, which was to look for Jesus only. This

takes more faith, because he said none would know the day or the hour, so they had to be ready all the time.

Once the Rapture occurs, it will be a much easier task to figure out the timing of the Second Coming described in Revelation, chapter 19. It is simply three and a half years after the Antichrist desecrates the temple and can even be figured out to the exact day by anyone.

It will require little or no faith to believe that he is coming at this point, and in fact, the enemies of God will plan on fighting the Lord God himself at Armageddon, *knowing* that he is coming to fight them.

So then, with maximum faith, come maximum rewards. (This is also true with other faith positions, such as, healing and other gifts.) If you believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture, you most likely will be ready to escape the coming wrath of God. You will keep your spiritual clothes clean, and you will pray to be strong enough spiritually, as Luke 21:36 tells us.

However, if you believe we are not close to his return because the Antichrist has not desecrated the temple yet, then you may not be ready when Jesus raptures his ready followers. If you are looking for signs like these, you may become like the scoffers who say, “*Where is he?*” Those left behind will have to endure through all the wrath of God to the very end of the Tribulation in order to be saved. They will not be protected from it, even though some may want to believe this.

Chapter 2: The Letters to the Churches

Revelation Chapters 2 & 3

Church Ages?

Only ruins remain of the seven original churches of Asia, a region that is now modern day Turkey. These were literal churches but were not the only churches at that time. The message of these letters was not only for these seven in Asia, but also for every church that ever was and will be.

The “Church Age” theory holds that the church world-wide has gone through different phases over the centuries in a way that resembles each of these seven churches. Those who believe this say we are now in the “Laodicean” church age, citing that the church today is rich and lukewarm. But this is only mainly true for the American church, not for the rest of the world.

If we are living in the age of Laodicea now, then this would mean all churches worldwide are lukewarm today, which obviously is not the case. Take, for instance, the church in Africa or Asia. They are poor, persecuted and far from lukewarm. When this is presented to church-age theorists, they respond, *“It’s the predominant characteristic, not the rule.”* But if this was the case, then that would mean there was also an age when most churches were poor, which isn’t fully accurate. So saying that most churches worldwide are rich today just isn’t true. For the most part, only the American church is rich. Also, America’s numbers don’t represent the most, when you consider the exploding numbers of believers in the third world.

As a whole, the worldwide church is now and has been predominately poor far more than it has been rich. If one wants to break this down to say only the American church is the Laodicean church, this would be closer to accurate. These churches of Revelation actually represent church types and types of individuals of every church

that was then, now, and in the future, especially as we head toward the Rapture event.

Jesus told the church in Philadelphia, that he would keep them from the time of trouble that was coming to test the whole earth. We know this time of trouble will be the last, Great Tribulation period. Did Jesus know that the original Philadelphian church of Asia would be long gone when he actually came back to gather his ready followers into the clouds to be with him?

Yes, of course, he did. This is one way we can know these are types of churches and types of individuals. If you and I are faithful to the Lord, we, too, will be kept from the hour of trial that is coming. If Jesus had come back in the first century, then the original church of Philadelphia would have been gathered along with the church of Smyrna (the poor church,) and any others who were still persevering in the faith.

There are churches, even today, that have everything described in all seven letters going on at once. The problems these Revelatory churches had were the same problems found in the church throughout the centuries up to the present. Surely, Jesus is also speaking to the church today through these letters written so long ago.

Jesus' Simple Message

While the book of Revelation completes all previous end-time prophetic books, it also, at times, completes other teachings found in the Bible. The letters to the churches in Revelation contain the final words of Jesus to the church of yesterday and to the church world-wide today.

Jesus makes a clear message regarding his expectation for the church, which is to simply overcome and beat sin, so we can be ready for his soon return. It really is no more complicated than this, but some in the church have made it more complicated than it needs to be.

Some have added to, and subtracted from, the simplicity of these letters and have cut out the heart of the message which is a message of constant repentance, even for the Christian. Some say Jesus did not really mean what he said in these letters, as they do with other scriptures in the Bible when they don't like the message. You will find that people like this make excuses for their sin instead of trying to defeat it. They think they are finished works of Jesus even as they willingly wallow in unrepentant sin. They will make excuses for your sin too, if you let them.

Jesus' Finished Work

We hear the phrase more and more lately, "The finished work of Jesus." But, what does this really mean, in light of scripture? Although Jesus' work on the cross is finished, the book of Revelation chronicles even more work Jesus will do in the future. Although His work for our redemption is finished for all time, our work is not.

Without repentance, there is no forgiveness of sin; therefore, repentance is the key for being right with God all the time. We cannot just assume it is an automatic process, since we are to submit daily to his will.

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:27, that he crucified himself daily and he brought his "members" under subjection so that when he preached, he would not be disqualified from the prize of eternal life.

Sin is to be rare in the life of a Christian. If we sin, we need to repent. This is our daily work. In 1 John 2:1-2, John tells the church that the purpose for his letter was so that they would not sin in the church. It reads: *"My dear children, I write this letter to you **so you will not sin**. **But if anyone does sin**, we have a helper in the presence of the Father—Jesus Christ, the One who does what is right. He died in our place to take away our sins, and not only our sins but the sins of all people."*

Do we ever hear anyone speaking like this today from the pulpits of America? It rarely happens. Most beat around the bush, if they get to it at all. Unfortunately when a pastor preaches the topic of sin and holiness, they are harassed by members to the point of discouragement. It is a rare occurrence that anyone today reminds us of our sin and of the scriptural mandate for continual holiness which requires continual repentance, if we sin. The word “if” reminds us that we do not *have* to sin, but instead, it is our choice.

In Romans, chapters six through eight, Paul reminds us of what our past life of sin was like and how we were once a slave to it. In chapter eight, he tells that now, with and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we no longer need to be a slave to it, but instead can overcome it.

Not only can we beat sin, but we are expected to, even if through much pain and suffering. If we stumble in our walk, we are to go back to Jesus and get clean again. This is the way we continue in the faith, and if we continue, then we will be continually cleansed by his blood. 1 John 1:7 states: *“But if we live in the light, as God is in the light, we can share fellowship with each other. Then the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from every sin.”*

Anyone who becomes lazy or aloof to living a blameless, holy life that we are expected to live, Paul says they believed for nothing. He says in 1 Corinthians 15:1-2, *“Now, brothers and sisters, I want you to remember the Good News I brought to you. You received this Good News and continue strong in it. **And you are being saved by it if you continue believing** what I told you. **If you do not, then you believed for nothing.**”*

John also wrote about “continuing” in John 15. Of course, we know from scripture that Jesus who began this work in us is faithful to complete it. But we also hear in John 15, that if we continue to remain in Christ, he remains in us, but apart from him we can do nothing. There is clearly an active part that we must take even after salvation which is to submit our will daily to the Lord.

Jesus tells the believers in the Revelation letters to hold on to their first love or their love would wax cold. It is obvious, not all Christians remain where they are supposed to remain on that path of work Jesus wants to complete in us. Our free will can still lead us the wrong way, if we choose poorly. Thank God for the persistent grace of God that continually waits for us to get back on that path.

Outline of the Letters

All seven letters share the same outline or pattern. Jesus starts and ends each letter by stating his identity along with his credentials, each with slightly different language. None can argue who it describes.

Each letter contains a compliment, a criticism or both. He warns each church of the punishment for not obeying and the reward for those who do. Each punishment is said in different ways, yet these are the same punishments for all who are lost or not ready.

The rewards listed in each letter are also stated with different variations. However, each who perseveres will receive the sum total of these rewards in full effect.

He ends each letter with, “*Whoever has ears let him hear...*” He is speaking to everyone, of course, since we all have ears. But do we all have spiritual ears tuned into what he is telling us to do?

To the Church in Ephesus

*“Write this to the angel of the church in Ephesus: The One who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands says this: I know what you do, how you work hard and never give up. **I know you do not put up with the false teachings of evil people. You have tested those who say they are apostles but really are not, and you found they are liars.** You have patience and have suffered troubles for my name and have not given up.” Rev 2:1-3*

Jesus says we should test those who say they are his followers to see if they are genuine. How many of us do this today? Some say to do this would be judgmental. Although we are not to judge the world, we are to judge those in the church who say they are Christians, but are not living as a Christian should. This was the important, though not comfortable, practice of Paul and the other apostles.

Part of the problem today stems from the church's lack of teaching about sin and the carrying out of church discipline. The church, especially in America, many times looks like the world and has not abandoned the ways of the flesh to walk in the new life. Some believe the only verse which speaks of judging is the one where Jesus said, "*Judge not lest ye be judged,*" not realizing he was speaking more about final condemnation, than judging right from wrong. It is a Christian's duty to judge what is going on in the church; otherwise, it will become a messy free-for-all, and as we can see, it already has in some cases.

However, this "judging" should not include condemnation and needs to be based in love. Galatians 6:1 says, "*You who are spiritual should go to that person and gently make him right again.*" We are to be right with God ourselves, if we are to do this work of restoration, yet according to scripture, it is to be done.

Also, in 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, Paul says it very plainly: "*It is not my business to judge those who are not part of the church. God will judge them. **But you must judge** the people who are part of the church. The scripture says you must get rid of the evil people among you.*" You can't deny from this scripture that there is a place for judging and is consistent with the message of Jesus to the churches here in Revelation.

Jesus has a rebuke for Ephesus in verse four:

*"But I have this against you: You have left the love you had in the beginning. So remember where you were before you fell. Change your hearts and do what you did at first. **If you do not change, I***

will come to you and will take away your lampstand from its place. But there is something you do that is right: You hate what the Nicolaitans do, as much as I.” Rev 2:4-6

The Nicolaitans were a Pharisaical sect that believed you could still partake in unrepentant sin and still make it to Heaven. Jesus hated this teaching then, and still does today. In this first letter, Jesus will take away their destiny in the kingdom, if they do not obey the message of repentance.

Removing the “lampstand” is not simply closing up the doors of the church. He is not referring to a physical building. This refers to Jesus removing the Spirit from these churches along with his anointing. Many churches operate fully today, but God is not there.

He ends this letter with a description of his reward to those who win the victory:

*“Every person who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. To those who win the **victory I will give the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life, which is in the garden of God.**”* Rev 2:7

The Tree of Life is for all Christians, of course, not just the faithful of Ephesus. What is this victory and how is it done? We know that the victory over sin was won on the cross. But it is our role to listen to the Spirit of God so we can obey, change, and overcome sin as we continue in the faith ourselves.

To the Church in Smyrna

*“Write this to the angel of the church in Smyrna: “The One who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again, says this: I know your troubles and **that you are poor, but really you are rich!** I know the bad things some people say about you. **They say they are Jews, but they are not true Jews.** They are a synagogue that belongs to Satan. Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to*

test you, and you will suffer for ten days. But be faithful, even if you have to die, **and I will give you the crown of life.**

“Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches. Those who win the victory will not be hurt by the second death.” Rev 2:8-11

This is one of two letters where Jesus has no criticism for anyone in the church. They are poor, as far as earthly standards go, but not as far as Jesus is concerned. To him, they are rich spiritually, and of course, this does not mean that those who are poor will automatically be spiritually rich. However, to those who do not have the distraction of riches usually find it is easier to come to faith and once there, to remain and depend on God. In addition to persecution, this may be why the church in Africa and Asia is so on fire for God.

What does this church of Smyrna receive as their reward for being faithful? They will get each reward listed in each of these letters and the Crown of Life which is described here specifically. But, we know they also will be able to eat fruit from the Tree of Life along with all Christians in Heaven.

To the Church in Pergamum

“Write this to the angel of the church in Pergamum: “The One who has the sharp, double-edged sword says this: I know where you live. It is where Satan has his throne. But you are true to me. You did not refuse to tell about your faith in me even during the time of Antipas, my faithful witness who was killed in your city, where Satan lives.

*“But I have a few things against you: **You have some there who follow the teaching of Balaam.** He taught Balak how to cause the people of Israel to sin by eating food offered to idols and by taking part in sexual sins. **You also have some who follow the teaching of the Nicolaitans.** So change your hearts and lives. If you do not, I will come to you quickly and fight against them with the*

sword that comes out of my mouth.” Rev 12-16

Jesus holds the faithful ones responsible for those who are following false teachings and beliefs. This is more proof we cannot sit idly by while others espouse teachings that contradict scripture.

"Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

"I will give some of the hidden manna to everyone who wins the victory. I will also give to each one who wins the victory a white stone with a new name written on it. No one knows this new name except the one who receives it."

Rev 2:17

This is another reward for those who are doing the right thing. We can add these rewards together with the others. All who continue in the faith will receive all of them, not just some.

To the Church in Thyatira

"Write this to the angel of the church in Thyatira: "The Son of God, who has eyes that blaze like fire and feet like shining bronze, says this: I know what you do. I know about your love, your faith, your service, and your patience. I know that you are doing more now than you did at first.

"But I have this against you: You let that woman Jezebel spread false teachings. She says she is a prophetess, but by her teaching she leads my people to take part in sexual sins and to eat food that is offered to idols. I have given her time to change her heart and turn away from her sin, but she does not want to change. So I will throw her on a bed of suffering. And all those who take part in adultery with her will suffer greatly if they do not turn away from the wrongs she does. I will also kill her followers. Then all the churches will know I am the One who searches hearts and minds, and I will repay each of you for what you have done."

Rev 2:18-23

Again, see how Jesus holds those who allow false teaching to be responsible for it, even if they themselves are not teaching it. “*You let that woman Jezebel,*” refers to this. Also, we see how this woman Jezebel does not want to change. Jezebel is not a real person in our church today, but there are types of Jezebels, with her spirit of rebellion working through them. One mission of this spirit is to control and water down pure scriptural teaching.

It may be difficult to believe that these types of things can go on in a church, but recent news, especially, has shown this type of influence to be at the base of church scandals. Many of these situations have happened in American churches causing church splits and disillusion.

*“But others of you in Thyatira have not followed her teaching and have not learned what some call Satan's deep secrets. I say to you that I will not put any other load on you. **Only continue in your loyalty until I come.***

“I will give power over the nations to everyone who wins the victory and continues to be obedient to me until the end. ‘You will rule over them with an iron rod, as when pottery is broken into pieces.’ Psalm 2:9 This is the same power I received from my Father. I will also give him the morning star. Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.” Rev 2:24-29

For those who continue in the faith and stay strong through whatever and whenever their end is, they will get to rule over the nations. This refers to when Jesus reigns on earth for a thousand years after the Great Tribulation and the Battle of Armageddon. Again, all Christians who are ready for his soon return will get this reward, as well as, all the other rewards previously mentioned by Jesus.

To the Church in Sardis

“Write this to the angel of the church in Sardis: “The One who

*has the seven spirits and the seven stars says this: **I know what you do. People say that you are alive, but really you are dead. Wake up! Strengthen what you have left before it dies completely.** I have found that what you are doing is less than what my God wants. So do not forget what you have received and heard. Obey it, and change your hearts and lives. **So you must wake up, or I will come like a thief, and you will not know when I will come to you.**” Rev 3:1-3*

There are many churches today which appear to be lively, such as with their music or other church programs. Yet they simply go through the motions of godliness without the separation from sin, which is required by Jesus. If they do not change, they will be left behind at the first phase of Jesus' Second Coming. Jesus will come as a thief to all who are not expecting him, especially to those who proclaim Jesus as their head, but live another way in private. Jesus calls these who live like this, liars and hypocrites.

“ But you have a few there in Sardis who have kept their clothes unstained, so they will walk with me and will wear white clothes, because they are worthy. Those who win the victory will be dressed in white clothes like them. And I will not erase their names from the book of life, but I will say they belong to me before my Father and before his angels. Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.”

Rev 3:4-6

One of the most important parts of all these letters is here in the letter to Sardis. Jesus is extremely clear that the possibility of name erasure from the Book of Life can be a reality, if one continues in unrepentant sin. However, this is not the only passage in the Bible that proclaims this principle. In fact, Exodus 32:33 specifically talks about this erasure when many had their names erased from the Book of Life, even though Moses pleaded with God for them. Some, who look to soften this message today, may be left behind as well. It is unfortunate

how many pastors overlook unrepentant sin and fail to recognize the seriousness of this prophecy.

Another important aspect of this letter is regarding, *“The few who have not stained their clothes.”* These that Jesus refers to are those, who, at one time, were given these spiritual clothes when they were saved. It is common sense to see that, at birth, our spiritual clothes were already stained because of Adam and the original sin we inherited from him. So here, the only way these unstained clothes were in their possession was because they were given them by Jesus alone. In this passage, the clothes “kept unstained” refer to maintaining holiness after salvation.

Some wonder, *“Is it actually possible to be this perfect?”* Some in the church would have us think not, but this scripture implies it to be not only possible, but expected. Therefore, the answer is, yes.

How do we do this? This spiritual clothing is not physical clothing. However, the principles we use in the physical realm can apply to the spiritual. What do we do when we get our earthly clothes stained? We launder them, naturally. We need to do the same for our souls, if they once again become stained by sin. We need to go to Jesus who is our "laundry soap," if you will, among many other things.

To the Church in Philadelphia

“Write this to the angel of the church in Philadelphia: This is what the One who is holy and true, who holds the key of David, says. When he opens a door, no one can close it. And when he closes it, no one can open it. I know what you do. I have put an open door before you, which no one can close. I know you have little strength, but you have obeyed my teaching and were not afraid to speak my name.

Those in the synagogue that belongs to Satan say they are Jews, but they are not true Jews; they are liars. I will make them come before you and bow at your feet, and they will know that I have loved you. You have obeyed my teaching about

not giving up your faith. So I will keep you from the time of trouble that will come to the whole world to test those who live on earth.

*"I am coming soon. **Continue strong in your faith so no one will take away your crown.** I will make those who win the victory pillars in the temple of my God, and they will never have to leave it. I will write on them the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, that comes down out of heaven from my God. I will also write on them my new name. Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches."*

Rev 3:7-13

Like the poor church of Smyrna, this is the other church for which Jesus had no criticism. We can say that in the eyes of Jesus, these two churches were spiritually perfect.

These people were like those today who are not ashamed of the Gospel, unlike the fakes. Notice Jesus again calls some in the church liars. This is strong language, indeed. There are many today who call themselves Christians, but live and think like the world.

Jesus says those that are liars will have to answer for it, if they don't change. However, Jesus says those who continue strong in the faith and overcome their sin will not have their crown taken away, or in other words, will not have their name erased from the Book of Life.

If our crowns could not be taken away, as some claim they can't, then Jesus would not have mentioned it here. Again, we also know Satan is always looking to do just that... to kill, steal and destroy our souls. If all he could do was affect our earthly possessions, then these scriptures would be meaningless. We have a role in protecting the spiritual crown that we have been given.

1 Peter 5:8 says: *"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."*

To the Church in Laodicea

*"Write this to the angel of the church in Laodicea: "The Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of all God has made, says this: I know what you do, that you are not hot or cold. I wish that you were hot or cold! But because you are lukewarm—neither hot, nor cold—I **am ready to spit you out of my mouth.**" Rev 3:14-16*

Some do not take this letter seriously and say that the “spitting” out of the mouth is not that serious, it’s really just a tongue lashing. Others say Jesus was referring to the water that flowed into the city that was lukewarm, as if that’s what matters here.

If they faced the truth of this letter, they would have to change. We would rather twist scripture than to admit this may be talking about us. Certainly, this letter describes the state of the American church today, as a whole. We live in a country where even the so-called, “poor” among us are rich compared to the poorest in the world.

"You say, 'I am rich, and I have become wealthy and do not need anything.' But you do not know that you are really miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold made pure in fire so you can be truly rich. Buy from me white clothes so you can be clothed and so you can cover your shameful nakedness. Buy from me medicine to put on your eyes so you can truly see."

Rev 3:17-18

Jesus plainly says that those who are rich with worldly wealth are the ones who are the most spiritually poor, because they do not think they have to depend on God for anything. Notice how he says they are just the opposite of what they think. Then he tells them what they must do to change their standing with him spiritually, they must “buy white clothes.”

This is a significant command, because they are obviously Christians, but are not living blameless and holy. If they were, he would have not mentioned the white clothes, which signify purity, repentance and right living. This passage also tells us we can have

white clothes now, we do not have to wait for Heaven to get them.

Some in the church claim we cannot have white clothing now, because we are not perfect yet. Nevertheless, this passage here and many more speak about how we are supposed to live holy lives and be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more as he forgave her sins. Did Jesus tell her to do something that was impossible? If so, it would have been a cruel request. He did not just tell this woman this, he told everyone this, in one form or another, and he is telling you and me, the same thing today through these letters.

*"I correct and punish those whom I love. **So be eager to do right, and change your hearts and lives.** Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and eat with you, and you will eat with me."* Rev 3:19-20

Why did Jesus tell the church that they needed to change, if repentance was not to be a constant in the life of a Christian? Why would Jesus need to stand at the door of the church and knock and tell them to listen to his voice, if they were right with him? Why would Jesus ask Christians to open the door and let him in? Did they not already do that once? Jesus is asking here for a relationship with them that they did not have, or if they had it, they lost it.

We, in the American church of Laodicea today, are in just as much danger of losing what we think we have, if we do not change as well. So then, what is needed here? We need to return back to God in America and we need to do it now. As individuals, if we have fallen, or are falling away, we need to repent and recapture the same zeal of the Lord we had when we were first saved. If we are falling back into bad habits, like the ones we did before we became Christians, we need to repent and take on the humbleness of a real Christian.

We need to once again listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit who tells us what is right and what is wrong. If we do this, then we are continuing in the faith and will be eternally secure. If we do not

continue, then there will be no spiritual guarantees when you go on a wrong path, since you don't know what it will lead you to do. If we do the right thing and continue, we will reap the rewards promised in these letters.

A Message for All

"Those who win the victory will sit with me on my throne in the same way that I won the victory and sat down with my Father on his throne. Everyone who has ears should listen to what the Spirit says to the churches." Rev 3:21-22

The message is for everyone, as it says here. However, why should we care about the letter to the poor church, for instance, if we are not part of that church? 2 Timothy 3:16 tells us: *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for showing people what is wrong in their lives, for correcting faults, and for teaching how to live right."* It may be that you can learn from the negative elements found in each of these seven churches and avoid their mistakes.

What is the heart of the message in these letters for all, and especially for those who profess faith in Christ Jesus? It can't be any clearer than the message of holiness, which is being set apart, persevering in the faith, and loving God instead of the world. Hebrews 2:1-3 says: ***"So we must be more careful to follow what we were taught. Then we will not stray away from the truth. The teaching God spoke through angels was shown to be true, and anyone who did not follow it or obey it received the punishment that was earned. So surely we also will be punished if we ignore this great salvation."***

For some of us, it may take a lifetime to realize we can't do anything apart from accepting Jesus as our Lord and Savior for our salvation. If we accept the Lord, we are born of the Spirit. After this born-again experience, we have a role in the growth of our faith and

must actively protect it on a daily basis.

Anyone who strays from the truth puts themselves in danger like an animal that strays from the protection of the pack only to get picked off by a predator. If we stay with Jesus and all his teachings, we will not fall away, though we may stumble at times. The key to right living is to minimize these times we stumble and ***if we do stumble*** (1 John 2:1,) we have an advocate in Jesus who will forgive us with an unlimited amount of times, ***if we need it***.

Some people like to change this word, “*if*” to “*when*,” but we are not allowed to do that, for sin is supposed to be rare in the life of a Christian. It is God’s will that we “*go and sin no more*,” especially now that we have the Holy Spirit as our guide and power. We do not all have to wallow in the vomit of our past sin, if we stay focused on Jesus alone.

This does not mean we are free to sin without any recompense. If we do sin, there will still be a punishment or some kind of consequence, especially in this life, as some of us are experiencing even now. There are some in the church today who say a Christian does not need to repent of future sin after their initial salvation. But as we have just seen in these letters, this is a dangerous false teaching that comes from the modern-day Nicolaitans and Pharisees.

The way to avoid punishment in the next life is to simply stay in Christ and continue in the faith by never looking back. Paul tells us this in Philippians:

*“Brothers and sisters, I know that I have not yet reached that goal, **but there is one thing I always do. Forgetting the past and straining toward what is ahead**, I keep trying to reach the goal and get the prize for which God called me through Christ to the life above.*

“All of us who are spiritually mature should think this way, too. And if there are things you do not agree with, God will make them clear to you. But we should continue following

the truth we already have.

*“Brothers and sisters, all of you should try to follow my example and to copy those who live the way we showed you. Many people live like enemies of the cross of Christ. I have often told you about them, and it makes me cry to tell you about them now. In the end, they will be destroyed. They do whatever their bodies want, they are proud of their shameful acts, **and they think only about earthly things. But our homeland is in heaven,** and we are waiting for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. By his power to rule all things, he will change our humble bodies and make them like his own glorious body.” Phil 3:13-21*

There are many passages in the Bible that speak of some who **were in the faith once** and then wandered away from it and were lost. The message of continuing and repenting that is taught throughout scripture is also reinforced here in the Revelatory letters.

Here are similar passages for further study:

Ex. 32:33, John 15:6, 1 Cor 9:27, 1 Cor 11:27-32, 1 Cor 15:1-2, Phil 2:12, Col:2:6-8, 1 Tim1:18-20, 1 Tim 4:16, 1 Tim 6:10-20, Hebrews 2:1-4, Heb 6:4, Heb10:26 -39, Heb 12:14, James 5:19, 2 Peter 2:20, 1 John 1:6; 2:24; 3:6, Rev. 2:4, 16, 21; 3:2-3, 11, 16

Chapter 3: God is in Control of Everything!

Revelation Chapters 4 & 5

“Lightning flashes and noises and thunder came from the throne. Before the throne seven lamps were burning, which are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was something that looked like a sea of glass, clear like crystal.

“In the center and around the throne were four living creatures with eyes all over them, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion. The second was like a calf. The third had a face like a man. The fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of these four living creatures had six wings and was covered all over with eyes, inside and out. Day and night they never stop saying: ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty. He was, he is, and he is coming’

“These living creatures give glory, honor, and thanks to the One who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever. Then the twenty-four elders bow down before the One who sits on the throne, and they worship him who lives forever and ever. They put their crowns down before the throne and say: ‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, because you made all things. Everything existed and was made, because you wanted it.’”

Rev 4:5-11

In these next two chapters, we see the Living God who has been in complete control of everything from the beginning of time and will remain in control forever. He is the God of Israel, the same God who made everything and allowed all men, not just Jews, the ability to access his throne and eternity through his son Jesus. His name is the only name that saves.

All other gods are simply a product of someone’s vain imagination. There is no god anywhere like our God. None of these other gods can do anything for anyone, because they do not even exist in the first place. Even the so-called, “prophets” that some of the other

religions follow remain dead in the grave, unlike Jesus. He has risen and lives among us with all power and authority from Heaven.

Vision Continued

When the books of the Bible were originally written, there were no chapters or verses. Each book was written without any breaks from beginning to the end. These chapters and verses were added later for convenience in the year 1277, by a gentleman named Stephen Langton. Langton was a professor at the University of Paris and later became the Archbishop of Canterbury. Naturally, it would be a difficult task to find things in the Bible without this modification.

Why is this important to know? Although helpful, there are times when these chapter and verse assignments cause content to be cut off from the original flow of the writer. We need to remember this, especially when we come to chapters 6 and 7 of Revelation, but it is also important to know here in chapter 4 of Revelation.

In the beginning of chapter 4, John is seeing Heaven. We were told in chapter one that John was “*in the spirit on the Lord’s day,*” and he is still in the spirit here, as he is throughout the rest of the book. When we left off last, John was writing the letters to the seven churches in Asia, as Jesus instructed.

The entire episode of Revelation was given to John as one big vision which included the seven letters. So here in chapter 4, we are simply given the continuation of this same vision. John’s vision started on the Isle of Patmos, where he first sees Jesus behind him. Now in chapter 4, he is being moved up to Heaven to see what is going on there, both in his day and in the future.

Is This The Rapture?

“After the vision of these things I looked, and there before me

*was an open door in heaven. And the same voice that spoke to me before, that sounded like a trumpet, said, "**Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this.**"* Rev 4:1

We can only see that Jesus is speaking to John here. One position is that this chapter and verse describes the occurrence of the Rapture event. Those who hold this opinion have added something that is not here, which is an entire group of people, i.e. the Church. When Jesus says, "**come up here,**" they wrongly infer he is talking to a larger group of people. But we must interpret this literally and not add things that are not here.

Those that believe this is the Rapture also believe that the First Seal, found in the next chapter of Revelation, is the start of the Great Tribulation. This is the reason they also feel a need to force fit the Rapture here at this chapter. While it is true, the Rapture does occur before the Great Tribulation, there is no valid description of a Rapture event here at all. There is, however, a place in Revelation where the Rapture *is indeed* described, and it still comes before the Great Tribulation, but it is not here in this chapter of Revelation. We will get to that place in the proceeding chapters.

We can understand this verse of Revelation 4 by looking at the context. The entire book is a continuous vision. Let us break it down to see why this verse only describes John's experience and is not a reference to a group that was supposedly raptured:

First, John says here, in chapter four, that after the vision of the letters, he was before an open door in Heaven. When Jesus says, "Come up here," the vision is simply continuing for John, but now in the setting of Heaven to get a picture of the Glory of God.

Second, some will say, here, that these **twenty-four elders** symbolize the church that was raptured, but there is no proof of this. "*Immediately I was in the Spirit, and before me was a throne in heaven, and someone was sitting on it. The One who sat on the throne looked like precious stones, like jasper and carnelian. All around the*

*throne was a rainbow the color of an emerald. **Around the throne there were twenty-four other thrones with twenty-four elders sitting on them. They were dressed in white and had golden crowns on their heads.***” Rev 4:2-4

Does the twenty-four represent a multitude? We cannot be dogmatic about an interpretation that says he was speaking about a group, because it’s just not here. But, we can be dogmatic about what is literally in the passage. John saw twenty-four elders, plain and simple.

Remember, we already saw some symbols in chapter one. Jesus told us what the symbols meant in the very next verses. If these twenty-four elders were a symbol of something else, we would have been told that here, or we could go to some specific verse elsewhere in the Bible that would shed more light on it. Since there isn’t any, we must accept these twenty-four elders as a literal, exact number of people.

One interpretation is that the twenty-four is made up of the twelve apostles **and** twelve Old Testament prophets which they say could represent the church. Again, there is no scriptural proof of this, it’s just guessing. We can’t base a doctrine on guesses and speculation. Since there were more than twelve prophets, it doesn’t fit. After all, who would you pick as the top twelve? When you figure it out, another comes along and disagrees. It would be anyone’s guess, but not scripturally solid.

If these twenty- four *are* a representation of the church, it still doesn’t indicate that the entire church is there at this point anyway. Of course, we know Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist and other prophets, who are in heaven already, would certainly qualify as being elders and representatives of the church. And, it just may be they are among these elders wearing white and placing their golden crowns before God, as we all will when it is our turn to go through the Gates of Heaven. Still, there is no proof that these elders represent a larger mass of people here in this phase of the revelation to John.

Finally, Jesus says, “*And I will show you what must happen after this.*” Some fair questions to ask here are: “After what?” and “What will happen?” The answer is literally, “after” what he just showed John, and “what” will happen next, is simply the rest of what is about to be shown him. This does not mean that “after this” is a referral by Jesus to events of the Great Tribulation. The answer is in the context of the surrounding scriptures. There are no mysterious symbolisms to surmise, just commonsense.

The Tribulation will be marked by definite events and definite descriptions, unmistakable, and earth changing in an instant. There is a passage in the Bible with easy to read proof and evidence, without adding it, that shows where the Rapture actually occurs in the sequence of Revelatory events, as we will see. So there is no need to add it here in chapter 4 of Revelation.

Seven Spirits of God

*“Then I saw a Lamb standing in the center of the throne and in the middle of the four living creatures and the elders. **The Lamb looked as if he had been killed. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God that were sent into all the world.**” Rev 4:6*

Perhaps you did not know there are seven spirits of God, not just one. Nevertheless, we see here there are seven. Some have thought that these seven spirits comprise the Holy Spirit. Do we know this for sure? No, but if they do, it is not a problem. If they don’t, it is still not a problem. Since God is more complicated than what our human minds can comprehend, we need to accept its mystery much like we do with the triune nature of God.

These seven spirits of God are sent into the world. We know that God’s spirit is always at work convicting people of sin, but that is not all his spirit is doing. We also know his spirit can restrain evil (2

Thessalonians 2: 6-7,) do miracles and many other things. Therefore, these seven spirits are simply doing God's will and they will make sure it happens exactly as the Bible says it will.

Worthy is the Lamb!

*“The Lamb came and took the scroll from the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders bowed down before the Lamb. Each one of them had a harp and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's holy people. And they all sang a new song to the Lamb: ‘**You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were killed**, and with the blood of your death you bought people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation. You made them to be a kingdom of priests for our God, and they will rule on the earth.’*

“Then I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels around the throne, and the four living creatures, and the elders. There were thousands and thousands of angels, saying in a loud voice: ‘The Lamb who was killed is worthy to receive power, wealth, wisdom, and strength, honor, glory, and praise!’ Then I heard all creatures in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea saying: ‘To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power forever and ever.’ The four living creatures said, ‘Amen,’ and the elders bowed down and worshiped.” Rev 4:6b-14

Jesus, the crucified Lamb of God, is getting the scrolls from his Father, and then is worshipped as God as well. This worship is going on right now and has been for at least the last 2000 years since John saw this vision and before that as well. We see Jesus is the only one worthy to open the scrolls. Chapter 5 of Revelation is where we see Jesus open the First Seal which starts a definite order of events.

Up until this point, no definite order of events has begun. We

will see very clearly in chapter six of Revelation when the Rapture actually does occur and when the Great Tribulation finally begins. We will see that it is still a pre-Tribulation and pre-God's wrath Rapture of the church.

*Then I saw a scroll in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne. The scroll had writing on both sides and was kept closed with seven seals. And I saw a powerful angel calling in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?" But there was no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth who could open the scroll or look inside it. I cried bitterly because there was no one who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. But one of the elders said to me, "**Do not cry! The Lion from the tribe of Judah, David's descendant, has won the victory so that he is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.**"* Rev 5:1-5

Jesus is able to open the scrolls because he has won the victory. The one on the throne gives his son the scrolls and seals to break. We are also told that he has **won the victory**. Of which victory is he speaking? Since Jesus' victory of Revelation, chapter 19 has not been fulfilled yet, which victory is this here? This is obviously the victory over sin, which Jesus won at Calvary.

In fact, we were told in the Revelatory letters that Jesus had "*already won the victory,*" and that we, too, "*must overcome to win the victory.*"

We know that Jesus wins the ultimate victory at the end of time, and we will too, ***if we continue in the faith***. In our next chapter, we find another description of someone who is winning the victory today, who has won it in the past, and who will also win it in the future.

Chapter 4: The First Five Seals

Revelation Chapter 6: 1-11

At chapter six, Revelation picks up speed and transitions from the portion of John's vision that does not have a numerical or sequential order to a portion that does. The events from this point on cannot be taken out of order in any way. When we find previous end-time events mentioned in scripture outside the book of Revelation, we know that that they can be plugged in here to complete the overall end-times picture and timeline.

In fact, this is one purpose for the book of Revelation. It is the master plan and the final word, which completes all previous end-times prophecy. If we did not have Revelation, it would be impossible to know the exact end-times chronology of events.

This is one reason we find confusion and conflict regarding end-times teaching. None of the Old Testament prophecies will give an order of events because the events are not arranged in any consistent order. In fact, prophecies of the Old Testament can appear to conflict with each other, unless you understand they are not chronologically listed.

Even in the New Testament, Paul and others gave no definite order and even Jesus skipped around when he told about end-time events in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21. He did not need to give an order because Revelation would eventually be written by his Spirit through John the Revelator.

Waiting To Be Opened?

In the previous chapter, we saw the worship of Jesus in Heaven and God the Father giving him the seven scrolls that contain the Seven Seals. When do these Seals ***begin*** to be opened? We will see that some of these seals have indeed been broken already, possibly long ago.

When the Seals on the scrolls began to break, powerful spirits were sent out to cause specific things to happen on the earth. The things listed in the first five Seals are happening now, and seem to have a continuous effect, as we have seen the evidences of each going on still, and in concert with each other. These happenings are also a result of the curse caused by Adam's sin. For instance, his sin brought about judgment punishments like the pain of childbirth, hard work, death and family trouble. So these Seals are basically an extension of the curse, but they occur today in a more multiplied, intensified and convergent manner.

Over these past one hundred years, these "judgments" have become multiplied, and in just the last ten years, have become even more intense. For instance, martyrdom has taken place since the early church. This is what the Fifth Seal brought to earth. But in the last one hundred years, more have been killed for their faith in Christ than at any other time throughout history.

Martyrdom is not going away. It is getting worse, especially in India, the Middle East, and Africa. Don't forget political and social persecution is rising everywhere as well. Increasingly, many today notice that the evidences of the Seals have been occurring. And, like an actual sealed letter, once opened, it is available to read over and over again. John was told, after all, to write was for now (in his day), and what will happen later, not just for the future.

The things listed in the Seals also match the things that Jesus described in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, when he refers to the signs of the last days.

Let us not forget that in Jesus' day, while he walked the earth, he fulfilled scores of previous prophecies that had been made about him throughout the Old Testament. The people who supposedly had been expecting their messiah for centuries did not recognize him as such. Let us not be like them and miss what is about to happen next in prophecy.

We need to recognize the signs of the times, and where we are now, just as Peter did in Acts 2:16, when he proclaimed the ***last days had started***, fulfilling Joel 2:28-30. If the last days started 2000 years ago, as Peter said, then what days are we living in now?

“How Many Seals Are Broken?”

More and more people from all over the world have been asking us for some time the following question: ***“How many seals of Revelation have been broken?”*** People ask this because they can see with their own eyes the evidences of these Seals mirrored in everyday life.

People are not blind. You can't tell someone that something isn't going on, when they can see for themselves that it is. Really, there is nothing new described in the first five Seals of Revelation that hasn't been happening already. The Seals simply describe normal life events (though sometimes unpleasant,) including the many causes of death that have taken place for centuries.

Why these questions were not asked a few decades back is not hard to understand. It is because these things have started to occur in greater intensity, in multiplied numbers and in convergence beginning around the year 2000. This coincides with the uptick in global earthquakes that started to climb off the charts and still continues to break records.

Because the evidences of the first five Seals are happening now, it would be impossible, for example, to know when Seal two is broken. Since there is no peace on the earth now, (and there has not been peace since even before Jesus walked the earth,) how would we know the difference?

Therefore, if the evidences of these Seals have already been seen and felt, one must conclude they have been broken already. If they are not broken yet, how will we know when they “officially” become

opened, since we see their evidences now? They are certainly growing in intensity, so at what point would we know they have been officially opened? The answer is we wouldn't know. And, these answers are found nowhere in scripture. The only thing we are told is what we should see that would indicate the opening of a specific Seal. These things or evidences were written in a straight forward way that would be obvious to us, not hidden or mysterious.

Since we see proof that the first five Seals are open, does this mean the last Great Tribulation has begun? No, not at all, because when the Tribulation does start, that first day will be very obvious.

We will look at the signs of the first five Seals and see that they have been happening. We will also see that they are a perfect match for the signs Jesus said would intensify up to the time of his return.

First Seal

*“Then I watched while the Lamb opened the first of the seven seals. I heard one of the four living creatures say with a voice like thunder, “Come!” **I looked, and there before me was a white horse. The rider on the horse held a bow, and he was given a crown, and he rode out, determined to win the victory.***

Rev 6:1-2.

Who is this rider? Everyone has a different interpretation. Since many think that the First Seal must be the start of the Tribulation, they assign this rider in the First Seal to the Antichrist. But there is nothing here that speaks of the Antichrist, no description that has any weight without adding to, or subtracting from. But we do have substantial reason to believe this rider is Jesus.

Consider the following about this rider of the First Seal and the subsequent riders of the other Seals:

Jesus?

Some skip over the importance of the fact that this rider of the First Seal is on a white horse. Who in the Bible rides a white horse? Jesus, of course! We will also join him one day on white horses when we come down from Heaven for the Battle of Armageddon.

Also, we can't skip over the fact that the rider has a bow in his hand. Who else do we see in scripture that has a bow in his hand? There is a matching scripture in Zechariah that describes Jesus as the rider at the Second Coming with a bow in his hand.

*"I will bend Judah as **I bend my bow** and fill it with Ephraim. I will rouse your sons, Zion, against your sons, Greece, and make you like a warrior's sword. Then the LORD will appear over them; **his arrows** will flash like lightning. The Sovereign LORD will sound the trumpet; he will march in the storms of the south."*

Zech 9:13-14

Not the Antichrist

It does not matter if most scholars agree or disagree that the first rider is the Antichrist or Jesus. It only matters what scripture already says, if the scholars agree with scriptures, then it is fine, but unfortunately, many do not.

Some may think this rider is a very powerful angel, such as Michael or Gabriel. Angels are seen throughout scripture doing mighty things and protecting people, such as, Daniel 12:1, when Michael stands up to protect Israel. But because of the crown alone, this first rider is disqualified from being an angel, since we find nowhere in scripture of angels wearing crowns. However, we know that Jesus wears a crown in Revelation 19.

Jesus is the ultimate overcomer in all of scripture. Let's look at the original Greek for this verse in Revelation to see that this rider is not just "conquering," as some translations say, but will ultimately overcome in the future, and is overcoming today (which has continued

from John's day through to our present day.)

(Greek/English Interlinear (tr) NT) Revelation 6:2: 2 kai <2532> {AND} eidon <1492> (5627) {I SAW,} kai <2532> {AND} idou <2400> (5628) {BEHOLD,} ipsoV <2462> {A HORSE} leukoV <3022> {WHITE,} kai <2532> {AND} o <3588> {HE} kaqhmenoV <2521> (5740) {SITTING} ep <1909> {ON} autw <846> {IT} ecwn <2192> (5723) {HAVING} toxon <5115> {A BOW;} kai <2532> {AND} edoqh <1325> (5681) {WAS GIVEN} autw <846> {TO HIM} stefanoV <4735> {A CROWN,} kai <2532> {AND} exhlqen <1831> (5627) {HE WENT FORTH} nikwn <3528> (5723) {OVERCOMING} kai <2532> {AND} ina <2443> {THAT} niksh <3528> (5661) {HE MIGHT OVERCOME.} Rev 6:2

Do not let the phrase, “*He might overcome,*” fool you into thinking this rider may or may not overcome. First, “*he went forth overcoming*” shows us he already was overcoming something from the start. Since Jesus has always been with the Father in Heaven, this goes along with the fact that he has always had the victory from the foundations of the world and the universe. “*And that he might overcome,*” simply tells that he plans to overcome in the future as well.

The only conquering, “overcoming,” or victory the Antichrist will ever realize will be fleeting and temporary, and in the future only. Jesus is the only one, however, who fits each description. He is the one who overcame in the past, continues in the present, and will overcome in the future. Jesus is the ultimate “overcomer,” not the Antichrist!

In addition, the Antichrist will only destroy for destruction's sake, but his real goal is to be worshipped as “God.”

The riders of these Seals have tremendous power that affects all of humanity, which no one man can do, including the Antichrist. In all these centuries of evil, it was never at the hand of one man. There have been many types of “antichrists” under the spirit of antichrist. Later on, when the actual last Antichrist attempts to force everyone to accept his mark, **many will decline it and be killed as martyrs**. So he will not have nearly the power that these spirit riders possess. God will allow the Antichrist to ultimately kill them, but it will be a **victory for**

those martyred, not the Antichrist! The martyrs will be victorious and overcome as Jesus already did and will.

Spirit Riders, Not Men

These are ***spirit*** riders of ***spirit horses***, not men as some assume. The scripture also does not call them “horsemen,” at all. Since only this first rider has a crown, it means this rider has more authority, and has authority over the others. This is another reason to link this rider to Jesus.

Only a spirit can be in control of other spirits. The Antichrist will be a man and will not be able control any spirits himself; instead, it will be the other way around. So it is not possible that any of these riders would be the Antichrist, or any man, for that matter.

God has always used both good and evil spirits, as well as, evil and good men to do his will. So it is possible that these riders without the crown are angelic, or good or evil spirits. In fact, we find nowhere in the Bible, which shows that all of these riders get thrown into hell. Only the two riders of the Fourth Seal will be thrown into Hell, denoting that the other riders are possibly good spirits.

Apocalypse?

When you interpret it literally, the riders of the Seals actually total five riders, not four. Why is it important to split hairs on this? Unfortunately, the assumption that there are “four riders” has led to other misunderstandings about the nature of the Seals and has given license to be loose with scriptural interpretations in other places, as well.

Let’s look at it clearly. Seal one has the white horse rider. Seal two has the red horse rider. Seal three has the black horse rider. Seal four has two riders, “Death” and “Hades,” who followed behind. (We see that these two riders will be thrown into the Lake of Fire at Revelation 20:14.) So altogether, we really see five riders.

Besides the fact that these riders are not men, and there are actually five riders, not four, they are also not riding *only* during the “Apocalypse.” Actually, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse” has been an improper association to the Great Tribulation period without definite scriptural proof.

Even with all the obvious evidence that the first five Seals have been broken already, we have failed to recognize it properly because someone categorized the first four Seals as, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse.” The problem is, the Bible never calls the Seals this, man did, and the term, “apocalypse” is not even used in the first five Seals at all, as we just saw.

God's wrath is not mentioned in these first five Seals, neither is the Apocalypse. It is important to know this has been a manmade concoction. This is the main reason many have falsely linked these Seals to the Great Tribulation period.

Apocalypse means, great distress. The Webster dictionary specifically defines it as, “Great disaster.” Others say it refers to the complete and final destruction of the world on a catastrophic scale.

The final destruction that fits the true “apocalypse” nature of the end is actually found in Revelation 19. Remember, Revelation is to be read and understood in order.

Second Seal

“When the Lamb opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, “Come!” Then another horse came out, a red one. Its rider was given power to take away peace from the earth and to make people kill each other, and he was given a big sword.” Rev 6:3-4

This is a simple straightforward Seal and very general in scope with little detail. Some will say this Seal signifies war. Actually, war is specifically described at the Fourth Seal, not here. This Seal describes murders and killings of all kinds, not just war, if it is at all.

We again see this has to be a spirit rider, like the others, since no man can force a person to kill another person against their will. But we know spirits can influence killings and do all the time. Controlling spirits are seen in many places in the Bible and here they are again.

Peace has certainly been taken from the earth already and this Seal would bring us nothing new, if it were true that it has yet to be opened. More and more people are crying for peace and more and more people display peace signs these days. But peace is not coming to earth until Jesus reigns. However, Jesus does offer peace today to any who will accept his message and accept him as their Savior.

Overall, if this were only a future Seal, it would be impossible to identify its opening, since there is already no peace on earth now. All one has to do is look at the news today to see the results of no peace on earth and in people's lives.

Third Seal

“When the Lamb opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come!’ I looked, and there before me was a black horse, and its rider held a pair of scales in his hand. Then I heard something that sounded like a voice coming from the middle of the four living creatures. The voice said, ‘A quart of wheat for a day's pay, and three quarts of barley for a day's pay, and do not damage the olive oil and wine!’” Rev 6:5-6

Some will say this represents famine or future famine, as if there never has been famine these past many centuries. We have had famines since the beginning, all over the world, and in every century. We can go to the sometimes helpful online encyclopedia to find more information on this: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_famines. You can see for yourself how famine has increased substantially, especially starting in the seventeenth century.

In addition, the scripture is not just describing famine, in fact, to be totally accurate, it's not describing famine so much as it describes **inflation**. This is indicated by the language that speaks of salary and how little it will buy. Working all day for a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley, leaves no room for the luxuries we enjoy here in America, such as cars, entertainment, vacation homes and eating what we want, when we want. This type of inflation is not fully here in America yet, but it is definitely widespread in other countries. Inflation is not new to the world. However, it is getting worse all the time.

In addition, we see the wording, *“Do not damage the oil or wine.”* This means the rich will stay rich for a little while longer, because this does not describe total worldwide famine for everyone, but instead, for only those who can't afford the high cost of living.

The poor always feel the brunt of inflation, but not the rich. The real poor can only afford a loaf of bread, especially in third world countries. And they really can't afford oil or wine, so to speak.

Some of the rich among us don't do enough to help feed the truly poor. We will be judged for what we did and what we did not do. It should not be forced by the government, but it should be done by individuals who submit to God. To whom much is given, much is required.

Forth Seal

*“When the Lamb opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, “Come!” I looked, and there before me was a pale horse. **Its rider was named death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill people by war, by starvation, by disease, and by the wild animals of the earth.**”* Rev 6:7-8

This Seal specifically describes war and famine for certain. Notice how these riders are given power over only one quarter of the earth, because if it were over everyone, they would have killed everyone

by now. What is most interesting and telling, is how they also have power over disease and wild animals. Obviously, no man could have power like this, only a spirit. However, this is only talking about the methods by which one quarter of the earth's population will be killed over time. (In contrast, at the Sixth Angel Trumpet, one third of the earth's population will be killed quickly, possibly in one day, by a demonic army.)

A few important statistics that match this Seal:

- Only 80 documented wars were fought from 999 B.C. to zero
- Another 80 were fought in between 0 to 1000 A.D.

Look at the dramatic increase since 1000 A.D. up until today:

- 80 more were fought in just 400 years from 1000 to 1400 A.D.
- 93 wars were fought in just 200 years between 1400 and 1600.

Do you notice a pattern yet?

- 73 wars in just one hundred years from 1600-1700.
- 70 were fought from 1700-1800. But, world wars started to increase here, as well.

At this point, wars start to include multiple nations involved in bigger wars.

Look at the next dramatic jump:

-295 wars were fought from 1800-1900!

- Over 300 wars were fought in between 1900 and 2000, including WWI and WWII.

-Then in just seven years in between 2003 and 2010 there have been **48 more.**

-Today there are **26 current ongoing wars somewhere in the world.**

This is staggering. These statistics can also be found at:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_wars)

Does this increase in wars remind anyone about how Jesus described it would be before the very end? It should, because Jesus, in Matthew 24 and Luke 21, describes these very things we have been talking about, but without calling them Seals. As with other previous prophecy, we have to match up Matthew and Luke to Revelation. Jesus said when you see wars, rumors of wars, lack of food, riots, sicknesses, and earthquakes, all on the increase, the end would be near. Jesus said that while these things are happening, people will also proclaim “peace,” which is what we see today.

Jesus also talked about martyrdom in Matthew and Luke as well, which the next Seal addresses specifically.

Fifth Seal

*“When the Lamb opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been killed because they were faithful to the word of God and to the message they had received. **These souls shouted in a loud voice, Holy and true Lord, how long until you judge the people of the earth and punish them for killing us?** Then each one of them was given a white robe and was told to wait a short time longer. **There were still some of their fellow servants and brothers and sisters in the service of Christ who must be killed as they were. They had to wait until all of***

this was finished.” Rev 6:9-11

Jesus, in Matthew, also describes events which match the Fifth Seal: *“Then people will arrest you, hand you over to be hurt, and kill you. They will hate you because you believe in me.”* Matt 24:9

The Fifth Seal, here in Revelation 6:9-11, is important in proving that the first five Seals have already been broken, not that we don’t have enough proof already. The martyrs ask the Lord in this passage, ***“How long?”*** until he judges the earth for their deaths. Jesus tells them to wait until the number of those to be killed, as martyrs, ***is complete.***

This, in fact, does not get completed until the Antichrist kills all who will not accept his Mark in Revelation 13:15, which will be approximately halfway towards the end of the Great Tribulation.

But their question gives us a sense of the time period they are asking this. ***This question never would have been asked, if the last Great Tribulation had already begun.*** These martyrs would have known for themselves the answer to this question. It seems likely then, that this question is asked before the Rapture happens, and before the Tribulation even starts.

All true believers know that once the Great Tribulation starts, only seven short years, or so, will be left until Jesus brings his justice at the Battle of Armageddon.

In addition, they are in Heaven, where ***we will know all things.*** The only thing that they, and Jesus, do not know is the day and hour he will steal away his followers into the air at the Rapture.

Therefore, we must conclude that this Seal was broken long ago. In fact, it must have been broken ***before*** the approximately 70 million martyrs, that we know of to date, ***started to be killed,*** which was all the way back to the time of the apostles. Even now, 171,000 Christian martyrs die each year on average. This information is cited in *Christianity Today* and can be found at:

<http://christianity.about.com/od/denominations/p/christiantoday.ht>

m.

Voice of the Martyrs is another organization that has up-to-date information that should amaze. Their website can be found at: www.persecution.com. Five hundred Christians will die somewhere today for their faith in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, this does not make for a politically-correct news headline.

Again, the Fifth Seal is actually completed later in Revelation 13:15 and 14:14 when the beheadings are ordered by the Antichrist of all who will not accept the Mark of the Beast.

Jesus is the one who has ordered all these things because he is the breaker of the Seals. With the increase of martyrs worldwide, with the increasing number of earthquakes, with the increase of all kinds of deaths, and with the increase of the evidences of the other Seals, we must be very close to the Rapture.

Daniel's 69th & 70th Week

Daniel's prophecy describes the end-times events with a series of weeks. The first week of Daniel's vision through to the 69th week represents what has already been fulfilled. The 69th week ended with the death of Jesus on the cross. We wait for the fulfillment of the 70th week.

Daniel's 70th week represents events within the Great Tribulation period, with special emphasis on what happens with the Jews after the Antichrist desecrates the temple when there is 3 ½ years left of the Tribulation. The final falling away from the faith and temple desecration is the event that brings the final rise of the Antichrist also described in Revelation, chapter 13. But, the angel specifically told Daniel to seal up this 70th week vision until the time of the end (Daniel 12:9.)

Interestingly, John was told **not** to seal up his prophecy, as the angel instructed Daniel. Instead, the angel told John in Revelation

22:10 that the time for these things to happen is near. This is why it makes sense that John's prophecy is being fulfilled right before our eyes today, such as the happenings of first five Seals.

Some think the rise of the Antichrist will **begin** the Great Tribulation and Daniels 70th week. They think this because they also believe that the Antichrist is the rider at the First Seal, and that the First Seal is the start of the Great Tribulation.

However, there is no proof that the First Seal rider is the Antichrist and we will see that the Sixth Seal is the real start the Tribulation. Moreover, it is Jesus, himself, that will put all events into motion, since he is the breaker of all the Seals. The Antichrist is not even mentioned well into Revelation 13. *(However, this does not rule out the possibility that the Antichrist could be in some position of power at the time of the Rapture.)*

The Antichrist is identified with the First Seal only because it fits a preconceived notion about when the Tribulation begins. But it is not scripturally clear or sound. In fact, according to scripture, it is not the start of the Tribulation that brings the Antichrist, but it is the turning away from the truth and faith at the start of the last three and a half years (Daniel 8:23.) We have to plug Daniel's prophecy into Revelation, where it matches. We cannot try to put Revelation into Daniel and get a sense of order.

Therefore, we are in a lull or interlude between the Fifth and Sixth Seals. This is a fitting match for Daniel's 69th & 70th week interlude, which many believe has been going on since about 70 A.D.

We can clearly see that the first five Seals are open since their evidences are all around us. We only wait now for the Sixth Seal to be opened.

Sixth Seal Coming Up

The all important Sixth Seal is about to be broken and will

change everything for all times. The beginning of the end will soon be upon us. Relatively few believe this or know exactly what is about to happen, which makes it the perfect time for Jesus to steal away the ready and waiting group of believers.

He said he would come at a time when it would be least expected. Since more in the church today doubt that there will be a pre-Tribulation Rapture, many will be caught off guard.

There is a clear distinction between the events of the first five Seals and the events of the Sixth Seal that will start the Great Tribulation. The Sixth Seal scripture says very plainly that the people of earth cry out and declare it to be the first day of God's wrath.

We refer to the Great Tribulation as, "*God's Concentrated Wrath,*" because at the Sixth Seal, there will be a distinct change in the intensity of God's wrath.

Although the Sixth Seal is about to be broken and the Great Tribulation is about to begin, this does not mean that some Christians today are not going through some sort of tribulation already. For instance, many today are enduring sickness, tragedy, family problems, or financial trouble. For some of us, our testing comes now. Jesus said we would have tribulation in this life.

God's wrath initially started with Adam and Eve's sin in the garden. We can see that the happenings of the first five Seals are present and are a direct result of sin. Throughout the years, the effects of sin have become progressively worse, and are the cause of all the trials and tribulation we experience today.

However, these problems have not been devastating to the earth in the way the events of the Sixth Seal will become. The events that start at the opening of the Sixth Seal and beyond will be stronger, more devastating, and unmistakable.

Chapter Five: The Rapture Revelation

Revelation Chapter 6:12-17

*“I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. **The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth**, as figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. **The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.***

*“Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, **and everyone else**, both slave and free, hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. **They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?’**” Rev 6:12-17 (NIV)*

Sixth Seal Rapture

This chapter brings us to the most important part of *Revelation Unleashed*: The incredible events of the overlooked Sixth Seal. The events of the Sixth Seal will happen soon and will take many by surprise.

Along with the birth and resurrection of Jesus, the Sixth Seal is one of the biggest events in all of scripture. However, the church has treated this passage as a mere bump in the road on the way to the Second Coming.

We can't miss this part of John's vision or we will totally miss what it truly represents. It is not symbolism and it is not a foreshadowing description of the Second Coming of Revelation 19. The Seals are numbered for a reason. We should not skip to Revelation 19

when we get to the Sixth Seal of Chapter 6. We have to read these Seals in the order they were given to John.

The Sixth Seal is the next event to be fulfilled; we are not waiting for anything else. These will be actual events and **this is the exact place where the Rapture of the church occurs** in the order of end-time events.

When Jesus raptures the ready church, the first day of God's wrath will immediately commence, followed by the Great Tribulation period.

Most people have no clue this is about to happen because many think that we have to wait for the Antichrist to be identified before Jesus raptures the church. But if this were true, it would negate the scriptures that teach he will come as a thief.

For this same reason, the Rapture cannot occur in the middle or near the end of the Tribulation; it would be too obvious and expected since the events of the Tribulation will be distinct and predictable.

We already discussed how the First Seal is thought by many to be the start of the Great Tribulation and because of this, those who believe in a pre-Tribulation Rapture, also think that the Rapture has to happen before this First Seal is opened.

However, if anyone is willing to see that the first five Seals are open already, they will be able to see the truth of the Sixth Seal Rapture. When you read the Sixth Seal you will understand why both the Rapture and the start of the Tribulation happen here instead.

With a Sixth Seal start of the Tribulation, the Rapture is still positioned at the *beginning* of the Tribulation, not at the middle or the end of it. This matches scriptures that say we are not appointed to suffer his wrath. We will be out of here before the events of the Sixth Seal start to unfold.

The Secret is Out

We have always thought that the Rapture will be a completely secret event. It is true that **Jesus will come to get us with the surprise of a thief**, and no one knows the day or the hour that this will occur. However, **the Rapture will not be a secret once it has happened**, because scripture says everyone will see Jesus in the air at this event.

The details of this Sixth Seal event are very important. In this chapter, we will bring in **previous passages of Rapture prophecy** that get fulfilled at the Sixth Seal. This Sixth Seal is no blip on the screen; instead, it is a very detailed, massive event that makes for a day of shock, sadness, crying and unparalleled destruction that has never been seen before.

God's Wrath Begins!

There are at least two “Great” days of the Lord found in scripture. The Rapture “Day of the Lord” is only the *first* day of God’s wrath and we will see that it happens at the Sixth Seal.

God won’t completely annihilate the earth and its people at this first great day. It will only be the start of the testing period known as the Great Tribulation that will last approximately seven years.

The Tribulation will be a punishment and testing period for those who miss the Rapture. However, God is merciful and will give all another chance to obey before the final judgment.

The *second* “Great” day of God’s wrath is at the Second Coming of Jesus as described in Chapter 19. This is when he comes down from heaven on horseback with the raptured church to fight the Antichrist in the Battle of Armageddon. It will bring complete annihilation of the Antichrist and his followers.

It is extremely clear when you read Revelation 6 that it’s truly

the *first* day of God's unmistakable and more concentrated wrath. How do we know this? At verses 16 and 17, the people of earth proclaim it themselves: "***For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can withstand it?***" What gets unleashed onto the world at this point onward will be dramatically different than anything we have ever seen before.

Unmistakable Events, Unmistakably God

We described the Sixth Seal as the start of God's "*concentrated*" wrath. We know we have been under God's wrath already, considering the chaos of sin that has been allowed to rule the earth today. This chaos of sin we see today matches the evidences of the first five Seals, yet we still have many pockets of peace where "normal" life is basically experienced.

But compared to the wrath of the first five Seals, the Sixth Seal will be more concentrated, more powerful and dramatically noticeable everywhere, and will affect everyone. After this day, there will be no more normal life, and no more denying that God is in control.

We will review descriptions of God's wrath in Matthew 24 and in Luke 21. Each matches the description of the Sixth Seal event from Revelation 6. Matthew and Luke also include the signs that will lead up to the Sixth Seal and a description of the events that will occur that first day and some that will occur throughout the Tribulation.

World-Wide Earthquake

The first thing we see at the Sixth Seal is an earthquake. How big is this earthquake? It will be the biggest one yet in the history of the world, "***and every mountain and island was removed from its place.***" Earthquakes, as we discussed, have been on a sharp increase all over the world since the year 2000. They all lead towards this massive worldwide earthquake described here at the Sixth Seal.

Red Moon

Next, we see that the sun grows dark and the moon red. Jesus also described this in Matthew 24:29: *"Soon after the trouble of those days, **the sun will grow dark, and the moon will not give its light.** The stars will fall from the sky. And the powers of the heavens will be shaken."* We also see this wording in Isaiah 13:10 and 34:4.

These events of the Sixth Seal have clearly not taken place to date. The sun growing dark obviously matches in both Matthew, and the Sixth Seal.

What about the moon growing dark? Is growing dark the same as turning red, which the Sixth Seal specifically states? Does Matthew describe this same event, but with different wording? Yes, it does.

For example, if you were to put a piece of red film over the white light of a flashlight, you would darken the brightness of the white light. So a red moon can also be classified as growing darker.

Falling Stars

"The stars fell from the sky to the earth," from the Sixth Seal scripture compares well to *"the stars fell from the sky"* from Matthew. Are they the same thing? Of course, they are. However in this case, Revelation gives a bit more detail. It not only tells us that the stars fell from the sky, but also exactly where they fall. They fall to the earth!

It is the same thing with the moon. Not only does it grow dark in Matthew, but we see at the Sixth Seal, it also grows red, showing that it is still being darkened, but with even more detail.

This is the benefit of matching scripture together where the language and description fits into the set order of Revelation. We get a bigger and complete picture of the whole *and with order*.

Sky Recedes

The Sixth Seal then says, *"**The heavens receded like a scroll being rolled up.**"* This is a huge and almost strange detail

that you will hear few scholars try to explain. You may ask, “*Why is the sky being rolled up like a scroll?*” Well, we can also find this described in other scriptures.

Isaiah 34:44 says, “*The sun, moon, and **stars will dissolve, and the sky will be rolled up like a scroll. The stars will fall like dead leaves from a vine or dried-up figs from a fig tree.***”

This passage needs to be matched with this passage in Revelation 6, since it clearly has the same language. Along with the match, comes even more detail about this one event.

2 Peter 3:10 also describes this and gives us more pieces of the puzzle: “***But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The skies will disappear with a loud noise. Everything in them will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be exposed.***” Peter adds another amazing detail; when the sky recedes, it will make a loud noise.

One reason the sky will be receded or rolled up may be to expose the earth, possibly for the remainder of the next seven years. The other could be to allow the people of the earth to see Jesus in the sky clearly with no atmosphere to get in the way, since it is said in Revelation 6 that “Every eye will see him.” Revelation 6 also says that the people **know** the destruction is from the wrath of the Lamb. So it is clear that all will see Jesus for themselves.

The World Will Cry

Jesus partially described in Matthew 24:29-31 what we will see at the Sixth Seal:

*“At that time, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. **Then all the peoples of the world will cry.** They will see the Son of Man coming on clouds in the sky with great power and glory. He will use a loud trumpet to send his angels all around the earth, and they will gather his chosen people from every part of the world.”*

Where else in scripture do we see “*all the people of world*” crying out or mourning? Only in one place.....at the Sixth Seal! Not at the physical Second Coming of Jesus at Revelation 19. This Matthew scripture is to be placed at the Sixth Seal event, not at the Revelation 19 event of the Battle of Armageddon.

First, there are not many people left at that point in Revelation 19. The people left on Earth by then, after all the destruction of the Sixth Seal, the Trumpet Judgments and the Bowl Judgments, will be significantly diminished.

Some of those that remain will be a very small number of Jews who were protected in the desert for the last 3-1/2 years. Zechariah does speak of the Jews crying out and only matches with the events of Jesus’ Second Coming at Revelation 19:

“I will pour out on David’s family and the people in Jerusalem a spirit of kindness and mercy. They will look at me, the one they have stabbed, and they will cry like someone crying over the death of an only child. They will be as sad as someone who has lost a firstborn son.” Zech 12:10

These Jews are the only people crying at Jesus’ actual physical Second Coming, not the godless. Also, the holy Tribulation Saints will have been beheaded long before this point.

However, before their defeat at the Battle of Armageddon, these godless people will not be crying out or mourning anything. In fact, they will look forward to fighting against God. They will only give out a war cry, thinking they will be able to win because of the power the Antichrist displayed with his deceptive miracles.

Jesus said in Matthew 24:30 that all the people of earth would see Jesus in the air and would ***all be crying out*** which matches the Sixth Seal. “***They called to the mountains and the rocks, ‘Fall on us. Hide us from the face of the One who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb! The great day for their anger has come, and who can stand against it?’***” Rev 6:16-17

This here is not a war cry. If you were to hear someone calling to rocks and mountains to fall on them, would you not say they were crying out to them? What do people do when they are frightened? They cry for help.

But, we must notice from whom they are asking this help. Not from God, but from inanimate objects of stone. This is much different than the Jews in Revelation 19, who will be crying directly to God himself as he lovingly ministers healing to them.

The crying out at the Six Seal is not a foreshadowing of the crying out that will happen in Revelation 19. These are two separate events.

The Son of Man

Now we need to ask ourselves another important question. How is it that the people of earth know to credit Jesus and his Father for what is going on? Notice what they say as they are crying to the rocks:

*“Fall on us. **Hide us from the face of the One who sits on the throne and from the anger of the Lamb!** The great day for their anger has come, and who can stand against it?”* Rev 6:16-17

It is a worldwide earthquake and star fragments are falling, no doubt causing millions of fires, but why are these godless people crediting this event to God? What do people credit for natural disasters today? Not to God anymore, instead we give credit to Mother Nature, “global warming,” or “climate change.”

How is it that they are able to know this is God here? There can only be one answer and it is found back in Matthew 24: 30-31:

*“At that time, **the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky. Then all the peoples of the world will cry. They will see the Son of Man coming on clouds in the sky with great power and glory. He will use a loud trumpet to send his angels all around the earth, and they will gather his chosen***

people from every part of the world.”

Whom does the scripture say they see here? They are seeing none other than Jesus himself, which is why they are crediting the events of the Sixth Seal to God.

And why are they crying? Those who are not ready for the Rapture will certainly be distraught that they missed it. Those who never learned about the Rapture will simply cry out in fear as they can see the massive destruction of God’s wrath happening before them. Since Jesus’ coming will be with the surprise of a thief, there can be no previous sign to tell us that it is about to happen.

In fact, when Matthew 24:30 says “the sign of the son of man will appear in the sky,” it means that Jesus himself *is* the sign. For whom is he a sign? The Jews, especially, but he will also be an obvious sign to everyone that the beginning of the end has officially started.

The “Last Trumpet”

Is Jesus simply being seen in the sky here or is he also doing something else? According to the matching scriptures of 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and Matthew 24:29-31, there is a trumpet of some sort being blown at the Rapture.

For instance, it says in Matthew 24: 31, “*He will use a loud trumpet.*” He uses it to call his angels to collect his elect. Jesus has a voice that “*sounds like a trumpet.*” (Rev 1:10 & 4:1) He blows this himself, or perhaps just calls out in that trumpet-sounding voice as described by John in Revelation.

Some say this Rapture trumpet doesn’t happen at the start of the Tribulation. You may have heard 1 Corinthians 15:52 that says Jesus will Rapture the church when the “last trumpet sounds.” This scripture is true, of course.

Unfortunately, some use this scripture to say that the Rapture will happen at the end of the Tribulation at the Battle of Armageddon

because of the scripture that says Jesus blows a trumpet there. They think this is the “last” trumpet talked about in Corinthians.

Some even say that the Rapture trumpet will not sound until half way through the Tribulation at the “last” Angel Trumpet. Which is it?

We hear of trumpets throughout the Bible and it is popular to hear about trumpets in end-time teachings. Back in chapter one of *Revelation Unleashed*, we touched on the importance of distinguishing the many trumpets mentioned throughout scripture.

We need to realize that there is more than one trumpet within the book of Revelation and that they are not all one and the same. If we misplace these verses that mention trumpets, we misunderstand where the Rapture trumpet actually occurs in the line of all the other important end-time events.

This trumpet at the Rapture will be the starting point of the last Great Tribulation period. There are trumpets mentioned in various places in the Old Testament that represent historical events already completed. There are also some mentioned in prophetic texts that have yet to be fulfilled. We can easily place these unfulfilled trumpet scriptures in with Revelation events by matching their wording and context to form a more complete picture.

With other prophetic texts overlapped into the events of Revelation, we can see **there is more than one trumpet and trumpeter** as the end of days unfolds. When we do this properly, we will see that the Rapture trumpet is actually *not* the last literal trumpet blown in the Bible.

Rapture Trumpet

*“But look! I tell you this secret: We will not all sleep in death, but we will all be changed. It will take only a second as quickly as an eye blinks **when the last trumpet sounds**. The trumpet will sound, and those who have died will be raised to live forever, and we will all*

be changed.” 1 Cor 15:52

When does the Rapture trumpet get blown? Since the trumpet will signal his coming, the collection of the elect by the angels will most likely have to happen in an instantaneous way after it is blown, otherwise people would have a warning. Jesus said he would come like a thief. If it were blown followed by a long interval of time, it would negate him coming as a thief as he promised in many passages.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 also partially describes the Rapture event: ***“The Lord himself will come down from heaven with (1.) a loud command, (2.) with the voice of the archangel, (3.) and with the trumpet call of God. And those who have died believing in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive will be gathered up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And we will be with the Lord forever.”***

Jesus is doing three things at once here. There is no other trumpet anywhere in the Bible that comes remotely close to this description, because it is one of a kind, and a trumpet of this sort is never seen again anywhere in all of scripture. It is the first of its kind and the last of its kind! Why?

Again, John described Jesus as the one with the voice that sounds like a trumpet. So we can see then, how he is able to shout, and blow a trumpet, all with the voice of an archangel as well.

Let us look at all the verses that talk of trumpets in Revelation. We will see why the Rapture trumpet cannot be the trumpet that occurs at these other events in Revelation.

Last Angel Trumpet

There are the Seven Angel Trumpets that come after the Six Seal, which are blown by angels. The purpose of the Angel Trumpets is to bring punishment or judgments to earth. The “last” trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52 is often incorrectly linked to the last Angel Trumpet of Revelation 11:15.

The last Angel Trumpet should not be confused with the “Jesus Trumpet” that must be blown at the breaking of the Sixth Seal or seconds before the Sixth Seal is broken. The Rapture trumpet blown by Jesus is a trumpet with a unique purpose, and one that closes a period of time, and ushers in another. This is a “Jesus Trumpet” because it is he that blows it at the Rapture, not an angel.

It is clear we have not been appointed to suffer God's wrath, as stated in all the following scriptures: 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-9, Revelation 3:10, Luke 21:28, and 21:36. If the Rapture trumpet were the same as the one blown at the last of the Angel Trumpet judgments, again, it would be far too obvious that he was coming. But also, it leaves us here during the wrath when we are supposed to be removed from it before it starts.

Battle of Armageddon Trumpet

If we look in Zechariah, we see that Jesus blows another trumpet, but this one will be blown during the Battle of Armageddon.

*“Then the Lord will appear above them, and his arrows will shoot like lightning. **The Lord God will blow the trumpet**, and he will march in the storms of the south.” Zech 9:14*

Some have said that this trumpet here is the Rapture trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:5, but it can't be. This trumpet in Zechariah is a war trumpet. The Rapture trumpet, on the other hand, will be to gather the elect to the clouds as a kind of, “reward” trumpet.

We also should remember that the Rapture scriptures are a perfect match for the Six Seal, not for Revelation 19. For instance, Revelation 19 does not have a description of a mass of people gathered up to heaven like we see at the Sixth Seal. Revelation 19 also does not have the involvement of angels as we see described in the Rapture scriptures. Therefore, the trumpet of the Rapture scriptures must be matched with the Rapture event alone and should not be confused with any other.

The End of the Battle Trumpet

Isaiah describes the *actual* last trumpet blown in the order of end-times events which will be at the end of the Battle of Armageddon. However, it is not certain who blows this. The purpose is to call the Jews back to Jerusalem. The Jews will not be collected into the clouds as in the Rapture. They will, however, stay and repopulate the earth for the last thousand years.

*“At that time the Lord will begin gathering his people one by one from the Euphrates River to the brook of Egypt. He will separate them from others as grain is separated from chaff. Many of my people are now lost in Assyria. Some have run away to Egypt. **But at that time a great trumpet will be blown**, and all those people will come and worship the Lord on that holy mountain in Jerusalem.”*

Isa 27:12-13

If we are going to be completely accurate, this trumpet would be the actual last one blown in all of scripture. So the question then becomes, if this is the very last trumpet, and it is, then would this be when the ready church is raptured? The answer, of course, has to be, “No.” It is not, since God's wrath has long been poured out at this point and since we have much scripture that says true Christians have not been appointed to suffer his wrath.

In fact, all the evil people will have been killed and the only ones left will be the remnant of Jews and perhaps a few straggling Gentiles who may have somehow avoided taking the Mark of the Beast and were able to hide. They will be left to repopulate the earth during the last 1000 year millennial reign of Jesus.

Therefore, since this last trumpet is blown after all of God's wrath is completed, there is no way this trumpet is the same as the Rapture trumpet of 1 Corinthians 15:52.

Different Trumpets, Unique Purposes

What should we conclude about all this trumpet talk? There are many trumpets throughout the book of Revelation and throughout the Bible in general. They are definitely not one and the same. They happen at different events, and for different purposes.

Jesus blows the trumpet at the Rapture event himself. This appears to be the “last” trumpet of our era, that when blown, will bring it to an end.

After this Rapture trumpet is blown at the Sixth Seal, a new era will begin which will be the final testing period for everyone left on the earth, including both Jew and Gentile.

Within the Tribulation period, there will be various trumpets as well. Seven angels will blow trumpets to bring specific judgments to earth. We also saw that Jesus will blow a trumpet during the Battle of Armageddon to direct the armies of Heaven.

And finally, we see a trumpet blown at the end of the battle to call the Jews back to Israel. This is literally the last trumpet that will be blown in the line of end-time events.

Therefore, the Rapture trumpet is described as the “last” trumpet for another reason. It is definitely not called the last trumpet because it is the very last one blown in the end-times, as we just saw, but it is the last one of an era.

Chapter Six: The 144,000 and the Raptured Saints

Revelation Chapter 7

*“After the vision of these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth. The angels were holding the four winds of the earth to keep them from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. Then I saw another angel coming up from the east who had the seal of the living God. And he called out in a loud voice to the four angels to whom God had given power to harm the earth and the sea. He said to them, **‘Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we mark with a sign the foreheads of the people who serve our God.’** Then I heard how many people were marked with the sign. **There were one hundred forty-four thousand from every tribe of the people of Israel.**” Rev 7:1-4*

Chapter 7 of Revelation continues with the Sixth Seal events. This is one place in the Bible, at least, where chapter assignments were not helpfully placed. Ideally, the Sixth Seal should have been one complete chapter by itself in order not to break up the continuity of the events as they unfold.

With this knowledge, we have a more critical understanding of the context as we continue to read about the Sixth Seal in these next passages. We know from matching scriptures that the Rapture took place at the onset of the Sixth Seal.

Also, we saw that on this day, the start of God’s undeniable wrath is unleashed onto the earth. The next event of the Sixth Seal is the marking of a finite, literal number of special people, the 144,000.

144,000 Sealed

Those to be marked with a special seal will be none other than the Jews. But, for what they are being sealed? John tells us that angels

are getting ready to harm the earth and sea, but these special servants are being sealed with a SEAL OF PROTECTION. Since the angels are getting ready to pour out more punishments soon, these selected few will be protected from it.

This is not a seal of Salvation as some want to assign to it. They are saved already. In fact, if they were not, they could not receive this seal. We see later in Revelation 14, that these 144,000 Jews had not defiled themselves with women. Therefore, another characteristic of this group is ***they are all men.***

Some people believe that this group of 144,000 missed the Rapture. But that is not clear, nor is it probable. There is a better chance that they were raptured along with the great multitude we will read about later in Revelation 7.

However, it does not matter if they were sealed on earth or in Heaven. They will be on earth at this point to do God's work and are saved, Messianic Jews. This is clear. The passage also states specifically that they are from the twelve tribes of Judah, and with great detail, lists the names of each tribe and their numbers.

“From the tribe of Judah twelve thousand were marked with the sign, from the tribe of Reuben twelve thousand, from the tribe of Gad twelve thousand, from the tribe of Asher twelve thousand, from the tribe of Naphtali twelve thousand, from the tribe of Manasseh twelve thousand, from the tribe of Simeon twelve thousand, from the tribe of Levi twelve thousand, from the tribe of Issachar twelve thousand, from the tribe of Zebulun twelve thousand, from the tribe of Joseph twelve thousand, and from the tribe of Benjamin twelve thousand were marked with the sign.” Rev 7:5-8

Since Revelation is the master plan, we can place Isaiah 66 here and know what this group of Jews will do during the tribulation period. Isaiah states:

“I will put a mark on some of the people, and I will send some of these saved people to the nations: to Tarshish,

*Libya, Lud (the land of archers), Tubal, Greece, and all the faraway lands. These people have never heard about what I have done nor seen my glory. **So the saved people** will tell the nations about my glory. And they will bring **all your fellow Israelites** from all nations to my holy mountain in Jerusalem. **Your fellow Israelites** will come on horses, donkeys, and camels and in chariots and wagons. They will be like the grain offerings that the people bring in clean containers to the Temple, says the Lord. And I will choose even some of these people to be priests and Levites, says the Lord.” Isa 66:19-21*

Everything here in Isaiah is speaking about Jews specifically and separately. There is no talk of Gentiles, either here, or at the Sixth Seal description of the 144,000.

Not the Church or Tribulation Saints

There are those who want to replace this group of 144,000 Jews with the church or Tribulation Saints. This teaching is called, “Replacement Theology.” The fact that this sealed group is men disqualifies them from being a true representative of the church, since the church is made up of men and women. But most of all, the Bible clearly says they are from the twelve tribes of Israel. This makes them clearly Jews.

A reason some seek to replace this group with the church is that they see there will be protection for this group through the Tribulation period and there is no protection for anyone else. In their minds, they feel that God would protect all saints during this time. Unfortunately, this is not scriptural, as you will see when you continue to read Revelation.

For the most part, people who believe this also hold to a mid or post-Tribulation Rapture view as well. Because they do not believe in a pre-wrath or pre-Tribulation Rapture, they want to believe there will be protection for the saints or themselves during the Tribulation period. But, the fact is, there is not even protection for the Tribulation Saints,

nor the Jews as a whole. Only this one small group of 144,000 is protected. This is one reason we need to be ready for the Lord's coming today.

There is a punishment for missing the Rapture no matter who you are. The punishment is that they will have to endure through all the plagues just like the rest of the world. However, those who hold on to their faith through all the testing of the Tribulation will be saved.

In fact, Jesus said in Revelation 3:10 that the time of testing would come to the entire world. What we know about testing is some pass and some fail. Certainly then, there will be many saved during the Tribulation period, but it will not be through protection, instead it will be done through standing strong against great persecution and suffering.

If God protected all saints during the Tribulation with physical protection, then everyone would want to become a Christian. Even today, not all Christians are granted protected through persecution. Today, some are jailed, some starve to death, and some are ultimately martyred. *(Again, this is proof of an opened Fifth Seal.)*

The Raptured Saints Worship God

*“After the vision of these things I looked, and there was a great number of people, so many that no one could count them. **They were from every nation, tribe, people, and language of the earth.** They were all standing before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. They were shouting in a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.’ All the angels were standing around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures. They all bowed down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying, ‘Amen! Praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor, power, and strength belong to our God forever and ever. Amen!’*

“Then one of the elders asked me, ‘Who are these

people dressed in white robes? And where did they come from?’

“I answered, ‘You know, sir.’

“And the elder said to me, “These are the people who have come out of the great distress.” Rev 7:9-14a

We must realize the importance of this passage, but first realize that this is still part of the Sixth Seal. This is where many theologians have gone off the rails, as they have skewed this scripture by adding to, and taking away from its plain and simple truth.

Let us not forget all the proof of the Rapture we just saw at the beginning of this Seal. This Seal is the fulfillment of all the verses about the Rapture. These verses here give even more proof that the Rapture just occurred earlier in the Seal and that everyone saw it occur.

We see that this crowd is described as, “*a great multitude,*” which cannot be numbered, from *every* nation and people. We know that the Holy Spirit can go where missionaries cannot. It may be that God will reveal himself to some of these unreached nations through visions and dreams. In fact, he already has, and we hear reports of this happening more and more. If God wants someone from every nation at the Rapture, he will make it happen, even if we don’t physically get there ourselves.

Also, we learned that “*they have come out of the great tribulation,*” or distress, as said in some translations. The logical question is: ***“What portion of the Tribulation did they come out of?”***

Some have subtracted from this truth, and then added their own words by saying they have “*come through*” the Great Tribulation, but that is not what the scripture says plainly. It literally says they have **come out of it!** Every translation, including the original Greek, says they have “come out of.” If it were “through,” then we would be talking about a post-Tribulation Rapture. “Through it” means they go through the events that make up the Tribulation. If you have “come out of it,”

then you were spared.

Since we know this is still part of the Sixth Seal, and this is the first day of God's wrath that has just begun here, then we know that they have "come out" before the Great Tribulation starts! This is proof of a pre-Tribulation, Sixth Seal Rapture!

Another reason one would say they came "through" is that they want this to be the Sixth Seal event to be tied to the Chapter 19 event of Revelation, and claim these are the martyred Tribulation Saints. Again, we can't take this Seal out of order, and this Seal matches Rapture scriptures. It is not the same event as Chapter 19.

Finishing with the passage, we see the glory this multitude receives:

"They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Because of this, they are before the throne of God. They worship him day and night in his temple. And the One who sits on the throne will be present with them. Those people will never be hungry again, and they will never be thirsty again. The sun will not hurt them, and no heat will burn them, because the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd. He will lead them to springs of water that give life. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes." Rev 7:14b-17

It does not get any better than this. All the scriptures which proclaim how some will not experience God's wrath, such as Revelation 3:10, Luke 21: 28-36, 1 Thessalonians 5:9, are all fulfilled here at the Sixth Seal. There is a pre-Tribulation, pre-wrath Rapture, but it does not occur before the First Seal where many think it does.

We have missed the mark is on this because Bible teachers have added to, and subtracted from the plain truth of scripture. They do this in order to fit their own preconceived ideas of where they *think* and *want* the Rapture of the church to occur, instead of where it actually does.

Chapter 7: The Seventh Seal- 3½ Years of “Silence”

Revelation Chapters 8 & 9

*“When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, **there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.** And I saw the seven angels who stand before God and to whom were given seven trumpets.”*

Rev 8:1-2

Revelation, chapters 8 & 9 represent the first part of the Great Tribulation period. First, we see that there will be a pause in God’s wrath after his first day of wrath at the Sixth Seal. This pause or silence in heaven will last three and a half years. God will break this silence and continue his wrath with the blowing of the Seven Angel Trumpets. We will see that God continues to hold out his hand of mercy even as he sends out this wrath with the Trumpets.

Although there will be many horrific things going on during this period, many will also receive salvation from the one true God. Those who knew better, but were left behind because they were not ready will realize, at this point, that they will have to endure to the end through much pain and suffering to be saved.

No one will ever again doubt the literal nature of scripture after the Sixth Seal is broken. After that day, it will be very clear and obvious that the events taking place are the exact fulfillment of specific scriptures. To know what is coming next will be as simple as checking off the things that happen, one by one, as described in the book of Revelation, as it is unleashed onto the world one verse at a time.

The many things that used to be gray and fuzzy will now become black and white. People will now have to choose whether they will serve the Lord one hundred percent, or be against him one hundred percent. There will be no place for the lukewarm during this time, as there is now. The many lukewarm who miss the Rapture will now become either hot or cold during this last period.

The Sixth Seal will be the end of atheism. Since everyone will see Jesus in the air, none will be able to deny there's a God. However, just believing there is a God will not be enough to save anyone; after all, even the demons believe and tremble. Many will still choose wrongly and go with the Antichrist as their god.

Silence in Heaven

This silence in Heaven will be a pause in God's wrath, so that those on earth can get over the shock of what will be the first and most destructive event in all of human history. However, no such silence or calm will be happening on the earth, since there will be a crying out over the devastation from the Sixth Seal.

No one will be able to rebuild or get over the Sixth Seal event overnight. After all, look at the effects of the earthquake in Haiti. They are still being felt years later and it is said that a half million Haitians are still homeless. It is the same with the incredible tsunami that hit Indonesia and the earthquake and tsunami that hit Japan. It would be shortsighted to think that the effects of the Sixth Seal's worldwide earthquake will not be more intense and longer lasting.

How Long?

How long will this silence in Heaven last? It will last about 3 ½ years. The verse says that it will last for about a half an hour. However, God's time is not like ours. We see in 2 Peter 3:8 that to the Lord, one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like one day.

We also see language in Revelation 3:10 that the faithful, ready followers of Jesus "**will be kept from the hour of trial**" that will come to test the entire earth via the Rapture. When we study prophecy texts, we find out this testing period, that is, the "hour" of trial, is more like seven years. It is not one hour consisting of 60 minutes. Therefore, this silence in Heaven is simply half of the "hour." This

would be 3-1/2 years.

The end of this “silence from heaven,” is found in chapter 8 of Revelation with the start of the Seven Angel Trumpets. However, the start of the Angel Trumpets will not be the start of the last three and a half years just yet. The last three and a half years won’t even start until chapter 11 of Revelation.

We can see that there may be a small gap of time between **the end** of the first 3 1/2 and **the start** of the last 3 1/2 years. The reason we can say this is because at least one event of the Trumpets describes the time it will take it to fulfill. The Fifth Trumpet will cause locust to torture the earth for five months. The other Trumpet events will also take up time.

This means, therefore, the first 3 1/2 years of silence, along with the five months of locust, would make it almost four years before the *last* 3 1/2 years even start. (The start of the last three years is explicitly stated in Chapter 11.)

This small gap in time is the reason some believe the last “Seven Year” Tribulation period is a little longer than seven years, possibly 7 1/2 years, or so. Though it certainly would not be eight, since Daniel’s 70th Week prophecy begins at the Sixth Seal, and would have to end in a “week,” that is, about “seven” years.

Keep in mind, there is nowhere in scripture that tells the exact amounting of years the entire Tribulation period will last. We come up with seven out of common sense and logic as we see that the numbers conform to a pattern. For instance, we know Daniel’s 70th week is most likely seven years long (a week lasts seven days.) However, even if it were 7 1/2 years or so, we can still call it the Seven Year Tribulation for ease of understanding and continuity.

God Still Answers Prayer

“Another angel came and stood at the altar, holding a golden pan for incense. He was given much incense to offer with the prayers

*of all God's holy people. The angel put this offering on the golden altar before the throne. **The smoke from the incense went up from the angel's hand to God with the prayers of God's people.** Then the angel filled the incense pan with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth, and there were flashes of lightning, thunder and loud noises, and an earthquake.” Rev 8:3-5*

This beautiful passage tells us God's people are still being heard at this point, and that past prayers are still being answered. Certainly, many will pray to God at the breaking of the Sixth Seal to be saved. Although it will be too late for them to go with Jesus at the first phase of his return, it will not be too late to be saved afterward.

Some believe there will be no salvation for those who missed the Rapture. But scripture is clear that the prodigal can be saved and Jesus himself said we are to forgive seventy times seven. The earnest prayers of repentance and the prayers for those who need salvation will always be heard and answered by God.

The Seven Angels and Trumpets

First Angel: One Third of Earth Burns

“Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to blow them. The first angel blew his trumpet, and hail and fire mixed with blood were poured down on the earth. And a third of the earth, and all the green grass, and a third of the trees were burned up.” Rev 8:6-7

This starts the transition from silence to the beginning of more punishments that become severe, but still will not be the start of the last three and a half years. Some may wonder why God would order these punishments in different stages and severities. God does not have to give anyone time, but we can see here he does. Instead of just taking them out at once, he gives people time to repent of their sin, if they will. Some will look at this Revelation and say what a horrible cruel God.

However, the reality is, he is merciful, and patient.

Obviously, it will cause massive disruption when God burns up a third of the grass, trees and earth at this First Trumpet. This will bring worse inflation than we have now, because even the animals and farmlands on this third of earth will get burned up as well.

Second Angel: A Third of the Seas

*“Then the second angel blew his trumpet, and something that looked like a big mountain, burning with fire, was thrown into the sea. **And a third of the sea became blood, a third of the living things in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.**”* Rev 8:8-9

This one sounds so incredible. Today, some have said this has already occurred at the Gulf oil spill because the oil resembled blood. However, the Gulf oil spill did not destroy a third of the ocean, the sea creatures or the ships, like this Trumpet will. If it were true that this Trumpet was already fulfilled, it would be way out of order since the events that come before it in Revelation have not even happened. It doesn't say in the text that the blood is a symbol, so we must interpret it literally. Otherwise, it would only be “good” guessing and subject to a host of opinions. It will be literal blood at this Trumpet.

Third Angel: A Third of the Waters

*“Then the third angel blew his trumpet, and a large star, burning like a torch, fell from the sky. It fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water. The name of the star is Wormwood. **And a third of all the water became bitter, and many people died from drinking the water that was bitter.**”* Rev 8:10-11

This didn't get fulfilled with the Chernobyl accident that occurred in the Soviet Union, as some have been teaching. Again, it didn't make a third of all the waters bitter, so we cannot say this Trumpet has happened. It will happen in the order where it is found in Revelation.

We are not given a specific number, but it says many people die from this bitter water. The death toll continues to mount. These dead can be added to those most likely killed on the destroyed ships and to those most likely killed from the fires at the First Trumpet.

Forth Angel: A Third of the Light

“Then the fourth angel blew his trumpet, and a third of the sun, and a third of the moon, and a third of the stars were struck. So a third of them became dark, and a third of the day was without light, and also the night.” Rev 8:12

With one third of the day and night lost, this will be a uniquely depressing punishment that those on earth will have to endure.

More Trouble

“ While I watched, I heard an eagle that was flying high in the air cry out in a loud voice, "Trouble! Trouble! Trouble for those who live on the earth because of the remaining sounds of the trumpets that the other three angels are about to blow!" Rev 8:13

Again sounding very much like a fantasy novel, this eagle signals that the next two punishments will be more severe and will be horrible for many, including Tribulation Saints.

Fifth Angel: Stinging Locusts from Hell

*“Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fall from the sky to the earth. **The star was given the key to the deep hole that leads to the bottomless pit.** Then it opened up the hole that leads to the bottomless pit, and smoke came up from the hole like smoke from a big furnace. Then the sun and sky became dark because of the smoke from the hole. **Then locusts came down to the earth out of the smoke, and they were given the power to sting like scorpions.** They were told not to harm the grass on the earth or any*

*plant or tree. They could harm only the people who did not have the sign of God on their foreheads. These locusts were not given the power to kill anyone, but to cause pain to the people for **five months**. And the pain they felt was like the pain a scorpion gives when it stings someone. During those days people will look for a way to die, but they will not find it. They will want to die, but death will run away from them.” Rev 9:1-6*

This passage has been widely misinterpreted. People seem to have a hard time accepting that locust will actually come out of a portion of Hell to torment people.

Many details in this passage prove that it will happen literally as described. Some don't believe these locusts are actual locust, but instead seek to replace them with some man-made thing, like helicopters or other man-made military aircraft. Why they do this is hard to discern. Besides adding to, and taking away from the passage, they also give more credence to what man can do, instead of what God, himself, will do directly.

We have *many* proofs right in the passage that prove these are real actual locust, though demonic.

1. The people will be tormented for five months. It just so happens that this is the life span of a locust. This is not a coincidence.

2. They are told not to harm the trees or grass, plant or tree. Why are they told this? It is because it is the natural inclination of a locust to do just that.

They are not aircraft, since at the Sixth Seal, God most likely took out much of the hi-tech military might of the world (though possibly temporary), making a campaign like this even more impossible, if it were an army of men.

Besides this, all one would have to do to avoid this “man-made” torment, if it were, would be to go to fallout shelters, or basements to escape them.

Just think of the expense of weaponry that would have to be

expended to see this through and all just to torment people and not kill them? In addition, which country or countries would undertake this and why? There is no reason for even the Antichrist, whom is not even mentioned yet at this point, to do something like this. Since all the people of the earth will be tormented except for the 144,000, even the Antichrist will be tormented by these locusts along with all the other world leaders and yes, even Tribulation Saints.

What Will the Locust Look Like?

“The locusts looked like horses prepared for battle. On their heads they wore what looked like crowns of gold, and their faces looked like human faces. Their hair was like women's hair, and their teeth were like lions' teeth. Their chests looked like iron breastplates, and the sound of their wings was like the noise of many horses and chariots hurrying into battle.” Rev 9:7-9

If you got a few billion of any type of locust flying together, they would sound like squeaky chariot wheels. These locusts, though in some ways normal, will also be demonic, ramped-up locusts. They clearly will not be your typical locust that can wreak havoc on the crops of the plains. If they were regular locusts, people would be able to kill them just as they can kill a regular locust or grasshopper. But, the people will not be able to kill these because of their strange armor that will protect them.

The Locusts from Hell

*“The locusts had tails with stingers like scorpions, and in their tails was their power to hurt people for five months. **The locusts had a king who was the angel of the bottomless pit. His name in the Hebrew language is Abaddon and in the Greek language is Apollyon.**”* Rev 9:10-11

In this passage we see more proof that these locust are from Hell and not from anything on the earth. Their leader is a demonic

angel from the bottomless pit named, Abaddon. Of course, these locusts are different in that they will be able to sting people very painfully. It will be so bad that they will want to die by suicide, but they will not be allowed to do so.

Who is Tormented?

Lastly and more importantly, we need to realize who is being tormented by these and who is not. *“They could harm only the people who did not have the sign of God on their foreheads.”* **This is everyone except** for the 144,000 special Jews. The rest of the Jews, which is approximately 13 million today, will be tormented just as will the Tribulation Saints. This is all a part of the testing they must endure. If there was protection for the Tribulation Saints, then everyone would want to become a Christian to avoid the torment. But we see that throughout Revelation, most will not.

More Trouble to Come:

“The first trouble is past; there are still two other troubles that will come.” Rev 9:12

This is specifically talking about the trouble that will come from the next two trumpets.

Sixth Angel: A Third Killed

*“Then the sixth angel blew his trumpet, and I heard a voice coming from the horns on the golden altar that is before God. The voice said to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, ‘**Free the four angels who are tied at the great river Euphrates.**’ And they let loose the four angels who had been kept ready for this hour and day and month and **year so they could kill a third of all people on the earth.** I heard how many troops on horses were in their army—two hundred million.”* Rev 9:13-16

Much like the locust, this is not an army of anything from this

earth. The leaders are four evil angels or demons with an army of evil demons as well. (Only evil angels would have been tied up.)

Some like to say this is the Chinese army because they are the only ones that have an army close to this size today. But again, there are many problems with this, just on the logistics side alone. Killing this many people in such a short time gap between the first 3-1/2 years and the last 3-1/2 years, would be an impossibility for any human army to accomplish. If we just look at the logistical magnitude of what the U.S. had to do in Iraq and other campaigns for an army of just a few hundred thousand troops, we can see that supporting a 200 million-man army would be impossible. They are clearly demonic and of a supernatural nature.

What the Demonic Army Looks Like:

“The horses and their riders I saw in the vision looked like this: They had breastplates that were fiery red, dark blue, and yellow like sulfur. The heads of the horses looked like heads of lions, with fire, smoke, and sulfur coming out of their mouths. A third of all the people on earth were killed by these three terrible disasters coming out of the horses' mouths: the fire, the smoke, and the sulfur. The horses' power was in their mouths and in their tails; their tails were like snakes with heads, and with them they hurt people.” Rev 9:17-19

This is not describing any sort of military vehicle although some like to jump to this conclusion. This simply describes demonic horses of some kind with demonic riders.

They Would Not Repent

*“The other people who were not killed by these terrible disasters **still did not change** their hearts and turn away from what they had made with their own hands. They did not stop worshipping demons and idols made of gold, silver, bronze, stone, and wood—things that cannot see or hear or walk. These people did not*

change their hearts and turn away from murder or evil magic, from their sexual sins or stealing.” Rev 9:20-21

We are looking at somewhere in the neighborhood of 2 billion people killed here, and the others **still** would not repent of their ways.

What is God looking to do here? He wants to save as many as possible through repentance, but they would not repent, so the punishments keep coming.

Another Gap Ahead?

Six out of seven Angel Trumpets are now done. Many people will have died by this point, along with even more added destruction to the earth, and the last three and a half years have not even begun yet!

Those who say that the first day of the Great Tribulation will not start until the desecration of the temple could not be more wrong. It is obvious that God’s wrath has been going on since the Sixth Seal.

And, we know from scripture where the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation actually begins, which is in Chapter 11.

Chapter 10 of Revelation, coming next, will show another likely gap in time. We will see that there are many more events that will take place before the seventh Angel Trumpet is even blown. The next time we will discuss the seventh Angel trumpet will be in Chapter 11 of Revelation, where the two witnesses begin to prophesy at what will be the official beginning of the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation.

Chapter 8: The Last 3 1/2 & Years

Revelation Chapters 10, 11 & 12

Chapter 10 of Revelation continues to describe the events that take place after the “silence in heaven” period that happens after the Sixth Seal. How long this period lasts is not exactly clear. This is the reason some believe the Tribulation could be a bit longer than 7 years. We only know that once the events in Chapter 11 take place, the last three and a half years begins.

Seven Thunders

*“Then I saw another powerful angel coming down from heaven dressed in a cloud with a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, and his legs were like pillars of fire. The angel was holding a small scroll open in his hand. He put his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land. Then he shouted loudly like the roaring of a lion. And when he shouted, the voices of seven thunders spoke. When the seven thunders spoke, I started to write. **But I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Keep hidden what the seven thunders said, and do not write them down.’**” Rev 10:1-4*

As we said before, when we come up on a mystery, we should accept it as such. Chapter 10 of Revelation is one of those mysteries that will not be fully realized until it occurs. However, scripture clearly indicates that no one will know, since John was told not to record it. Because this was the intention, all the guessing is pointless.

There are some false teachers and preachers today who say they have all the answers and know the meaning of these thunders. They should not be followed. This is clearly to stay a mystery until it occurs. Jesus said in Luke 21:28: *“Be careful so you are not fooled. Many people will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the One’ and, ‘The time has come!’ **But don’t follow them.**”*

This speaks of the date setters specifically and others who may say things like, *"I am the last day prophet of God."* Don't listen to them, instead read what the word of God plainly reads already.

When someone tells us, *"the time has come,"* Jesus says: *"Do not follow them!"* Jesus was very clear here, don't you think? This does not mean we will have no idea when the time has come, it simply means, no man knows the **exact** day or hour. The **season is** to be discerned or known, because of the many signs that Jesus said will happen before his coming.

Angelic Prophecy

*"Then the angel I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised his right hand to heaven, and he made a promise by the power of the One who lives forever and ever. He is the One who made the skies and all that is in them, the earth and all that is in it, and the sea and all that is in it. The angel promised, "There will be no more waiting! In the **days when the seventh angel is ready to blow his trumpet, God's secret will be finished. This secret is the Good News God told to his servants, the prophets."**"* Rev 10:5-7

The secret he is speaking of here is not the same thing as the Seven Thunders. This means that the Seventh Angel Trumpet is about to blow and that the secret of the Good News is about to be fulfilled through the prophets, who are the two witnesses in Revelation 11.

Eating the Scroll

"Then I heard the same voice from heaven again, saying to me: 'Go and take the open scroll that is in the hand of the angel that is standing on the sea and on the land.'

"So I went to the angel and told him to give me the small scroll. And he said to me, 'Take the scroll and eat it. It will be sour in your stomach, but in your mouth it will be sweet as honey.' So I took the small scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. In my mouth it tasted

sweet as honey, but after I ate it, it was sour in my stomach. Then I was told, 'You must prophesy again about many peoples, nations, languages, and kings.'" Rev 10:8-11

The Two Witnesses & The Start of the Last 3-1/2 Years

*"I was given a measuring stick like a rod, and I was told, 'Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the people worshiping there. But do not measure the yard outside the temple. Leave it alone, because it has been given to those who are not God's people. **And they will trample on the holy city for forty-two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses to prophesy for one thousand two hundred sixty days, and they will be dressed in rough cloth to show their sadness.'***" Rev 11:1-3

This is where the last 3-1/2 years **officially begins**, here in chapter 11. We are told specifically that the two witnesses will prophesy for 1,260 days, which is 3-1/2 years, also equal to 42 months.

Their Power

*"These two witnesses are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. **And if anyone tries to hurt them, fire comes from their mouths and kills their enemies.** And if anyone tries to hurt them in whatever way, in that same way that person will die. These witnesses have the power to stop the sky from raining during the time they are prophesying. And they have power to make the waters become blood, and they have power to send every kind of trouble to the earth as many times as they want."* Rev 1:4-6

Who Are They?

It is amazing that these two witnesses get to prophesy, preach

the Gospel and send plagues for such a long period of time. In fact, they are doing this right from the start of the last 3-1/2 years through to almost the very end. Some think they could be Moses and Elijah. However, it does not really matter. They might even be from among the “least” in heaven, if there is such a thing. However, it is more likely that one is Elijah because of the scripture in Malachi 4:5, which says:

“But I will send you Elijah the prophet before that great and terrifying day of the Lord's judging. Elijah will help parents love their children and children love their parents. Otherwise, I will come and put a curse on the land.”

This is an important verse. It helps us clarify a few things not only here but in other passages as well. As we recall, the first great and overwhelming “Day of the Lord” was at the Sixth Seal. The difference between that day and the one that Malachi is describing here is the word, “judging.” The day of judging begins in Revelation 19 with the Battle of Armageddon, not at the Sixth Seal. So Elijah is likely the one of the two witnesses here. Punishment certainly begins at the Sixth Seal, but not final judgment.

Their Work is Done

“When the two witnesses have finished telling their message, the beast that comes up from the bottomless pit will fight a war against them. He will defeat them and kill them.

“The bodies of the two witnesses will lie in the street of the great city where the Lord was killed. This city is named Sodom and Egypt, which has a spiritual meaning.” Rev 11:7-8

The witnesses cannot be touched for three and a half years. God decides when and if his servants are going to be hurt or killed. The Antichrist, otherwise known as, the beast, in Revelation Chapter 13, is allowed to kill them at the end. (They are killed in the city where Jesus was crucified, which is Jerusalem.)

They are killed because God allows it for a specific purpose.

This is probably one more reason why the world will be deceived to think that the Antichrist will be able to defeat God, because of the temporary “victory” he will be allowed at the end.

Their Deaths Celebrated

“Those from every race of people, tribe, language, and nation will look at the bodies of the two witnesses for three and one-half days, and they will refuse to bury them. People who live on the earth will rejoice and be happy because these two are dead. They will send each other gifts, because these two prophets brought much suffering to those who live on the earth.” Rev 10:9-10

We are looking at some sick and depraved people here at this point. They are not just happy about the deaths of these servants of God, but they throw a party to celebrate. They don't know that things are about to get much worse. They may think their troubles have ended with the deaths of these two prophets, but in reality, their troubles have just begun.

Resurrected and Raptured

“But after three and one-half days, God put the breath of life into the two prophets again. They stood on their feet, and everyone who saw them became very afraid. Then the two prophets heard a loud voice from heaven saying, “Come up here!” And they went up into heaven in a cloud as their enemies watched.”

Similar to Jesus who was crucified then rose again on the third day; these two prophets are brought back to life by God after three and a half days. Then they are taken up to heaven in their own sort of mini-Rapture, with the people watching, much like at the Sixth Seal.

“In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city was destroyed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and those who did not die were very afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven. The second trouble is finished.

Pay attention: The third trouble is coming soon.” Rev 11:11-14

At least some are giving glory to God here. This is one of the few times we see this happen in all of Revelation. However, we also know there are large numbers of “Tribulation Saints” during this time, who are standing fast in the faith and being made clean, pure and spotless, as described in Daniel 12:10.

The Seventh Trumpet

*“Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet. And there were loud voices in heaven, saying: **The power to rule the world now belongs to our Lord and his Christ, and he will rule forever and ever.**” Rev 11:15*

We do not see Jesus physically ruling the world until Revelation chapter 19. He has always had the power to rule, but has given power to men and Satan for a time in order that his will would be accomplished in the end.

The Spirit of God is always at work in the world. God is always in control and has been from the very beginning. This passage is simply giving us a glimpse of what is to come shortly. Although Satan is called the “prince” of this world, he is not the king, never has been and never will be. Any authority he has been given will soon all be taken away.

Time to Judge

“Then the twenty-four elders, who sit on their thrones before God, bowed down on their faces and worshiped God. They said: ‘We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, because you have used your great power and have begun to rule!’

*“The people of the world were angry, but your anger has come. **The time has come to judge the dead, and to reward your servants the prophets and your holy people, all who respect you, great and small.** The time has come to destroy those who*

destroy the earth!” Rev 11:16-18

This is another example of something that will come into its fullness as these events continue. God’s anger did not just start here, as we already know. We also know that the time to “*judge the dead*,” as it says here, does not fully occur until later in Revelation’s events.

This is one of those times we need to apply common sense and see that this scripture shows a crescendo of worship building in heaven as the final judgment draws closer.

The Ark of the Covenant

*“Then God’s temple in heaven was opened. **The Ark that holds the agreement God gave to his people could be seen in his temple.** Then there were flashes of lightning, noises, thunder, an earthquake, and a great hailstorm.” Rev 11:19*

The Ark of the Covenant, built by Moses to store the Ten Commandments, is seen here in Heaven. It is thought that the Ark is currently buried under the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. If it truly is, it will not remain there because we see it present in Heaven here at this passage. The Antichrist will soon take over the temple so perhaps God takes the Ark just before this happens. Perhaps it is in Heaven already. It is another mystery we will leave alone for now.

The Woman Israel and the Dragon Satan

*“And then a great wonder appeared in heaven: A woman was clothed with the sun, and the moon was under her feet, **and a crown of twelve stars was on her head.** She was pregnant and cried out with pain, because she was about to give birth.” Rev 12:1-2*

The Woman

This woman, who has twelve stars on her head, is symbolic of the literal twelve tribes of Israel. But this number twelve is not the

only clue that identifies her as Israel. Remember, when we find symbols in scripture, we usually have the meaning explained right in the same passage. When we do not, we need to appropriately match other scriptures found in Bible to get more understanding. This is just common sense. However, in the next passage, we do see more proof for the true identity of this woman.

Although some may say this woman is Mary, the mother of Jesus, the woman of this passage is actually the mother of all Jews. Israel is the motherland for the Jewish people. Furthermore, Jesus, the Messiah, was really born to Israel and always has belonged to Israel.

The Dragon

*“Then another wonder appeared in heaven: **There was a giant red dragon** with seven heads and seven crowns on each head. He also had ten horns. His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and threw them down to the earth. He stood in front of the woman who was ready to give birth so he could eat her baby as soon as it was born. **Then the woman gave birth to a son who will rule all the nations with an iron rod.** And her child was taken up to God and to his throne.” Rev 12:3-5*

Of course, we see that this dragon describes Satan. It was Satan that tried to destroy Jesus at his physical birth, but to no avail. He tried to do this through a decree from King Herod which all the first-born male children of Israel were killed. *“When Herod saw that the wise men had tricked him, he was furious. So he gave an order to kill all the baby boys in Bethlehem and in the surrounding area who were two years old or younger. This was in keeping with the time he learned from the wise men.” Matt 2:16*

Jesus the Son

We know that this son is Jesus because it was he that was taken up to God’s throne in Heaven after his resurrection and ascension.

We know here that the “*son who will rule all the nations with an iron rod,*” could be none other than Jesus, as it also matches the words that describe him in Revelation 2:27. Referring to his thousand year millennial reign, Jesus said the faithful who overcome sin will rule alongside him with an iron rod over the earth.

Jews Protected in the Desert

*“The woman ran away into the desert to a place God prepared for her where she would be taken care of for **one thousand two hundred sixty days.**”* Rev 12:6

First, this is not Mary because she has been in heaven for the last 2000 years. This is specifically speaking of end-times events. Though it somewhat resembles the general story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, it is not her. This is Israel being taken care of in the last days, like God took care of Jesus when he escaped death from Herod’s decree.

This scripture gives us another reference to a three and a half year period-1,260 days. This tells us that Israel, or at least a smaller remnant of Israel, is going to be taken care of and protected for the last part of the Tribulation period. Up to this point, however, they were not. They also had to suffer from the stinging locusts and other plagues, as did the others, of course, except for the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who were sealed for protection.

They are being taken to the desert now for protection so that they may survive to repopulate the earth during the thousand year earthly reign of Jesus. This will fulfill the promise made to Abraham in Genesis that his descendants would number the grains of sand, which certainly has not been fulfilled to this present day.

War in Heaven

*“**Then there was a war in heaven.** Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels*

*fought back. But the dragon was not strong enough, and he and his angels lost their place in heaven. The giant dragon was thrown down out of heaven. **(He is that old snake called the devil or Satan, who tricks the whole world.)** The dragon with his angels was thrown down to the earth.” Rev 12:7-9*

Another thing we see here is this angelic war in heaven. There are some who will take this out of place and say this is something that has happened already. But this is not past, as we can see, it is a future war in the heavens that will be fought right here during the Tribulation period.

This does not mean that there was not another similar war that was fought long ago, obviously there was, or at least there was an ejection of Satan and his demons from their original place in Heaven.

We must remember that Satan is an accuser of the brethren and has been allowed, up until this point in the scriptures, to stand before God at the court of Heaven to do this. It is a mystery why God has allowed this. However, after this event here, Satan will no longer have admittance in Heaven ever again. His only admittance will be to the bottomless pit, then the Lake of Fire.

Of course, Satan has already lost his original place in Heaven. This is one reason why God will eventually destroy the earth and existing heavens because they have been defiled by Satan, his fellow rebellious angels, and the sin of mankind.

Saved By the Blood of the Lamb

*“Then I heard a loud voice in heaven saying: ‘The salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have now come. **The accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accused them day and night before our God, has been thrown down.** And our brothers and sisters defeated him by the blood of the Lamb's death and by the message they preached. They did not love their lives so much that they were afraid of death. So*

rejoice, you heavens and all who live there! But it will be terrible for the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you! He is filled with anger, because he knows he does not have much time.'

*When the dragon saw he had been thrown down to the earth, he hunted for the woman who had given birth to the son. **But the woman was given the two wings of a great eagle so she could fly to the place prepared for her in the desert.** There she would be taken care of for **three and one-half years**, away from the snake. Then the snake poured water out of its mouth like a river toward the woman so the flood would carry her away. But the earth helped the woman by opening its mouth and swallowing the river that came from the mouth of the dragon. **Then the dragon was very angry at the woman, and he went off to make war against all her other children—those who obey God's commands and who have the message Jesus taught.** And the dragon stood on the seashore." Rev 12:10-18*

The dragon Satan is also known as, "the snake." We see this reference in many passages throughout the Bible. Again, we see the reference to the three and a half years that Israel will be protected in a desert location. Satan is obviously very angry at all of this, so he tries to kill the Jews here by sending them a flood, but God opened the earth to swallow it up.

Satan then sees that God is protecting them, and goes after the other servants of God, which are the Tribulation Saints. Since there is not the same protection for them, he is able to do with them as God allows. His wish is to kill them through the Antichrist and False Prophet that we see rise up in Chapter 13 of Revelation.

These last three Chapters of Revelation have described many events that will take place right at the start of the last years of the Tribulation. There will be a remnant of Jews in the desert being protected, before the Antichrist takes over the temple and kills those who will not follow him. After the war in Heaven, God will basically

throw down the gauntlet and will no longer allow the enemy a place in Heaven, even though he has already lost his original place. Satan will then become even angrier causing him to pursue the complete destruction of God's saints.

Chapter 9: The Antichrist Period

Revelation Chapters 13 & 14

Chapter 13 continues to chronicle the beginning of the last three and a half year time period in which we see the Antichrist rise to final power. These chapters are full of important details regarding both the Antichrist and the False Prophet. Chapter 14 of Revelation describes the events that will take place as the end of the Tribulation draws to a close- the 144,000 being taken to Heaven and the Tribulation Saints being martyred. We will also see that Jesus' prophecy of Matthew 24:14 is fulfilled here in chapter 14 when an angel preaches the Gospel to every tribe, nation and language for the last time.

The Antichrist

*“Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea. It had ten horns and seven heads, and there was a crown on each horn. A name against God was written on each head. This beast looked like a leopard, with feet like a bear's feet and a mouth like a lion's mouth. **And the dragon gave the beast all of his power and his throne and great authority.**” Rev 13:1-2*

The Antichrist, (otherwise known as the beast,) has come up out of the “sea”. Revelation 17:15 says:

*“Then the angel said to me, **The waters** that you saw, where the prostitute sits, **are** peoples, races, nations, and languages.”*

These “waters” have the same meaning here as the word, “sea.” The peoples, races and nations are the waters; which mean that the Antichrist is not coming up out of the actual sea, but up out of the sea of humanity. It is likely that the Antichrist will rise out of a democratic nation. (We will discuss this more when we cover Revelation 17 & 18.)

The Antichrist will not be identified before the Rapture occurs

and he will not rise to power until there is a falling away from the faith, which will happen halfway through the Tribulation (Daniel 8: 23, 2 Thessalonians 2:3.) We see this happening today, but the falling away during the Tribulation will be on a larger scale. Scripture gives unmistakable and specific details that identify the Antichrist.

His Identification

*“One of the heads of the beast looked as if it had been **killed by a wound, but this death wound was healed.** Then the whole world was amazed and followed the beast. **People worshiped the dragon because he had given his power to the beast. And they also worshiped the beast, asking, ‘Who is like the beast? Who can make war against it?’”** Rev 13:3-4*

Head Wound: The Antichrist will sustain a deadly head wound and he will be miraculously healed. This head wound event, which is mentioned three times in this chapter, is obviously very important in identifying the Antichrist. Since this has not yet happened, it may be a complete waste of time to guess who he is or who he will be, even though it is interesting to ponder.

Although we have some reasonable clues and descriptions both here and in Daniel to narrow down the field, we still can't say unequivocally who he is yet. Also, the early church was not looking to identify the Antichrist. They knew then, as we should understand now, that many antichrists have come and gone, and the spirit of antichrist has always been a constant presence on earth.

He Will Be Worshipped: The world will be easily deceived, and will worship not only the Antichrist, but also Satan himself, who will give the Antichrist his power and authority. At this point in Revelation, people will begin to worship them both, in mass numbers and out in the open.

A Man: He clearly will be a man, not an actual beast, as we will see in Revelation 13:12-18.

*“The beast was allowed to say proud words and words against God, and it was allowed to use its power for **forty-two months**. It used its mouth to speak against God, against God's name, against the place where God lives, and against all those who live in heaven. It was given power to make war against God's holy people and to defeat them. It was given power over every tribe, people, language, and nation. And all who live on earth will worship the beast—all the people since the beginning of the world whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. The Lamb is the One who was killed.” Rev 13:5-8*

Proud Words: The Antichrist is allowed to do these things because God is letting him do so. He will use proud words to put himself above God. It is to fulfill God's purposes and prophecy.

Again, we see the 42-month period, which is 3-1/2 years, where all these things are going on at the same time. Make no mistake about it, God would love to have these people repent of their sins and be saved. He desires this for all mankind, but the fact is they won't. Instead, they will be deceived and follow their own pride and evil ways.

Patience and Faith

*“Anyone who has ears should listen: If you are to be a prisoner, then you will be a prisoner. If you are to be killed with the sword, then you will be killed with the sword. **This means that God's holy people must have patience and faith.**” Rev 13:9-10*

This is specifically speaking about the Tribulation Saints and how they will need faith and patience to make it through to the end to gain their salvation. The Tribulation Saints will die by beheading after coming through severe persecution, as we will see when continue to read through Revelation.

The False Prophet

*“Then I saw another beast **coming up out of the earth**. It had two horns like a lamb, but it spoke like a dragon.” Rev 13:11*

Unlike the Antichrist, the False Prophet will not come out of the “sea of humanity,” but instead will come out of the earth. You may not think that this is an important detail, until you find out what the Muslim people today are doing and believing that matches this very event.

The Twelfth Imam, otherwise known as, the Mahdi, is believed to be hiding today in the Jamkaran Well in Iran, which is a place of pilgrimage for Muslim believers. Here they drop their requests for help into the well, in the hopes that the Imam will read them and come to their aid.

They think these letters will eventually conjure him up. It may be that they will actually get their wish soon. Therefore, the Twelfth Imam, who the Muslims believe to be their messiah or prophet, just may be the one, who literally will come up from out of the earth and out of this Jamkaran Well.

This would explain a great deal and would even include why the Tribulation Saints will be beheaded for their faith since beheading is the Muslims’ choice method for killing infidels.

Could the False Prophet be a Muslim? It seems very likely. Could the Antichrist be a Muslim? It is not likely since Daniel 11:37 states he will not have regard for any god, whatsoever. Accepting all gods or pluralism, which many promote today, is also a form of regarding none and certainly disregards the one true God.

The Mark of the Beast

“This beast stands before the first beast and uses the same power the first beast has. By this power it makes everyone living on

earth worship the first beast, **who had the death wound that was healed**. And the second beast does great miracles so that it even makes fire come down from heaven to earth while people are watching. **It fools those who live on earth by the miracles it has been given the power to do**. It does these miracles to serve the first beast.

*“The second beast orders people to make an idol to honor the first beast, **the one that was wounded by the deadly sword but sprang to life again**. The second beast was given power to give life to the idol of the first one so that the idol could speak. **And the second beast was given power to command all who will not worship the image of the beast to be killed**. The second beast also forced all people, small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to have a mark on their right hand or on their forehead. No one could buy or sell without this mark, which is the name of the beast or the number of its name. This takes wisdom. **Let the one who has understanding find the meaning of the number, which is the number of a person. Its number is 666.**” Rev 13:12-18*

The only way to survive at this point, as far as food goes, will be to accept the Mark, without which, no one will be able to buy or sell anything. The last verse in this chapter is important and has been misconstrued by some. This verse says, **“Let the one who has understanding find the meaning of the number, which is the number of a person. Its number is 666.”**

Many think that this tells us to go and calculate the Antichrist’s name numerically, but this is not quite accurate. Once again, right in the passage, we see an answer to a symbol or a “hard saying.” It tells us first to *“find the meaning of the number”* then immediately tells us the meaning: **“which is the number of a person.”** The number is “666” and is a number designated for “man.”

This is proof he is a man. Not a beast, spirit or a demon. Although, we do see that he is given power from Satan eventually. The

reason God reveals the meaning to us, is because of how many times the word “beast” is mentioned in the passage. If we were not told at the end here that the beast is actually a man, we might want to think it is an actual animal of some kind.

Since they are both referred to as beasts, common sense leads us to assume, that if the Antichrist is a man, then the False Prophet must also be a man as well. The number six in the Bible always refers to humankind and the number seven always refers to God and his perfection.

Some may think this is too simplistic, but the real identifier of the Antichrist **will not be numerical**. It will be by the head wound from an assassination attempt, which is mentioned three times in this passage!

They Must Worship the Image

The Godless people will make some sort of image or statue of the Antichrist, and then the demonic powers will cause the image or statue to speak and anyone who will not worship this idol will be killed just like it was done in Daniel's day.

Then the famous “Mark of the Beast,” which we all have heard about, will be instituted and anyone who does not accept it will be killed. This group killed by the Antichrist will be the last of all martyrs killed throughout history and the Fifth Seal will be completely fulfilled at this point.

The 144, 000 in Heaven

Chapter 14 of Revelation starts us out with the same 144,000 special Jewish evangelists that we saw earlier at the Sixth Seal.

*“Then I looked, and there before me was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion. **With him were one hundred forty-four thousand***

people who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. And I heard a sound from heaven like the noise of flooding water and like the sound of loud thunder. The sound I heard was like people playing harps. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. **No one could learn the new song except the one hundred forty-four thousand who had been bought from the earth.** These are the ones who did not do sinful things with women, because they kept themselves pure. They follow the Lamb every place he goes. **These one hundred forty-four thousand** were bought from among the people of the earth as people to be offered to God and the Lamb. They were not guilty of telling lies; they are without fault.” Rev 14:1-5

I highlighted the 144,000 because it is mentioned three times in the passage. Because it is the dominant detail, it is certainly the most important detail, in that, it specifically identifies these people clearly and distinguishes them from other groups of people. This is the same exact 144,000 we previously saw at the Sixth Seal. It is certainly not a different group of 144,000 people, nor is it the Tribulation Saints.

Some think they are beheaded by the Antichrist, but it is not likely that they are and the reason is, the beheadings do not occur until later in this chapter after this group is already seen in heaven. It is more likely that the 144,000 are "mini-Raptured" themselves.

If they are beheaded, so be it, but because no death for them is specifically mentioned, as it is for other groups, we cannot say how or if they are killed.

Three Important Angels Who Preach

Three angels will proclaim extremely important instructions and truth to the remaining people who are on the earth:

*“Then I saw another angel flying high in the air. He had the eternal **Good News** to preach to those who live on earth—to every*

*nation, tribe, language, and people. He preached in a loud voice, **'Fear God and give him praise, because the time has come for God to judge all people. So worship God who made the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the springs of water.'***

Rev 14:6-7

The Good News

If you recall, Jesus said in Matthew 24 and Luke 21 that the Gospel (or Good News) would be preached to everyone and then the end would come. This passage brings us to this time of which he was referring.

It appears that an angel fulfills this prophecy right here. After this, there may only be approximately one week left of the Great Tribulation, which we will see why as we continue. In fact, everything from here on through to chapter 19 will most likely occur within a week's time before the Battle of Armageddon is carried out.

It is interesting to read what is described here as the **"Gospel,"** as opposed to what many say it is today. According to this verse, the Gospel is *"Fear God and give him praise."* This is straight and to the point.

This message of "Fear God" is rarely heard in our churches today as it once was, but that is the Gospel broken down to its foundation. There will not be a lack of faith during the Tribulation. However, many will place their faith and belief in the wrong person.

Everyone has already seen Jesus at the Sixth Seal, and the beginning of the Tribulation. Therefore, the problem will be with the refusal to fear the God that they saw and knew was God. Instead of fearing God, many will put their trust in the Antichrist.

"Then the second angel followed the first angel and said, "Ruined, ruined is the great city of Babylon! She made all the nations drink the wine of the anger of her adultery.

"Then a third angel followed the first two angels, saying in a

loud voice: *If anyone worships the beast and his idol and gets the beast's mark on the forehead or on the hand, that one also will drink the wine of God's anger, which is prepared with all its strength in the cup of his anger. **And that person will be put in pain with burning sulfur before the holy angels and the Lamb. And the smoke from their burning pain will rise forever and ever. There will be no rest, day or night, for those who worship the beast and his idol or who get the mark of his name.***"

Rev 14:8-11

Don't Take the Mark

This is an extremely important passage for at least two reasons. First, the angel is making it very clear to everyone on earth that if you accept the mark of the beast, you will be sent to Hell for an eternity of torment. God is so merciful that he gives another clear warning so that none may perish.

Another importance is that the Mark of the Beast is not instituted until the last half of the Tribulation period, and not beforehand. After all, the scripture clearly shows that the Mark happens at chapter 13.

Remember, we just read that the last three and a half years has only started at this point in Revelation. Some will say the Mark of the Beast is out there today in one form or another, but that cannot be true as we see here.

We should not worry today about using ATM cards and such. And, if you're here during the Tribulation, don't worry because it will be very clear what "the Mark" will be, since it will be proclaimed by God's angels.

Hell, the Incinerator?

In addition, we see proof here that Hell is a place of eternal torment, not a giant incinerator where the soul is burned up and no

longer exists. This is a false teaching growing in some circles today among some who call themselves Christians.

The scripture said they will be ***“put in pain with burning sulfur and the smoke of their pain will rise forever.”*** It also said they will have no rest from the torment.

The Earth is Harvested

*“This means God’s holy people **must be patient**. They must obey God’s commands **and keep their faith in Jesus**. Then I heard a voice from heaven saying, ‘Write this: **Blessed are the dead who die from now on in the Lord**. The Spirit says, Yes, they will rest from their hard work, and the reward of all they have done stays with them.’”* Rev 14:12-13

This passage sets up what is about to happen to the holy people of God, otherwise known as, the Tribulation Saints. If they have persevered this far and not given up their faith, they are about to be redeemed through their deaths, which will be a victory for them.

*“Then I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and sitting on the white cloud was One who looked like a Son of Man. He had a gold crown on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. Then another angel came out of the temple and called out in a loud voice to the One who was sitting on the cloud, **Take your sickle and harvest from the earth, because the time to harvest has come, and the fruit of the earth is ripe. So the One who was sitting on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.**”* Rev 14:14-16

This is not hard to figure out as it may appear at first. We just saw in the previous passage that *“Blessed are those who die from now on in the Lord,”* and then we see in the next, a description of a harvest of sorts, but it is not a harvest of crops. Instead, it is a harvest of people and souls.

The **destroying terror** that Jesus spoke of, in Matthew 24:15, is fulfilled here. The Antichrist sets it up the temple and likely all over the world as well. This terror will likely be guillotines to behead those who would not accept the Mark. We see proof of this later where there is a picture of those who had been beheaded in Heaven.

Revelation 20:4 states: *“I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. **And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded** because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”* (NIV)

God’s Anger: We also saw, in chapter 13, the order to kill all people who will not accept the Mark of the Beast, so it is for this reason these Saints are beheaded. However, they are harvested by God, or in other words, God is allowing it to happen.

“Then another angel came out of the temple in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. And then another angel, who has power over the fire, came from the altar. This angel called to the angel with the sharp sickle, saying, Take your sharp sickle and gather the bunches of grapes from the earth’s vine, because its grapes are ripe. Then the angel swung his sickle over the earth.

*“He gathered the earth’s grapes and **threw them into the great winepress of God’s anger. They were trampled in the winepress outside the city, and blood flowed out of the winepress as high as horses’ bridles for a distance of about one hundred eighty miles.**”* Rev 14:17-20

Do not let “the anger of God’s winepress” language distract you. First, it is not God doing the killing here, but the Antichrist. This is not the Battle of Armageddon where God will kill with complete annihilation. God’s anger here is not an indication that he is doing the

killing. God is angry that the Antichrist is doing this, and that His children have to be disciplined in this way, if you will. So God is angry.

Think about your own kids for a moment. If you had to punish them or see them get killed would you be angry about it? Of course, you would. That's all that is going on here. God didn't want to see so many miss the Rapture only to have to go through this.

Up to a Billion Beheaded

Some associate this bloodletting here with the Battle of Armageddon in chapter 19, but if we do that then we are going out of the order it was originally given. This blood bath here is speaking of the beheading of the saints, **not** Armageddon.

We can make a general calculation to predict how many people may be beheaded since we are given some clues. Whenever we are given details like numbers and distances in the Bible, it is always important. It is important because numbers and measurements "live" in a three dimensional world. God would not have noted them if they were not significant in understanding a reality.

While I understand this is a rather morbid thought, it is very important and worthy of consideration. If we can estimate the number of people who will not accept the Mark, we can have hope that many will be saved through Tribulation even if they missed the Rapture. This estimate should give use hope that if our loved ones are left behind, they can still be saved.

Let us think about some possibilities using the scriptural descriptions of the martyrs' blood:

A horse's bridle is approximately four to six feet high. Going with the more conservative side of things, we will go with 4 feet. Therefore, we have blood flowing 180 miles out by four feet high

according to the scripture.

How would this take up space and how many people's blood would this represent? A person has approximately one gallon of blood in their bodies and one gallon of blood takes up approximately one eighth of one cubic foot of space. We will round off 4×8 to 30.

1. Four cubic feet high, which is about the height of a horse's bridle, is approximately 30 people (in gallons of blood).
2. There are 5,280 feet in a mile and the scripture says this blood will flow approximately 180 miles out.
3. Therefore: 5,280 feet multiplied by 180 = 950,400 feet.
4. Multiply this number by the 4 foot high bridle = 3,801,601.
5. Then we must multiply this number by 30 people = 114,048,030 (one hundred fourteen million) people and this is a minimum estimate. (This is only if it were to flow in a one foot wide path, four feet high the whole length of the 180 miles.)

So we know the length and the height of the blood flow. What about the width? Could it be just one foot wide? It is probable that the path of the blood flow will be significantly wider, unless the blood flows into a prefabricated channel of a certain width unknown to us, which isn't likely.

It is more likely that the blood will be allowed to just spill on the ground. We can try to estimate the width of the blood flow if this were the case. I poured a gallon of water, which is more fluid than blood, over a flat surface of asphalt. Asphalt partially absorbs, of course. The water spilled out into an area that is over six feet wide and six feet in length.

At just six feet wide, along with the other calculations we made, there could be a path of blood for about 675 million people. This

estimate is on the minimum side of things, which is why I think it could be up to one billion people killed by the Antichrist at this mass execution.

Regardless if there is to be many locations for these executions, or if everyone will be brought to a central location from around the world, it does not matter. The 180 mile and four feet deep number we are given in this scripture is likely a sum total of all the blood that will flow, wherever it flows.

With our estimating, we can see how it is possible that millions or possibly even a billion people will be killed for not accepting the Mark. Even if it is not this many, the bare minimum of a 114 million is still a very large number.

Many Will Be Killed

If there are 7 billion people in the world, according to the U.S. Census bureau as of December 2011, we can estimate the amount of people killed and the amount left on earth at the end of the Tribulation.

When you consider that there are about 300,000 million underground believers in China today alone, never mind the other Asian countries, and the believers exploding in Africa and India, there could be approximately 1 billion raptured at the Sixth Seal.

Many sources say that there are approximately 2.1 billion Christians in the world. Realistically, we can assume that only half will be ready as taught by Jesus in the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Half were ready for the bridegroom. So, if a billion were raptured, that would leave about 6 billion on earth at the start of the Tribulation.

First, there will be many people killed when the Rapture occurs from the earthquake and the stars falling to earth. More will be killed from the bitter water, the ships being destroyed, the Seven Thunders, and the various other judgments that will occur during the Tribulation. We don't know exactly how many will be killed from these events, but a

billion is not an unreasonable number.

At the Sixth Trumpet, we know the demonic army will kill one third of earth's population, which will result in about 2 billion killed out of 6 billion.

Since we think about 1 billion Tribulation Saints will be killed by the Antichrist at chapter 14, it is possible that there would be about 3-4 billion killed during the whole Tribulation period altogether. In addition, those killed along with the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon may be the total of godless people that remain, about 2-3 billion.

Finally, there will be a remainder of Jews that get called back to Jerusalem after the battle. Their numbers would probably be in the millions, since today there are only 13 million Jews.

Chapter 10: The Last Week of the Tribulation

Revelation Chapters 15, 16 & 17:1-2

The events we have just read about in Revelation are in a sequential order and were written to be understood literally in this order. As we have already discussed, some take these events out of this order which has caused confusion and is the reason there are so many differing opinions on when they take place. These next chapters continue the progression toward the end of Tribulation.

John sees *another* multitude in Heaven to add to the other larger multitude already described at the Sixth Seal of chapter 7, and the 144,000 of chapter 14. The appearance of this mass of people, like at the Sixth Seal, is definite proof or indication of an event that just occurred beforehand. In this case, the multitude we see here in Revelation 15 is of those whom were just beheaded by the Antichrist, then seen in Heaven.

Chapter 16 of Revelation describes seven more angels bringing the last Seven Disasters, also known as, the Bowl or Vial Judgments. The end of the age is proclaimed when the Seventh Angel pours out the last bowl. These judgments are now getting progressively worse, but it is only because God is still trying to get the world's attention to give them one last chance to repent.

Beheaded Saints in Heaven

*“Then I saw another wonder in heaven that was great and amazing. There were seven angels bringing seven disasters. These are the last disasters, because after them, God's anger is finished. I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire. **All of those who had won the victory over the beast and his idol and over the number of his name were standing by the sea of glass.** They had harps that God had given them. They sang the song of Moses, the*

servant of God, and the song of the Lamb:

“You do great and wonderful things, Lord God Almighty. Everything the Lord does is right and true, King of the nations. Everyone will respect you, Lord, and will honor you. Only you are holy. All the nations will come and worship you, because the right things you have done are now made known.” Rev 15:1-4

This multitude, we are told, are the ones who “*won the victory*” over the Antichrist and his idol. The “*number of his name,*” means they did not accept the Mark and so they were killed. These saints had to overcome their trials, testing and tribulation to win the victory, which is their Salvation. They stood strong through the punishments and refused to worship the Antichrist even in the face of his threats of death.

These are the ones who were just described in Revelation 14:14 as being thrown into the “*winepress*” of God’s anger. Again, realize that God was not angry with them in the way we normally think of God being angry.

However, these believers will have to pay the ultimate price because they were not ready to go at the Rapture. Certainly there will be some who will come to faith in Christ for the first time during the Tribulation. God will also welcome back the prodigals.

Staying through the Tribulation is discipline for not being ready. If you have to discipline a child, it is not pleasant and there is usually some anger involved, though righteous. However, at the very least, you would be angry that you had to get to this point of discipline in the first place, because if they had obeyed the first time, the unpleasant discipline would not have been necessary.

There are consequences of not being ready for the Rapture, as we can see, but at the same time, there is also a reward if they overcome because they will finally get to go to Heaven. We know that to be absent from the body, as Christians, is to be immediately present with the Lord at death in spirit.

This Tribulation will purify these that didn't purify themselves when they had the chance. In Daniel 12:10, we see that the Tribulation Saints will be made pure by their trials and persecution and the wicked will go about being wicked.

The Seven Bowls

“After this I saw that the temple (the Tent of the Agreement) in heaven was opened. And the seven angels bringing the seven disasters came out of the temple. They were dressed in clean, shining linen and wore golden bands tied around their chests. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls filled with the anger of God, who lives forever and ever. The temple was filled with smoke from the glory and the power of God, and no one could enter the temple until the seven disasters of the seven angels were finished.” Rev 15:5-8

First Bowl

*“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, go and pour out the seven bowls of God's anger on the earth. **The first angel left** and poured out his bowl on the land. Then ugly and painful sores came upon all those who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his idol.” Rev 16:1-2*

Chapter 16 starts with the first angel pouring out his bowl of disaster and it caused ugly and painful sores to come upon all who accepted the Mark of the Antichrist.

There are no Tribulation Saints at this point, as they will have been killed by the Antichrist. The only ones left will be a remnant of Jews still protected in the desert.

It is possible that there will be a small number of people who are able to hide in the wilderness areas around the world in order to evade taking the “Mark of the Beast.” But, this would be a very small

number. In any case, Isaiah 13:12 says that there will be very few people left alive after all of this. Out of the seven billion Earth has today, even a few million would definitely be considered sparse.

Second Bowl

“The second angel poured out his bowl on the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man, and every living thing in the sea died.” Rev 16:3

This will be a devastating blow, which will do away with a major food supply. It will also destroy the ships and anyone on them.

Third Bowl

“The third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and the springs of water, and they became blood. Then I heard the angel of the waters saying:

“Holy One, you are the One who is and who was. You are right to decide to punish these evil people. They have poured out the blood of your holy people and your prophets. So now you have given them blood to drink as they deserve.’ And I heard a voice coming from the altar saying: ‘Yes, Lord God Almighty, the way you punish evil people is right and fair.’” Rev 16:4-7

There is likely **only a week left** after this judgment is poured out. Once all the water is poisoned everyone would die within one week or so. Since we cannot live much past a week without water, this seems to be the very end. The time between this judgment and Armageddon will have to be very short.

Forth Bowl

*“The fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and he was given power to burn the people with fire. They were burned by the great heat, and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these disasters. **But the people refused to change their hearts***

and lives and give glory to God.” Rev 16:8-9

This shows an incredible, merciful, and loving God. He is giving people chance after chance to be saved right until the very end. “*The people refused,*” implies that if they decided to obey God and give him glory, he would have saved them. No one should ever say that God is not fair or merciful throughout all of this.

Fifth Bowl

“The fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and darkness covered its kingdom. People gnawed their tongues because of the pain. They also cursed the God of heaven because of their pain and the sores they had, but they refused to change their hearts and turn away from the evil things they did.” Rev 16:10-11

Even now, they are still digging in their heels and trusting in themselves along with their evil leaders. The longer people hold on to this prideful place in their hearts, the harder it becomes to humble their hearts and repent.

Sixth Bowl

“The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates so that the water in the river was dried up to prepare the way for the kings from the east to come. Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. These evil spirits are the spirits of demons, which have power to do miracles. They go out to the kings of the whole world to gather them together for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.” Rev 16:12-14

This is dried up to make way for the kings of the east to cross it. They will need to cross it so they can fight against Jesus and his saints at the Battle of Armageddon. (It will actually be annihilation, not a battle, since those on God’s side can’t be killed.)

John sees three evil spirits come out of the mouths of Satan, the Antichrist and the False Prophet, which to John, look like frogs. These spirits went out to gather the kings of the earth and to call them to battle at the place called, “Megiddo.” In Hebrew, this place is also called, “Armageddon.” In the matching scripture of Ezekiel 38:4, we see where God will put hooks in their jaws to lead them into this battle.

A Commercial Break

*"Listen! I will come as a thief comes! **Blessed are those who stay awake and keep their clothes on** so that they will not walk around naked and have people see their shame." Rev 16:15*

Jesus does a complete break in the “action,” so to speak, to remind the reader to be ready for his return because he is coming as a thief. This is almost like a commercial break.

He inserts interjections like this one in other places as well. A paraphrased version of this commercial could be: “Hey, listen to this stuff! Do you want to go through this? If not, then be ready for my return so you won’t have to!”

This is the same message in his letters to the churches. He warned that those who are not ready would have to endure all this testing that is coming to the earth. Those who are ready can escape this testing *beforehand*.

This verse of Revelation 16:15 is more proof that there is an escape, that is, a rapture of the church before the Tribulation. It is not an indication that the Rapture is still yet to come.

Some may think this shows a post-Tribulation rapture. This is incorrect, because there are no holy ones left at this point, plus we have the escape verses that tell us some are leaving early. In addition, the Jews that are left, will stay to populate the earth, so they will not be raptured either.

This verse, and verses like it, simply contains a warning by

Jesus to all who have lived in the last two thousand years to be ready, for no one knows when their end will be. The ones who “*keep their clothes on*” will not have Jesus gaze upon their shameful sinfulness. Today is the day of salvation, for no one knows whether or not they will be here the remainder of today, or tomorrow.

Seventh Bowl

“Then the evil spirits gathered the kings together to the place that is called Armageddon in the Hebrew language.” Rev 16:16

Back to the action and without missing a beat, we see in the next verse, a continuance of the events that will draw us closer to the end. Three evil spirits have found the kings of the earth and have brought them to the place known as Armageddon where all the godless will fight against Jesus.

This event will most likely happen quickly in light of the Third Angel Bowl, which ruined the water; soon many would die from lack of water. So we are looking at the end of the end here, with the new beginning of Jesus earthly rule just around the corner.

*“**The seventh angel** poured out his bowl into the air. Then a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, **‘It is finished!’** Then there were flashes of lightning, noises, thunder, and a big earthquake—the worst earthquake that has ever happened since people have been on earth. The great city split into three parts, **and the cities of the nations were destroyed**. And God remembered the sins of Babylon the Great, so he gave that city the cup filled with the wine of his terrible anger. **Then every island ran away, and mountains disappeared**. Giant hailstones, each weighing about a hundred pounds, fell from the sky upon people. **People cursed God** for the disaster of the hail, because this disaster was so terrible.”*

Rev 16:17-21

Another great earthquake will occur here that is so great, all the mountains and islands of the earth will be leveled and disappear. There

has never been an earthquake so great like this one in the history of the world. All the cities will be destroyed. Giant hailstones weighing one hundred pounds will fall on people. Once again, people will curse God because of this plague. Not all are killed at this point yet, since Armageddon still has to happen in Revelation 19.

Every city falls here, including American cities. The United States is obviously included in this, though not named specifically. The only reason we were not named, is that we were not in existence until just 200 years ago.

The Beautiful Prostitute?

In the beginning of chapter 17, one of the angels with the Seven Bowls shows John the punishment that will be given to the “Great Prostitute.” This prostitute is a symbol of a certain evil nation and its capital city. This nation pedals filth, ungodly affluence and indulgences of all kinds throughout the world. This influence is felt all over the world and causes all the kings of the earth to sin with her.

*“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and spoke to me. He said, ‘Come, and I will show you the punishment that will be given to **the great prostitute, the one sitting over many waters. The kings of the earth sinned sexually with her, and the people of the earth became drunk from the wine of her sexual sin.**” Rev 17:1-2*

Before the vision of John progresses to the Battle of Armageddon, it looks like there is a break in the vision to look back at the event that already happened beforehand. The angel is giving John more detail about the fall of one of the cities that fell at the last Bowl Judgment.

This “Great Prostitute,” modern-day Babylon, will be destroyed along with all the other cities of the world and will be judged at the same time as well. This is just spelling out, in more detail, the

punishment for the “mother” who has given birth to all this degradation that we have in the world today.

America, the Beautiful?

Those who say America is not a part of end-times Bible prophecy should reconsider. I believe along with others that America is indeed a part of the end-times events, if not at the lead.

We are told in Revelation 17:18 that the woman, who is the prostitute, is the city that rules over the kings of the earth. The prostitute is a symbol for a certain, literal future city, from the time this was written 2000 years ago.

We are told that it is Babylon, but Babylon itself throughout scripture has also been used as a symbol just like Egypt and Sodom. These cities have been used in scripture as a symbol of sin, oppression and the old life which Christians are not to go back, or indulge in.

Therefore, although this symbol might not be as explicitly explained in the passage, is not difficult to figure out, if we are in tune with what is going on in the world today.

Some think that Babylon here is also a symbol for the entire world system which has become polluted. While there is some truth in this, there is still only one city and nation leading this pollution and is to blame for giving birth to it in the first place. So who is this prostitute, could it be America?

Let us look at the evidence. In the past, many biblical scholars told us that some of these symbols, especially here in this portion of Revelation, symbolize a much larger religious system, or a system of antichrist and or a financial money system, which will be in place and be running things in the end-times. Though there could be some truth in this as well, it has been largely vague.

Given the information they had at the time, who could blame them for being so general in scope and with lack of specificity? Who could imagine just back 50 years ago that America would become what

she is today? She has turned away from her relational roots with God, which is what made America great at one time. Today, we are no longer the desire of the world because of our morals and freedoms we offer. Instead, we now have become the “envy” of the world for the wrong reasons. The world desires our debauchery, exploitation and wealth.

If some of these biblical scholars of the past were alive today to see exactly what is unfolding now, I think they would have been much more specific in their predictions. But they did the best they could in the times which they lived and because of the information they had then. However, today things have changed drastically and quickly.

If it is not us the U.S.A., we would be hard pressed to name a replacement. Certainly, it is not the Catholic Church, as some believe because of their child molestation problem, yet this is one reason they have lost their once great influence.

Why is this important to understand the identity of this Prostitute? It is important to admit that America is in trouble and under judgment even now. We need to pray for our country, cry out to God, and change our lives.

Jesus warns the readers of Revelation, “*Come out of her my people and so that you don’t share in her sin.*” This doesn’t mean we are to move out of the United States. Jesus simply is telling us to be more holy, and live separate, spiritually, from the world around us.

We need to realize that we in the United States are not protected by our supposed “Christian” nation status. We have brought shame to his name, and have become complicit in pushing evil. Who really can match this description of Babylon other than the United States?

Chapter 11: Modern Day Babylon and Its Fall

Revelation Chapters 17 & 18

These next two chapters of Revelation continue the break in the action as John receives more details about the woman, known as, the Prostitute and the mother of prostitutes. Scripture says this woman also represents the city of Babylon.

The city of Babylon was destroyed at the last Bowl Judgment of chapter 16. John's vision in chapter 18 gives us a detailed description of how it was destroyed.

Who is Babylon?

*“Then the angel carried me away by the Spirit to the desert. There I saw a woman sitting on a red beast. It was covered with names against God written on it, and it had seven heads and ten horns. The woman was dressed in purple and red and was shining with the gold, precious jewels, and pearls she was wearing. She had a golden cup in her hand, a cup filled with evil things and the uncleanness of her sexual sin. **On her forehead a title was written that was secret. This is what was written: The great Babylon mother of prostitutes and of the evil things of the earth.”** Rev 17:3-5*

Historic Babylon was the land area of present day Iraq. Iraq today has no influence over the world in the way we see that this city of Babylon will have during the Tribulation. However, the United States uniquely does have this influence right now in Iraq. If there is a city today that most resembles the ancient city of Babylon, New York City has to be the front runner. There are many reasons, with the most important being the financial control it has in the world, along with the whole United States economy, in general. The United States has had this influence and power for some time. And, the chance that the U.S.

will be "dethroned" from its current ungodly status is highly unlikely.

Could this change? It could. But let us remember, there have been respected modern-day prophets that have warned America. Again, the late David Wilkerson had a vision of fires coming to NYC, and its surrounding Tri-State area, and to the entire world as well.

The scriptures say Babylon is a city and a country that has influence over the systems of the rest of the world. Whatever city Babylon will be, it will be the center of commerce, pornography and a variety of "anti-God" influences.

Rome, although it may have some religious influence, does not have nearly the influence the United States does in many aspects. In addition, Rome and the Catholic Church do not peddle pornography the way the United States has and continues to do.

Have they had problems with priests? Of course, but it was the exception, not the norm. We could easily point to several famous protestant pastors who have caused similar scandals. As a church, no denomination supports or promotes pornography, or prostitution. Therefore, this is not likely speaking of Rome.

It may be easy to label the Pope as the Antichrist or False Prophet and Catholicism as the One World Religion system, but we need to use common sense. The Antichrist will not be promoting family values and teach against the sin of gay marriage, the way the Pope does today. The Pope today has come under heavy criticism and attacks by the godless because of his biblical stances.

If there will be a "One-World Religion," it is not likely to be from the Catholic Church. It is Islam that is noted for beheading the infidels, as they call them, not the Catholics or other groups. If there will be a one-world religion at this time, most likely it would be Islam.

However, we see that, if anything, the direct worship of the Antichrist and Satan will be demanded of the people. Earlier we saw descriptions of the Antichrist that say he will have no regard for any god, whatsoever.

However, even if Muslims are to rise up in the last days, as it appears they are doing today, it does not mean that the Antichrist will have to be a Muslim. It is however, more likely that False Prophet will be Muslim because of what we discussed about him in Chapter 9 of *Revelation Unleashed*.

The Hated City

“The ten horns and the beast you saw will hate the prostitute. They will take everything she has and leave her naked. They will eat her body and burn her with fire. God made the ten horns want to carry out his purpose by agreeing to give the beast their power to rule, until what God has said comes about. The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.” Rev 17:16-18

This passage alone proves that this is more than just a system at work and in charge, but a single specific leader and a specific nation. The last "Big Ten" leaders of the world will hate the prostitute. Think just for a moment what this means. Why would they hate a system or nation that has brought them wealth and power? How could they destroy a system, and nation, of which they have been a part? Why would they want to destroy it?

We see that God made them do it. In the natural, they would not want to “bite the hand” that has fed them and given them much of what they had, but we are nearing the end here. This is, in fact, the last week before the Battle of Armageddon.

Is it possible that the Antichrist could in the end turn his back on his own country and people at the very end, if he is from this Babylon himself? The answer is, of course, yes. Since we know from the descriptions in Daniel, the Antichrist is out for himself alone. Therefore, we cannot disqualify that he could be from or in charge of this hated city.

Mother of Influence

More than giving birth to an offspring, a mother is also an agent of influence, whether good or bad. There is no country on the face of the earth which currently has more worldwide influence than the United States, also part of the “G8” Global Summit. It definitely has had some good influence in the past, but things have been drastically changing over this last generation especially.

Of course, today it is unpopular to speak out against immorality in the United States, unlike in the Muslim nations.

We only have to go back as far as 9-11-01, to a time where America began to be judged and punished by her enemies. This, of course, happened because God allowed it to happen, through evil people. We see many times in scripture where God used the enemies of Israel to bring them warning, punishment, then finally judgment. We cannot expect to be immune from the same punishment.

America's influence and affluence, is such that, even the so-called poor among us are very rich as compared to the real poor of third world countries. We have products and inventions of every kind to make peoples' lives more comfortable and though that is not a sin by itself, it has led to idle hands and idle minds wandering to places God never intended for us to go and see.

The internet is an invention out of the richness of the United States. It is not inherently evil on its own, but we can access ungodly material through it. Currently, millions are sinning right now as they look at inappropriate images. Millions are addicted to internet pornography, including too many in the church. We need to heed the words of Jesus who says, especially to the church, *“Come out of her my people and stop sinning!”*

The kings of the earth sinned sexually with this city. We need to ask ourselves how anyone can sin sexually with a city, which is an inanimate object? But it is not just a city; it is also a spirit, and a system

of a nation that created filth to distribute to everyone else. This indulgent country is in charge now and will be in the future, and “sits on many waters,” which simply means its influence and control is felt worldwide.

We can see that in this book of Revelation, God uses evil men and spirits to judge and punish other evil men, nations and peoples. We know that America was once a beacon of freedom and good light, but we are no longer what we once were.

We are now like Israel, who at times throughout history turned her back on God. Our moral standing in the world which was based on the Ten Commandments has now become polluted.

The only way to delay the inevitable is to cry out to God with a repentant heart and perhaps he will give us a little more time for more souls to be saved. This is God’s heart. He wants to save us, but we have to want salvation.

Babylonian Power

“Then I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people and with the blood of those who were killed because of their faith in Jesus.

*“When I saw the woman, I was very amazed. Then the angel said to me, “Why are you amazed? **I will tell you the secret of this woman and the beast she rides—the one with seven heads and ten horns.**” Rev 17:5-7*

John is told, here, what the symbols or the “secret” means. We see that Babylon does not rule alone, but has the other nations giving power to it, concurring with its lead.

Antichrist Rises from the Dead

“The beast you saw was once alive but is not alive now. But soon it will come up out of the bottomless pit and go away to be

destroyed. There are people who live on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life since the beginning of the world. They will be amazed when they see the beast, **because he was once alive, is not alive now, but will come again.**” Rev 17:8

This is simply talking about the Antichrist. The Antichrist will rise from death or near death because of the head wound event. In addition, we learned that the False Prophet likely comes from the bowels of the earth himself. We already saw in chapter 9 of *Revelation Unleashed* that the beast is the Antichrist, and the False Prophet is the other beast.

(Note: Some may say here that verse 8 shows that people can be predestined for Hell. This is not true, as they had the same chance to repent as everyone else. This is simply showing us that God foreknew what they would eventually choose. He wants everyone to be saved, but they chose the wrong path and stayed on it.)

Seven Kings

*"You need a wise mind to understand this. The seven heads on the beast are seven mountains where the woman sits. **And they are seven kings.**"* Rev 17:9-10a

This is another passage that is not as difficult to understand as it may seem on the surface. Some want to key in on the seven mountains here and say, because Rome is surrounded by seven mountains, it must be Rome, but this is not what it is saying. In fact, the more important thing is that the seven mountains **are also seven kings**. Therefore, the symbolic mountains are simply symbolizing seven literal kings. The seven mountains are not those that are around Rome.

The Spirit of Antichrist

Five Kings of the Past

*“Five of the kings **have already been destroyed**, One of the kings lives now. And another has not yet come. When he comes, he must stay a short time.”* Rev 17:10

This scripture that says, *“Five of the kings **have already been destroyed**,”* obviously refers to kings and nations in the past as John was writing it. *“One of the kings lives now.”* This is likely referring to a king that was alive when John was seeing the vision. Then he speaks of a future king, *“And another has not yet come. When he comes, he must stay a short time.”* The identity of these past kings does not really matter, though some have done this. More importantly, it is the *future king* in the next passage that is identified as the “eighth king.”

The Antichrist is the Eighth King

*“The beast that was once alive, but is not alive now, is also an **eighth king**. He belongs to the first seven kings, and he will go away to be destroyed.”* Rev 17:11

This “eighth king” is the Antichrist, because he was “the beast that once was alive.” The fact that the Antichrist belongs to the first seven kings, is simply saying that the major leaders of the past who were in control of an ungodly world system, were also controlled by the spirit of antichrist.

This spirit of antichrist has always been with us throughout the centuries, is still here now and will be in control in the future. Again, realize God is still in complete control of it all. He is simply letting this happen to serve his purposes and plan, as well as, fulfill the promise of prophecy.

His Future Reign

*"The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet begun to rule, but they will receive power to rule with the beast **for one hour.**"* Rev 17:12

This is another reference to future kings who will rule during the Great Tribulation period along with the Antichrist.

The "one hour" here is obviously speaking of a period of time that is more than just sixty minutes; instead, it is most likely the entire Tribulation period, as we previously discussed. Remember in Revelation 3:10, we saw that the faithful followers of Jesus will be "kept from" this **hour** of trial and testing, by escaping it early.

Antichrist Rules the Whole Earth

*"All ten of these kings have the same purpose, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. **They will make war against the Lamb**, but the Lamb will defeat them, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings. **He will defeat them with his called, chosen, and faithful followers.** Then the angel said to me, **The waters that you saw, where the prostitute sits, are peoples, races, nations, and languages.**"* Rev 17:13-15

Again, we are told the meaning of a symbols right here in the passage itself. The "waters" is a system of many countries and peoples that are under the influence of the Antichrist.

The place where the prostitute sits is one nation and with its leader, is in charge of it all. The Antichrist will not be acting alone; instead, he will have power to back up his actions so he can enforce all he wills.

The Fall of Babylon (Revelation 18)

We see another great angel here. This one comes down into the darkness of the earth (because of the Bowl of darkness that was

poured on everyone). He brightens the earth with his light and proclaims the future fate of Babylon in a loud voice:

“Ruined is the city of Babylon. She has become a home for demons and a prison for every evil spirit. She is ruined because of the evil desires of people to sin sexually and because the kings of the earth sinned with her and they also sinned by growing rich from her great wealth and luxury.” Rev 18:2-3

The whole world that stands with the Antichrist will eventually be punished. None will be able to avoid the punishment that is coming. It simply is saying here, that the brunt of the punishment will go to the controller and mother of all the degradation.

Jesus Interjects

In verse four, we see another voice from heaven saying to all who will listen: ***“Come out of her my people, so you will not share in her sins and receive the disasters that will come to her.”*** Rev 18:4

This is another "mini-commercial" from Jesus, much like the one in Revelation 15:16. Realize that there are no holy people left at this point and this city has already fallen along with the rest of the cities of the world. Therefore, **this message is to us now.** Jesus wants us to come out of her and not to wait until she is being judged, for then it will be too late.

Jesus continues: *“Her sins have piled up as high as the sky, and God has not forgotten the wrongs she has done. Give that city the same as she gave to others. Pay her back twice as much as she did. Prepare wine for her that is twice as strong as the wine she prepared for others. She gave herself much glory and rich living. Give her that much suffering and sadness. She says to herself, ‘I am a queen sitting on my throne. I am not a widow; I will never be sad.’ **So these disasters will come to her in one day: death, and crying, and great hunger, and she will be destroyed by fire, because the***

Lord God who judges her is powerful. Rev 18:5-8

One Hour of One Day

This is more description of what will happen as described in chapter 16:19, when the angel said it is “finished.”

Verse 8 says these disasters will come to her in one day and she will be destroyed by fire. In fact, in the next verse, it says this ruin will come in one hour of that one day.

All these cities will fall and everyone will lose everything they had in the span of one literal hour. The people, who were addicted to the indulgences of this earth, will mourn as they see everything that mattered to them burn up in one hour.

Their Hearts Are Hardened

“The merchants will say, ‘Babylon, the good things you wanted are gone from you. All your rich and fancy things have disappeared. You will never have them again.’ The merchants who became rich from selling to her will be afraid of her suffering and will stand far away. They will cry and be sad and say: ‘Terrible! How terrible for the great city! She was dressed in fine linen, purple and red cloth, and she was shining with gold, precious jewels, and pearls! All these riches have been destroyed in one hour!’” Rev 18:14-17

This loss will no doubt make them angrier than they were before and they will look to get even with God, if that were possible.

The rest of this chapter describes the sadness of the people, even though they are the ones who destroyed her. It is a long lamentation of extreme sadness and depression over their loss.

At the end of this angel’s message, we hear that God destroys this world system of Babylon as vindication for the evil it brought and the harm it did to the people. God is also getting the long awaited justice and vindication for the death of his prophets and saints.

“Then a powerful angel picked up a large stone, like one used

*for grinding grain, and threw it into the sea. He said: 'In the same way, the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, and it will never be found again. The music of people playing harps and other instruments, flutes, and trumpets, will never be heard in you again. No workman doing any job will ever be found in you again. The sound of grinding grain will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again, and the voices of a bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. **Your merchants were the world's great people, and all the nations were tricked by your magic. You are guilty of the death of the prophets and God's holy people and all who have been killed on earth.**'*

Rev 18:21-24

Worship God Today

Of course, this is all very sad, but it is God avenging what was done to the holy people and at the same time bringing the prophetic scriptures to pass, literally, as they must. Even if one does not want to believe America is the Whore of Babylon, she will be destroyed just the same, along with all the others.

We should not be afraid because of these things; instead they must wake us up to what is happening around us. More important than this, is the future. God is in control of all of this and it should make us want to worship him now, and not only when it may be too late.

This is why the Bible says, *"Today is the day of salvation,"* since no one knows precisely when his or her end will come. We do not have to be a part of the prostitutes' punishment, if we come out of her "system" now.

There is a number of ways we can do this, but the most important key is "holiness" and being set apart from the rest of the world. If no one knows you are a Christian now, then you need to press in with God now, before it is too late.

Going to church does not make anyone a Christian, even though it is a good practice. Even more, as we see Jesus' soon return approaching, we must have a personal relationship with him. Many people go to church, but then live as they please the rest of the week.

Do not wait for an angel to proclaim the Gospel from the air to accept Jesus, if you are even given that chance. Accept him and live for him now, because none of us know when our time is up.

If you are away from him because of sin, he is always waiting to accept you back if you want forgiveness. But do it sooner, not later, for there are no guarantees in this life without Jesus.

Chapter 12: The “Battle” of Armageddon

Revelation Chapters 19 & 20

Along with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, chapter 19 of Revelation describes what is popularly called, the Second Coming of Christ. While it is Jesus’ Second Coming, we have seen that the Battle of Armageddon is really the final phase of his Second Coming. The first phase is the Rapture, where Jesus gathers his followers in the air with the help of angels who will remove them before the Great Tribulation begins.

As the Tribulation period draws to a close, Jesus comes back with his followers on white horseback, not angels, to capture the Antichrist and the False Prophet in this battle at the location referred to as, “Megiddo,” which is a valley near Jerusalem and is also called, “Armageddon.” Though it is referred to as a battle, it is more of annihilation, as no casualties will be incurred on God’s side.

Chapter 20 takes us into the thousand year period of time when the Saints of God will rule with Christ on the earth. This is known as the Millennial Reign of Christ when *“the lion will lie down with the lamb”* and the curse of sin will be lifted once and for all. It will be a time of peace and justice as never seen on earth since before the fall.

Marriage Supper of the Lamb

“After this vision and announcement I heard what sounded like a great many people in heaven saying: ‘Hallelujah! Salvation, glory, and power belong to our God, because his judgments are true and right. He has punished the prostitute who made the earth evil with her sexual sin. He has paid her back for the death of his servants.’ Again they said: ‘Hallelujah! She is burning, and her smoke will rise forever and ever.’

“Then the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures

bowed down and worshiped God, who sits on the throne. They said: 'Amen, Hallelujah!' Then a voice came from the throne, saying: 'Praise our God, all you who serve him and all you who honor him, both small and great!' Then I heard what sounded like a great many people, like the noise of flooding water, and like the noise of loud thunder. The people were saying:

'Hallelujah! Our Lord God, the Almighty, rules. Let us rejoice and be happy and give God glory, because the wedding of the Lamb has come, and the Lamb's bride has made herself ready.'” Rev 19:1-7

At the start of chapter 19, there is a quick continuation of the events of chapter 18; the Saints in Heaven are praising God because he punished Babylon, followed by their supper with the Bridegroom in Heaven before they come down with him for the Battle of Armageddon.

This Wedding Supper of the Lamb is clearly not at the beginning of the Tribulation period. Likewise, it also does not represent the moment of the Rapture. This event will be at the end of the Tribulation period, right before these Saints descend out of heaven with Jesus to annihilate the Antichrist and his armies.

Linen of Good Works:

“Fine linen, bright and clean, was given to her to wear.” (The fine linen means the good things done by God's holy people.) And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who have been invited to the wedding meal of the Lamb!" And the angel said, "These are the true words of God.” Rev 19:8-9

This highlighted verse is very clear. Those who think good deeds are not important in the life of a Christian are mistaken. These linens are the sign of their salvation. It is no coincidence that these linens mean, *“the good things done by God's holy people.”* Although good works of the law by themselves cannot save us, it is obvious that

we are saved to do works of faith.

James said we are *not* saved by “**faith alone**” and that “*Faith without works is dead.*” James was not trying to contradict Paul’s message from the book of Romans in which he said the works of the law will not gain our salvation. Paul was correcting a church that was being influenced to go back in that direction.

James, on the other hand, addressed a problem that was the complete opposite. The church was starting to teach that works had no importance in salvation at all.

While James did not say we are saved through the works of the law, he did say, however, that we have to do “works of faith,” if you will, in order to complete our faith. He used the lives of Abraham and Rahab from the Old Testament to illustrate how faith and actions work together to complete our faith, justifying us before God.

James said: “*You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith **was made complete by what he did.** And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is **justified by what he does** and **not** by faith alone.”*

James 2:20-24 (NIV)

This does not contradict Paul at all. Paul talked about *one* necessary part of salvation which is “faith.” This is to be faith in Jesus’ work on the cross, not the law. However, James explicitly tells the church about the *other* necessary half, the importance of “**action**” which completes, or finishes faith.

This scripture in James is not talking about the “fruits” or “proof” of being a Christian. Yes, good works **should** be the product of a real Christian, but this verse is not talking about the signs or proof of salvation. Instead, it is talking about the requirement of works, that is,

the “**works of faith**” which complete salvation.

When Rahab hid the spies, she was not doing a “work of the law;” her action was not one of the Ten Commandments or another law in the Old Testament.

She was actually doing a “work of faith.” This work was followed by her faith. That is, she had faith, she believed that the God of Israel was the real God, and should be feared. Her faith was made complete when she hid the spies. Her work of faith completed her faith and she was justified. To be “Justified” is when we are declared, “Not guilty” by God.

You could say: “*Wow, look at what she did, this is proof she was one of God’s righteous.*” Sure, it is proof to you. But, to God, without the work, there is no completion. If she never acted on her faith, her faith would have died.

These saints at the wedding supper were spotless and pure after what they endured in their lives. Their hearts were found in love with him, circumcised, and their good works were righteous and true to their faith. They were found ready.

Is one work enough? Well, these saints didn’t do just one work. They continued in the faith the way Jesus and the apostles told them to do; daily works of perseverance in His name.

Rider on the White Horse

“Then I saw heaven opened, and there before me was a white horse. The rider on the horse is called Faithful and True, and he is right when he judges and makes war. His eyes are like burning fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him, which no one but himself knows. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven dressed in fine linen, white and clean, were following him on white horses. Out of the rider’s mouth comes a sharp sword that he will use to defeat

the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will crush out the wine in the winepress of the terrible anger of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his upper leg was written this name: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.” Rev 19:11-16

John sees Heaven opened again, and before him was a white horse with Jesus riding upon it. The passage has awesome details about the nature of Jesus and his appearance. Imagine the fear his enemies will feel when see him coming toward them with glowing eyes, a sword coming out of his mouth and his robe dipped in blood.

He is coming down with the raptured Saints who will also ride on white horses. (The age-old question is answered here: Are there animals in heaven? Apparently, yes.) These saints on horseback are described as those who made themselves ready and are dressed in fine linens.

This is the day prophecy describes as the actual physical Second Coming of Jesus Christ. He will come to earth at this point as conqueror and will set up his kingdom on earth, finally. This is a day of judgment, so to speak, for those who would not obey and repent during the Tribulation.

Anyone of them could have simply repented of their sins, called on God and refused the Mark of the Beast, as the angel warned them. For some, it seems too harsh, but the reality is they have just come through a time where they saw the power of God on display dozens of times, saw Jesus in the air, and heard his message of salvation and prophecy through the two witnesses for three and a half years. They will have no excuse.

The problem is that so many people think they can enter Heaven on their own terms, when the terms have already been laid out. They are very narrow, not broad. There is only one way to Heaven and it is through Jesus alone.

The Great Day of the Lord

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he called with a loud voice to all the birds flying in the sky: ‘Come and gather together for the great feast of God so that you can eat the bodies of kings, generals, mighty people, horses and their riders, and the bodies of all people—free, slave, small, and great.’

“Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth. Their armies were gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. But the beast was captured and with him the false prophet who did the miracles for the beast. The false prophet had used these miracles to trick those who had the mark of the beast and worshiped his idol. The false prophet and the beast were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur. And their armies were killed with the sword that came out of the mouth of the rider on the horse, and all the birds ate the bodies until they were full.” Rev 19:17-21

Prophecies of the Old Testament, from Isaiah through Malachi speak of end-times war, fighting, battle cries and the “great day of the Lord’s **judging**.” They clearly match the language here at Revelation 19:19. These scriptures are not a match for the events of the Sixth Seal, nor are they a match for the end of the thousand years.

While it is true that the day of the Rapture is considered to be a “great day of the Lord,” it is only the first one, as we discussed before. When you look closely at the descriptions of these two events, you can separate them easily into two different days. Any scriptures that mention war, fighting or battle cries refer to the physical Second Coming day here in Revelation 19:19. If there is no mention of these things, but instead we read about angles, clouds, and a gathering of people, it is the first day of the Lord at the Sixth Seal which includes the Rapture of the ready church.

The first day of God’s wrath at the Sixth Seal is described as

only a day of punishment, not a day of judgment as will be this event of Revelation 19. This is a very important distinction to make. At the first great and overwhelming day of the Lord at the Sixth Seal, he will allow some godless people to live, while here in Revelation 19 he will not. The time for God's mercy will be over, along with the "time of the Gentiles."

The first time Jesus physically came to earth 2000 years ago, he came as a humble, meek lamb born in a stable. He willingly gave up his life for the sins of humanity. At the Sixth Seal, Jesus will be seen in the air, but won't physically come to earth yet; instead, at this first phase of his return, he will step out of Heaven for a brief moment to collect his ready followers who are ready to be taken at that time.

This "Second Coming" event of Revelation 19, on the other hand, will be when he physically comes down to earth to stay. He will not come as a thief to steal anything or anyone away as he will do at the Rapture. Instead, he comes to fight, destroy his enemies and set up his earthly kingdom of peace and love for one thousand years.

The people who are alive at this time will no doubt be hungry, thirsty and quite desperate. They will want and even plan, to go to war against the one who caused them all this pain and suffering. And because of the miracles the Antichrist and False Prophet were allowed to do, they will be deceived into thinking they can defeat God.

The Battle of Armageddon will be a very fast war with no casualties to the Lord's army. According to other scriptures, like Ezekiel, God is likely defeating them within a one-day period, not with a long protracted war, as wars are today.

The Antichrist and the False Prophet will be captured and thrown alive into the Lake of Fire. Their armies will be completely killed as well. The smoke from their torment will rise forever and ever, in an eternal hell, with eternal and continual suffering.

What is “Gog and Magog?”

There are different ideas about the event referred to as the war of “Gog and Magog” found in the book of Ezekiel. Some believe it is a war that may start any day now and some believe it is a war during the Tribulation. Another belief is that it is an event that takes place after Christ’s thousand year reign on earth, as described in Revelation 20.

Since Gog and Magog is mentioned in several passages, it can get confusing. However, when you examine Ezekiel, Zechariah, and others, you will see that Gog and Magog is more likely the name of a geographical region, rather than a name of a war.

The Gog and Magog war event of Ezekiel 38 and 39 is a better match for the description of the Battle of Armageddon of Revelation 19, than it is for the event of Revelation 20. Even though Gog and Magog are mentioned in both Ezekiel and Revelation 20, they are not matching events.

Revelation 19: Battle of Armageddon

First, let’s notice just some of the similarities between Revelation 19 and Ezekiel 38 and 39. Revelation 19:17 and Ezekiel 39:17 describe a command to call out to the birds of the heavens to gather for the great feast of God so they can eat the bodies of those he will kill.

Both describe a battle where there are two opposing armies, which meet at a valley called Armageddon (Megiddo), just as we saw in Revelation 16. Ezekiel describes a war that will be fought in the mountains. Revelation 19 doesn’t say where the war is fought, however it does say the armies gather in the valley, at least initially.

Zechariah is also similar to Ezekiel and Revelation 19, saying that the Lord will go to war with the nations that captured Jerusalem. As Jerusalem defends itself from an attack by its enemies, Jesus appears above them in the air with his army to defeat all of them.

Zechariah has a description of this: *“Then the Lord will appear above them, **and his arrows will shoot like lightning**. The Lord God will blow the trumpet, and he will march in the storms of the south.”*

Zech 9:14-17

Jesus is described to have a bow in his hand as he did at the First Seal of Revelation and we can see here he will use it again at this battle.

Ezekiel 38 and 39 is likely speaking of the Battle of Armageddon in Revelation 19 because of the following two very important verses:

One is Ezekiel 39:7 where God tells us he will not be dishonored anymore after this battle. *“I will make myself known among my people Israel, **and I will not let myself be dishonored anymore**. Then the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One in Israel.”*

Clearly, God is being dishonored today and will be throughout the entire seven-year Tribulation period by the godless. Since God says he will not let **himself** be dishonored anymore, this battle has to refer to the Battle of Armageddon, which will put an end to the dishonor. In addition, this verse describes exactly what will go on during the Tribulation period when God allows the Godless to defame and dishonor him.

The other important verse is Ezekiel 39:29, which says that God will put his spirit into the Jews after the battle he describes is fought. *“I will not turn away from them anymore, **because I will put my Spirit into the people of Israel, says the Lord God.**”*

We know that God definitely turns away from them again during the Tribulation period as he allows the Antichrist to trample Jerusalem for the last three and a half years.

We know that the Jews will have his spirit in Revelation 20 during the last thousand years, but they do not have his spirit now and will not during the last seven-year Tribulation period. So again, there

can only be one place when his spirit is imparted, which is at the end of the Tribulation period, but before the last thousand years begins.

Revelation 20: The End of the Thousand Years

Ezekiel tells of how they will clean up after the battle of Gog and Magog. They will bury the dead, and clean the land. This is strong proof that this war in Ezekiel is not describing the event of Revelation 20, the period after the thousand year millennial reign of Jesus. Since at the end of the thousand years God only burns up his enemies with fire from Heaven, there will be no need for burial. Also, at the end of the thousand years, God will make a new heaven and new earth, so there will be no need for cleaning up the earth at that time.

There are also common sense clues in Revelation 20 that indicate the “Gog and Magog” mentioned there is not really a battle. It has been mislabeled a “battle,” but because during the thousand years no one will train for war, or have weapons of war (Isaiah 2:4), instead it will be a complete time of peace with Jesus in control.

Although Satan and “his army” will later march across the earth to surround Jerusalem to start a war, it will not happen. At that time, God simply calls fire down from heaven, without an army of any kind and burns everyone up. No war between two opposing armies will be fought at Revelation 20, whatsoever.

This mention of Gog and Magog better fits a description for people groups and their geographical locations. Whenever we read of Gog and Magog, we see a description of where they live and how these people will go to war against God.

However, not every scripture that mentions the Gog and Magog people represents the same event. And, the events that will involve the Gog and Magog people, as described by Ezekiel, can only fit in one spot which at the Battle of Armageddon of Revelation 19.

Binding Satan for 1,000 Years

*“I saw an angel coming down from heaven. He had the key to the bottomless pit **and a large chain in his hand**. The angel grabbed the dragon, that old snake who is the devil and Satan, and tied him up for a thousand years. Then he threw him into the bottomless pit, closed it, and locked it over him. The angel did this so he could not trick the people of the earth anymore until the thousand years were ended. After a thousand years he must be set free for a short time.” Rev 20:1-3*

“When the thousand years are over, Satan will be set free from his prison. Then he will go out to trick the nations in all the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle.” Rev 20:7-8a

At the end of the Battle of Armageddon, Satan is chained and thrown into the bottomless pit for one thousand years. However, this is just the beginning of God’s judgment for him. After the thousand years are over, he will be loosed and will be allowed to tempt those who have repopulated the earth. Then, he will be thrown into the Lake of Fire forever.

A friend was asked by someone, who only views Revelation as an allegory, *“Do you actually think God will use a real chain to bind Satan?”* (As if God will go down to Home Depot or Lowes to buy a chain.) The answer to this question has to be, “Yes!” God has literally fulfilled all previous prophecy to the letter and smallest detail, and he will fulfill this too. Is it possible that God, the maker of all things, will have a special chain made from a substance that only he could make? Of course he will. In Heaven, there are no impossibilities, he speaks it and it is so.

Gog and Magog, here, is the name of the countries and their people that Satan will trick into thinking they can win a fight with God. Satan will lure them in order to take as many to hell with him as possible.

Why is God letting Satan loose again? The simple answer is God has an exact plan in mind. God will let Satan loose one more time to tempt and sift the people before the New Heaven and New Earth. Should Heaven have another fall of God's own? No. After this sifting, it will be certain who is worthy of Heaven.

No one enters Heaven except through the testing of temptation and trials. This is a test we all need to pass.

God has always, since the beginning of time, been looking for a separate holy people who depend on him for their salvation and not themselves. However, God allows us live our lives and does not force anyone to choose him over their sinful desires. We must choose God's ways daily and crucify our carnal man, as Paul said he did. All this while Satan seeks to destroy all he can.

The few who choose to follow him, his ways and his desires, will get to live with him in his incredible and perfect creation of Heaven forever.

Those who will live during the thousand years will also have to make this choice just as we do today. Since the last thousand years will be a time of unprecedented peace, there will be no testing until the end when Satan is loosed. There will be complete justice as Jesus rules, and the Saints will stand as judges. It is likely, too, that the people of earth will be able to live longer, as back in Noah's day, since God will lift the curse during this time.

The Saints Rule with Christ

"Then I saw some thrones and people sitting on them who had been given the power to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been killed because they were faithful to the message of Jesus and the message from God.

*"I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. **And I saw the souls of those who had***

been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. **They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years.**

*“They had not worshiped the beast or his idol, and they had not received the mark of the beast on their foreheads or on their hands. They came back to life and ruled with Christ for a thousand years. (The others that were dead did not live again until the thousand years were ended.) **This is the first raising of the dead.** Blessed and holy are those who share in this first raising of the dead. The second death has no power over them. They will be priests for God and for Christ and will rule with him for a thousand years.”* Rev 20:4-6 (NIV)

The First Raising of the Dead

We see that the Tribulations Saints are raised from the dead to rule with Christ along with those that were raptured before the Tribulation. There are some who confuse this “*first raising of the dead*” with the Rapture event. We know that at the rapture, those in Christ will be raised from the dead. However, this resurrection in Revelation 19 is simply the first raising of the dead of the **new millennial** age with Jesus as the head.

The Rapture resurrection of the dead as described in 1Thessalonians 4:16-17 and other passages, will be the last resurrection of the **old age** which is still under the curse. (The Rapture resurrection will also occur at the “last trumpet” of the old age.)

There will be another “*raising of the dead,*” at the end of the thousand years as well. This will be for the judgment of those who died without Christ throughout all of history.

The “*second death*” in this passage is simply a reference to Hell, which is considered by God to be death, though no one will completely

die. The second death has to be a figure of speech because the smoke of their torment will rise forever, as we saw earlier in Revelation 19. It will be a death of sorts since there will be no hope of relief or escape.

The Power to Judge

John saw thrones and people who sat on them with the power to judge. You may have heard that there are two judgments, one at the beginning of the thousand years, and one at the end. The one at the beginning, people say, is for the judging of the Saints by Jesus at the “Bema Seat of Christ” where he will supposedly give out rewards. (“Bema Seat” is a man-made term.)

There are scriptures that indicate a receiving of something. For example, 2 Corinthians 5:10 says we “will receive what we should get-good or bad-for the things we did in the earthly body.” However, we really don’t see that these saints in Revelation 20 are being judged or that they are given anything **but the power to judge**. Rewards of some kind may be given here or at some point elsewhere, but it isn’t certain where.

Is it possible that rewards to Christians will be given right after the Rapture, or at the end of the thousand years when God judges the dead? There is no scripture that makes it clear.

As for the rewards mentioned in the Revelation letters to the churches, they will be given to all Christians, although given different names, each reward speaks to, and of, eternal life, which all Christians will receive.

When it comes to this passage in Revelation 20, we cannot add what is not here. There are no words here, at all, that show there is a judgment of the Saints of any kind, or a passing out of rewards. It only says that they were given the power to judge. We know this power to judge must be over the inhabitants of the earth during the thousand years.

They will be like the judges of the Old Testament, ruling over

the peoples' affairs, keeping order, with the King of Kings as the high authority.

This thousand year reign of Jesus fulfills all the Old Testament prophecies that discuss the future blessing on the nation of Israel. Those who populate the earth at this time will be the Jews, of course, which will fulfill the promise made to Abraham that his descendants would number the grains of the sand and stars of the sky.

This population will be comprised of the protected remnant of Israel that will be supernaturally flown to the desert during the last Great Tribulation. Although uncertain, it may be possible that some stragglers will be able to hide during the Tribulation and thus, be a part of this population too.

Final Sentencing

At the end of the thousand years, after God destroys Satan and those he tricked, God will call up the dead for judgment. The dead, who died without Christ throughout all previous generations, including those killed during the Tribulation, will be resurrected. He will judge and give a final sentence to those great and small, including Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet.

Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet

*“There are so many people they will be like sand on the seashore. And Satan's army marched across the earth and gathered around the camp of God's people and the city God loves. **But fire came down from heaven and burned them up.** And Satan, who tricked them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur with the beast and the false prophet. **There they will be punished day and night forever and ever.**” Rev 20:8b-10*

Satan will finally get his promised punishment and will be thrown into the Lake of Fire. This lake of burning sulfur will also

include the Antichrist and the False Prophet, where they already were during the previous one thousand years. The scripture says that they will be punished forever. Since the Antichrist and the False Prophet are both men, this once again shows how men are also tormented in Hell forever. Hell is not just for the angels that have become demons.

In Hell, everyone becomes a spiritual being. Obviously, our flesh cannot inhabit a place like Hell and continue to exist. We would be no more, and unconsciously dead. Therefore, it is common sense to know that God will give an immortal body to those in Heaven, and he will also give one to those in Hell.

One mystery I hope to have answered one day is: *“Why not just incinerate the spirit and soul of these evil people and angels so they no longer exist?”* *“Why eternal punishment in this way?”* For now, we must be content with not knowing all of God’s purposes and plans. Since God made a way out with Jesus, it proves he is merciful and is wishing that none perish in the place called Hell.

Those Not in Christ

*“Then I saw **a great white throne** and the One who was sitting on it. Earth and sky ran away from him and disappeared. And I saw **the dead, great and small**, standing before the throne. Then books were opened, and the book of life was opened. The dead were judged by what they had done, which was written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them. Each person was judged by what he had done. **And Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire.** The lake of fire is the second death. **And anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.**”* Rev 20:11-15

Here is where we actually see a judgment clearly described. These whose bodies will be resurrected, will be those who died without Christ and will represent all who have died from the beginning of time

through to the end of the thousand years. We see a final sentencing for each which is Hell for eternity. We see that those whose names are not in the Book of Life will be thrown into the Lake of Fire.

However, no rewards are indicated here in this passage and we don't see mention of those whose names are found in the book. Of course, we know they will go to Heaven, but we can't be sure Christians will also be present at this event to receive some kind of rewards or judging.

Death and Hades

Death or Hades is often thought of as Hell. (This scripture calls the Lake of Fire, the "second death.") We saw at the Fourth Seal that Death and Hades are actually evil spirits who ride spirit horses and kill people by a number of different methods. Here we see that these spirits are giving up the dead in a specific place or realm that they manage. Is it possible that Hades is a section of the Lake of Fire? Possibly, but either way, it does not matter, because Death and Hades are done away with when they are thrown into the Lake of Fire themselves.

Chapter 13: Heaven

Revelation Chapters 21 & 22

The psalmist in Psalm 84:10 said he would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of his God, than to dwell with the wicked. Position and possessions of earth are fleeting and will be gone tomorrow. If there was such a thing as position in Heaven, even the lowest position would be desirable and pleasing, and without sorrow, jealousy or regret.

But could it be true that some will get a higher place or more rewards than others who did less for God? It's not a hundred percent clear in scripture. However, we do know that *all saints* will receive Heaven and the perpetual happiness it will give.

These last chapters of Revelation describe the New Heavens and New Earth, along with the capital city, the New Jerusalem. John's vision is almost unbelievable and hard to fathom. The details of his description include the exact dimensions for the heavenly capital city, which tells us Heaven will be an actual place and not a state of mind. Heaven is the one place we need to get excited about and think of more and more as we get closer to the end.

The New Heavens and New Earth

*“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared, and there was no sea anymore. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was prepared like a bride dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, ‘**Now God's presence is with people, and he will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain,***

because all the old ways are gone.” Rev 21:1-4

Living in His Presence

As Christians, we can have the peace of Heaven now, even in the midst of the “earthly hell” in which we live today. The final Heaven will be of breathtaking beauty, unprecedented in scope and degree. We will live in the direct physical presence of God and his glory. His presence will make it Heaven and will make it powerfully joyous for eternity.

God himself will wipe away every tear from our eyes. All the sadness, crying, pain and bad memories will be removed. We will continue to worship him because he will be our God in Heaven too. We will be his people and we will live in the secure and happy feeling that nothing will ever be wrong again.

Everything is New

*“The One who was sitting on the throne said, ‘**Look! I am making everything new!**’ Then he said, ‘Write this, because these words are true and can be trusted. The One on the throne said to me, ‘It is finished. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give free water from the spring of the water of life to anyone who is thirsty.’” Rev 21:5-6*

God is going to make everything new. This does not mean there will be no more seas, mountains or the other things we have now, it just means, the old ones will be gone.

After the Battle of Armageddon, the old earth will be a type of “heaven” as Christ rules and reigns for the one thousand years (millennium.) However, the New Earth will be even more glorious, since it will not be stained by the defilement of sin, past, present or future.

Heaven will also be renewed to wipe away any effects caused by the rebellion of Satan and the other fallen angels. Everything about

Heaven will be perfect and pure, without even a memory of what went wrong with the old.

Who Receives Heaven?

“Those who win the victory will receive this, and I will be their God, and they will be my children. But cowards, those who refuse to believe, who do evil things, who kill, who sin sexually, who do evil magic, who worship idols, and who tell lies—all these will have a place in the lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” Rev 21:7-8

If you “win the victory,” you will receive Heaven. How do we win the victory? Jesus compared his work on the cross to the work Christians must do in return: “To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.” Rev 3:21

Jesus overcame sin and death at Calvary. We will win the victory too when we overcome sin through his blood and as we continue in the faith. If we overcome, then he will give us a place on his throne.

Further in the chapter, it states: “Nothing unclean and no one who does shameful things or tells lies will ever go into it. **Only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will enter the city.**” Rev 21:27

Jesus told the church in Sardis that the few who have not soiled their (salvation) clothes are worthy. “He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. **I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.**” Rev 3:5-6. Those who have their names in the Book of Life are overcomers and will have a place in Heaven.

There is another assigned place. It says here in Revelation 21:7 that there is place in Hell for those who do not believe and obey God. The word, “place” indicates that a person will continue to exist and will inhabit an actual, literal space. They will not be burned up to live no

more and neither will Hell be a party with friends. Burning sulfur will not be enjoyable for anyone.

Could Christians also be among those “*who refuse to believe?*” According to scripture, there will be a falling away, especially in the last days. Ever since the early church, there have always been those who believe for a time, but stop obeying. Peter speaks of the saved who go back to error:

“It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.”

2 Peter 2:21.

It certainly is not popular to teach that a saved person can end up eternally lost. It has wrongly been labeled, “works-based salvation.” This label is certainly true for some churches, as they teach of the possible loss of salvation with legalism and without the balance of scripture. If there is no love in our heart, following the law is pointless. This was the problem Jesus had with the Jewish leaders of his day.

We can’t overlook that God is love. We especially need to bring this message to those who are lost and to those who need comfort and healing. God is compassionate, long-suffering and full of grace for us all.

However, Jesus, along with the early apostles, taught that the duty of those who **are saved** is to overcome and continue overcoming to the end. We can see clearly in the scriptures, the consequences for those who do not continue in that faith.

Of course, only God knows a person’s heart and when they have completely turned from him. The fact is we don’t know where this line is as we look from the outside, and when he has cut someone off from the vine. But it is not a gamble any of us should take with our own personal walk with God; since who knows where the path of an unrepentant heart could take us. This is why we should keep our hearts soft to God daily.

The New Jerusalem

“Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last troubles came to me, saying, ‘Come with me, and I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.’ And the angel carried me away by the Spirit to a very large and high mountain. He showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It was shining with the glory of God and was bright like a very expensive jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. The city had a great high wall with twelve gates with twelve angels at the gates, and on each gate was written the name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south, and three on the west. The walls of the city were built on twelve foundation stones, and on the stones were written the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

“The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod made of gold to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. The city was built in a square, and its length was equal to its width. The angel measured the city with the rod. The city was 1,500 miles long, 1,500 miles wide, and 1,500 miles high.” Rev 21:9-16

Some translations use the term, “stadia,” some use, “furlongs.” The New Century Version uses the measurement term, “miles,” which we can understand and put into perspective. For instance 1,500 miles is more than half the size of the United States. With the city’s dimensions equal in length, height, and width, it will be a perfect cube. This will be an enormous city

The cost for a project like this today would be incalculable. There is not enough money or resources in the world today that would be needed to accomplish it. With all the riches and glory of Heaven, building this city will be nothing for God.

There will be more than enough room for every believer from every time period to dwell there. Earth’s highest mountain tops,

deserts and tundra are not fit for life. However, every part of Heaven will be suitable for living.

Could there be physical levels in the capital city and in Heaven? There could be. I am not talking about level of rewards, but of physical levels, almost like floors in a building.

Imagine, at 1500 miles high, the future New Jerusalem could have, let's say, about 280 levels with each at five miles deep. Of course, some levels could be as small as one mile and some could be as big as ten miles or larger, the geographical possibilities will be endless.

The River of Life

*“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life. It was shining like crystal and was flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, down the middle of the street of the city. The tree of life was on each side of the river. **It produces fruit** twelve times a year, once each month. **The leaves of the tree** are for the healing of all the nations. Nothing that God judges guilty will be in that city. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and God's servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. There will never be night again. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, because the Lord God will give them light. **And they will rule as kings forever and ever.**”*
Rev 22:1-5

The River of Life will run through the middle of the New Jerusalem. On each side will be the Trees of Life that are for the healing of the nations and will bear fruit once a month. This is the fruit we will have the right to eat.

God will be the light and will replace the need for a sun or lamps. Revelation 21 also describes that the doors of the city will never close because there will be no night.

Have you ever hated to end a gathering with dear friends or family because you had to go home? Think of the excitement you feel

for an upcoming celebration or vacation. In Heaven, we will have continuous fellowship, fun and excitement with our loved ones that will never end. We will have that good feeling of anticipation every minute of every day for eternity.

“I am Coming Soon”

*“Listen! I am coming soon! **Blessed is the one who obeys the words of prophecy in this book.**” Rev 22:7*

This is another announcement or warning by Jesus. This does not mean that the Rapture occurs at this point or later in the events. This interjection by Jesus is to remind the reader that he is coming soon and to be ready because he may come at any time. Jesus says to obey the words of the Revelation so you will be blessed.

Which words do we obey? We obey what Jesus tells us to do to be ready. We are to wash our spiritual robes with repentance, keeping our hearts pure and unpolluted by the world. Those who fall asleep and neglect this duty may wake to find they are not ready when he returns.

The Angel’s Exhortation

“I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. When I heard and saw them, I bowed down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed these things to me. But the angel said to me, ‘Do not worship me! I am a servant like you, your brothers the prophets, and all those who obey the words in this book. Worship God!’”

*“**Then the angel told me, ‘Do not keep secret the words of prophecy in this book, because the time is near for all this to happen.** Let whoever is doing evil continue to do evil. Let whoever is unclean continue to be unclean. Let whoever is doing right continue to do right. Let whoever is holy continue to be holy.’”*

Rev 22:8-11

The angel tells John not to keep the words of his prophecy a secret the way Daniel was told to do with his prophecy. Daniel was told by an angel to seal up his prophecy because it was not to be fulfilled until the Last Tribulation period begins. Daniel's 70th week vision will start up at the Sixth Seal.

The prophecy given to John, on the other hand, was to be open because some of the events would start in his time, and some would continue to happen up to the time of the end.

Again, it is obvious that Revelation's prophecy has begun to unfold already, for instance, the first five Seals. We continue to see their evidences, and wait for their full completion and fulfillment.

The angel says, "***Let whoever is doing evil continue to do evil.***" This describes the way it has been on earth since the fall. God has allowed man's free will and along with it, has allowed sin, but this is only for a time. There is coming a time when he will bring his justice and judgment, and sin will end forever.

Jesus' Final Words

His Reward

"Listen! I am coming soon! I will bring my reward with me, and I will repay each one of you for what you have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End." Rev 22:12-13

We cannot read this word to say, "Rewards," making it a plural. Jesus is coming with his **one** reward which is Heaven and all that it offers, as detailed in the Revelatory letters to the seven churches and here in these last two chapters of Revelation.

Could it be that God will repay each *differently* for what they "have done" for him? It is possible, but it is not one hundred percent certain that is what's meant here, and it's not made completely clear elsewhere in scripture either.

It is more likely we will all receive the same basic reward. This does not mean that some won't have more responsibilities or duties in Heaven than others. Some may be in charge of more because they were good stewards over what they were given here on earth.

However, Jesus' one reward of Heaven, which we saw clearly in the letters, will include the same privileges such as, the right to go through the gates of the city, to eat from the Tree of Life, to rule as kings, to sit with him on his throne, and to receive the Crown of Life, etc. These rewards will be for **all** who receive the one reward of Heaven.

Jesus used a parable about **the workers in the vineyard**, found in Matthew 20, to explain how all workers will receive the same wage, no matter how much work they were able to accomplish. If they were willing and worked, he gave them the same wage as those who worked since the beginning of the day.

This caused anger and jealousy between workers, but Jesus said the master had the right to pay any way he chose. Of course, this speaks to God's generous mercy and extravagant love for his own. In Heaven, we will not be jealous as those workers were in the parable.

Also notice this: We will be repaid for "*what we have done*" and not because we *just* believed. This doesn't mean faith is not important, for without faith, we can't please God. Obviously, one has to believe first, but it is only the beginning.

Even the thief on the cross used his fleeting time to witness to the other thief when he said, "*Don't you fear God, even when you are dying?*" ("The Thief on the Cross" story, by the way, has been widely abused to justify an idea that we don't have to do anything once we are saved. What we *should* gain from this story is that, even with his limited time, he was willing to do a work of faith, a work of witnessing and standing up for Jesus.)

Needless to say, there will be some who accept the Lord on their death bed, with no time to do a work. Again, God's grace covers it

according to the heart *and* situation of that individual person. But as we learned from the parable of the Workers in the Vineyard, the one who is saved on their death bed will still get **all** that the reward of Heaven offers!

Clean Robes

"Blessed are those who wash their robes so that they will receive the right to eat the fruit from the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside the city are the evil people, those who do evil magic, who sin sexually, who murder, who worship idols, and who love lies and tell lies." Rev 22:14

Jesus says blessed are those who wash their robes. They will have the right to eat from the Tree of Life. This tells us we must play an active part in our walk with God to stay holy and keep spiritually separate from the worldliness around us.

We must wash our robes through repentance of sin. It is not automatic, that is, it won't happen without a surrender of our will and our spirits humbled on a daily basis. We need to wash them as many times as it takes to **keep** them clean. If you recall, in the letters, the ones that were given robes by Jesus, were told, by him, to keep them clean.

It is true that our sins are thrown into the sea of forgetfulness when we are saved. This must refer to our past sins since Jesus continues to tell us to keep our robes clean. When you examine the model prayer Jesus taught in Matthew 6:5, we see we are to continue daily repentance. Continual humility before God is required at all times, not just once.

Whoever is Thirsty

"I, Jesus, have sent my angel to tell you these things for the churches. I am the descendant from the family of David, and I am the bright morning star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" Let the

one who hears this say, "Come!" Let whoever is thirsty come; whoever wishes may have the water of life as a free gift." Rev 22:15-17

Whoever who is thirsty for this water of life can have it.

Salvation is a "free gift," this means we are not able to earn it by our own works or without faith. However, Jesus did not promise us a comfortable Christianity. The world is getting to where real Christians are becoming more uncomfortable and it is becoming more difficult to live out faith apart from adversity. The question is, are we still thirsty?

"Whoever" refers to John 3:16, which says God is not willing that "any" should perish. (We know this means to perish spiritually.) John did not mean for the word, "any" to refer to just the elect. When people are not thirsty for God, and do not cry out and submit to him, it is because of their own will, not because of a predestined choice by God.

He predestined the way to heaven. Any who are willing to follow that predestined path, which is through Jesus, will be saved and will be predestined for Heaven. Certainly God knows ahead of time those who are predestined based on their choices. But God is willing that none perish, as 2 Peter 3:9 reads:

*"The Lord is not slow in doing what he promised—the way some people understand slowness. But God is being patient with you. **He does not want anyone to be lost, but he wants all people to change their hearts and lives.**"*

Does this sound like God wants only few to be saved? Of course, he doesn't. Many are called, few are chosen, as it says in Matthew 22:17. In other words, all people are called to salvation, but relatively few will accept it or stay on the path that will lead them to eternal life.

Warning

*"I **warn everyone** who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: **If anyone adds anything to these words**, God will add to that person the disasters written about in this book. And if anyone*

*takes away from the words of this book of prophecy, **God will take away that one's share of the tree of life and of the holy city, which are written about in this book.***” Rev 22:18-19

This is a very serious warning. Anyone who reads Revelation and then decides to add to it will share in the disasters of the book. Anyone who takes words away from it will not enter the heavenly city and lose their share of the Tree of Life. Both of these actions will result in the same punishment of Hell.

Why is it that so many do this? Mostly, they do this to fit their preconceived ideas and man-made doctrines. Unfortunately, there are many more that twist scripture to suit their own selfish desires and agendas. Every cult is born out of this practice. The faith of many has been affected by their false teachings.

Often times, people don't like the scriptures that have “uncomfortable” messages like the topic of Hell, the Rapture, the Tribulation punishments, and the potential for loss of salvation.

For instance, the message of holiness, not just found here in Revelation, but throughout the whole Bible, has been down-played, changed, or left out of church teaching today, altogether.

Holiness is very uncomfortable to teach and is very unpopular here in America. We should be praying for our pastors to be bold, and to be true to the scriptures. Although it is a difficult task in today's climate, they will have to answer to God for what they said and what they didn't say.

This may be why James said, *“My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.”* James 3:1

When we add things to any scripture, not just Revelation, we take away from the truth that is plainly stated. Just the same, when we take things away from a scripture, we change the intended meaning.

CONCLUSION

Revelation Unleashed

Empowering Believers

Our prayer is that you have discovered or re-discovered biblical truths as you went through the entire book of Revelation. Hopefully you gained more confidence and passion for reading and understanding the scriptures for yourself.

Unfortunately, lack of self-study by Christians over the years has resulted in many misconceptions to become imbedded in church culture. And despite the best of intentions, there is some scripturally inaccurate church doctrines upheld by various denominations as well. Therefore, it is important for you to read and divide the word rightly for yourself. **We definitely should love our pastor and support his God-given ministry to us, but we must be accountable for our own study just the same.**

Few today read and study the Bible for themselves and instead prefer the opinions and teachings of men. Whenever we hear a teaching, we should ask ourselves, “*What does the Bible say?*” and search it out. We hear many dear people tell us what others have said in regards to a particular teaching from the Bible. Instead of quoting people, they should quote the scriptures themselves to tell what the Bible itself teaches.

When it comes to Bible interpretation, unfortunately many use various methods to support their pre-formed opinion, rather than using them to get at the true meaning of the scripture. The methods and principals for interpreting scriptures are not wrong by themselves. With common sense, they need to be used in certain clear situations.

However, it is the literal approach that would solve so many of our doctrinal errors and conflicts today. If you speak to your children, do want them to take you literally, or figuratively?

How would you feel if you told them to do a chore and when you asked why it wasn't done they said, *"Oh, did you mean that literally?"*

Over 300 prophecies have already been fulfilled, literally. Not, figuratively. So we can expect that all unfilled future prophecy will be filled literally as well. This is why we need to read Revelation with a literal lens. Unless an allegory is explained in the scripture itself, or matched to another scripture, we simply must leave it a mystery, but as we just learned, there are not as many mysteries as we may have been lead to believe.

We hope you also understand now, that one scripture does not negate another scripture; instead, each scripture is to stand on its own and with its own authority. The scriptures that seem to contradict actually give us additional truths; often times giving us a more complete teaching when looked at together.

We cannot camp out on one truth while we avoid another and say, *"That can't mean what it says"* or *"This is a contradiction to the other."* Both scriptures are equally true and should be equally followed.

An important point made about understanding end-times events is that we have to use Revelation as the master plan for a sequential timeline. All other prophetic scriptures have to be plugged into matching places within Revelation, not the other way around. And where there seems to be a mystery or a gap, we need to avoid making guesses and adding something that is not there in order to protect the purity of the message.

God is not the author of confusion, and did not write the scriptures in a way that would be difficult to know his meaning. He did not write it with the idea that another person would have to tell you what it says. Jesus went against the teachers of the law, and brought the word straight to the humblest of people. **Many of those who understood what he said did so because the Spirit revealed the truth of his words.** They often understood more than the educated rabbis and priests.

The Sixth Seal Rapture

Revelation Unleashed challenged the traditional view that says the Rapture must occur at chapter 4 of Revelation. Our reading of Revelation showed us that there is no scriptural proof to this claim, only assumption and addition. We rediscovered this *Blessed Hope* in the scriptures and found it in a place we have overlooked.

The place where the Rapture occurs is at the Sixth Seal, but still with the surprise of a thief! When we compared the Sixth Seal verses and the Rapture verses from the book of Matthew and others, we saw a match in the language at the Sixth Seal.

The assumption that the Rapture is at the chapter 4, stems from yet another unsupported belief. **It has been thought that the First Seal kicks off the Great Tribulation period.** However, we saw that the scriptures themselves plainly state that the Great Day of the Lord's wrath **starts** at the Sixth Seal. The First Seal lacks this language.

One of the reasons we have believed the First Seal is the start of the Tribulation is because we were told for years that the Antichrist is **the rider on the white horse** mentioned there. Again, we challenged this view since it is not scripturally sound and based solely on assumptions. When matched to other scriptures, we saw that Jesus in most likely this rider and he began riding and overcoming at Calvary and even at the foundations of the world.

Immediately after the Sixth Seal event, we read about a great multitude of people from all over the world seen in heaven praising God. Common sense tells us that these are the ones who were just taken earlier in the Seal, especially since the description in Revelation 7 says that they are the ones **that came out of** the Great Tribulation. We discussed why **these did not come "through"** the Tribulation as some teach, but **out of it**, before it starts.

We discussed why we are able to know that the Sixth Seal is the next Seal to be opened. First, we have not seen anything happening in the world today, past or present that fulfills the Sixth Seal in anyway, whatsoever. Second, we saw from the scriptures that the happenings listed in the **first fives Seals** are already present and happening day after day and have been for a long time.

Before God's Wrath

“Since you have kept my command to endure patiently, I will also keep you from the hour of trial that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.” Rev 3:10 (NIV)

We explained from the scriptures that **a Sixth Seal Rapture is still a pre-Tribulation, pre God's wrath, Rapture** of the ready followers of Jesus, that occurs either simultaneously with, or seconds before the Seal is broken.

Just because we say the Rapture is at the Sixth Seal, doesn't mean the Rapture happens midway through the Tribulation. If you realize that we are in lull between the Fifth and Sixth Seals already, you will understand that the Tribulation actually starts at the Sixth Seal.

This lull we are in now matches the lull of Daniel's 70th week prophecy. All weeks up to the 69th week have been fulfilled already. We wait for his 70th week which describes the last Great Tribulation. And, again, it even says at the Sixth Seal scripture that the day of God's punishment has begun, which is the Tribulation. (The Day of *Judgment* however, happens at the end of the thousand years.)

Scripture clearly supports, in many places, that Jesus will remove the ready church before the Tribulation. The mid-Tribulation Rapture and post-Tribulation Rapture positions do not match scripture. We know that there are many proofs in the scriptures that describe a group of people escaping and not being physically present for the Great Tribulation.

Scriptures that talk about people enduring until the end can be applied two ways. First, it is true that those left behind can call on the name of the Lord and be saved, **but they will have to endure to the end of the Tribulation.** Second, all of us have an end of some kind. Naturally, some may physically die before Jesus snatches the ready church. This will be the end to which some must endure. This is a sobering thought that should compel us to be ready.

These positions also say that as we await the Rapture, believers will have to go through some or all of the Tribulation and claim there will be protection for them. We found out, however, the only ones who receive protection during the Tribulation are the 144,000 Jewish male evangelists, specially sealed and the portion of Jews to be flown to the desert during the last three and a half years of the Tribulation. **Again, all others, including those who called on the Lord to save them, will have to endure to the end, through great suffering to be saved.**

There will still be hope for those left behind after the Rapture, including *even* those who were part of the sleeping church. There are some who don't believe this is possible, but God is merciful to the prodigal. We discussed the reality that there will be many saved after the Sixth Seal is broken. And perhaps, even up to one billion could be killed by the Antichrist for their faith. **All those who continue to reject the Antichrist and follow Jesus up until their death will be saved.**

Jesus said he is coming at an hour people will not expect him. This is why we can say that the Rapture will not happen midway through the Tribulation, or at the end, since it would be very obvious that he is coming. **Once the events of the Great Tribulation start, beginning at the Sixth Seal through to the end, it will be unmistakable which scriptural events they are fulfilling.** They will be too clear, specific and overwhelming to miss.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins, told by Jesus, describes a

picture of the church where only half will be ready when the bridegroom returns. The other half will be left behind because they will not be looking or expecting. Nothing will be obvious enough to them that he is coming. To them, the convergence of the many signs will not be proof enough for them that Jesus is about to return. Instead, they will look for one major sign as they continue to live however they want.

The Time is Near

Many are looking for the Antichrist today to prove that the time of the end has arrived. **But, we are not to look for the Antichrist, only Jesus.** No one knows the day or the hour of the coming of the Lord as taught by Jesus in Luke 12:40. However, this has been completely ignored by some Bible teachers and so-called, prophets.

People still come out with dates; some say they have figured it out mathematically. There are even some who say the Lord told them directly when he is coming. This is simply another sign of the end.

When their dates come and go without incident, people fail to call them what they should, false prophets and teachers.

Despite Jesus' warning, many still continue to follow these teachers. We are not to set dates. We are not to worry about who the Antichrist might be.

Jesus intended for Christians to watch for signs that would signal his own coming. **The identification of the Antichrist was not the sign given for the ready church,** but was to be a sign for those left behind, primarily the Jews. The signs that Jesus told the church to look for are the very things that are happening today like, war, famine, murder and hate. These things are happening with increasing frequency.

We looked at the events of the first five Seals and saw that they correspond to these things that are happening today and have been happening for centuries, and today even more

dramatically. The question we asked was, “*At what point does it have to get worse for us to realize that the Seals have been ‘officially’ broken?*”

The answer is, of course, we wouldn’t know. We can’t know since the indication we would need is not in the scriptures. We only know *what* the evidences of the Seals will be. And since we see these things taking place already, **it is common sense to conclude that these Seals must have been broken already and remain open.**

It is not a coincidence that **the signs Jesus talked about also match the events of the first five Seals.** Jesus also said these signs would increase and multiply just before his return like pains of child birth. Every year conditions in the world get worse. We discussed some examples of this increase like the growing number of wars, earthquakes, natural disasters, cruelty and even martyrdom. Many will think the things happening today are just normal life and will be caught unaware. But **those who listen to Jesus words will realize** that the increase and intensity of these things we see going on today means that he is coming soon and the end is near.

“The End Will Come”

We have read in Matthew 24:14 that the gospel will be preached in the whole world and then the end will come. The question is what end? Does this mean that Jesus will only rapture the ready church when the gospel has reached the whole world? **Is the Rapture at this “end” talked about here?** Will this job of preaching the gospel to the whole world get completed before the Rapture? It may or may not.

We saw in the book of Revelation that **two witnesses prophesy** for three and a half years and **an angel finishes the job of proclaiming the Gospel** right before Jesus physically returns with the armies of Heaven for the Battle of Armageddon. So, this “end” in

Matthew most likely refers to the end of the Tribulation and not before the Rapture event happens.

This does not mean we can “drop the ball” and forget the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19. We are commanded to do this. It is important to realize, however, that **we, ourselves, may not get to every people group before Jesus raptures the ready church.** We need to realize that we are not waiting for anything to be completed; Jesus can come at any moment.

Are You Ready?

Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:8 that Jesus will give the crown of righteousness “**to all who have longed for his appearance.**” And John said in 1 John 3:3 that when we have the hope of his appearing, that is, if we believe it and long for it, we will be purifying ourselves.

If we watch for the signs, we will be ready. But if we don’t care, and don’t look for his coming, we put ourselves in danger of becoming lukewarm and not ready. Don’t listen to the mockers in the church that say, “**He is not coming, every generation has been wrong**” or “**He is not coming for a long time.**” This is a false teaching in the church today.

Apostasy in the church has always been present in the form of deceptive teachings. The most vicious false teaching with increasing dominance is that **a Christian doesn’t have to repent** after they have been saved, can live a life that is against God, and still make it in the Rapture.

This is **promoted as a kinder, gentler gospel, but is actually cruel.** We already discussed the turning away from salvation or the loss of salvation when we were at Jesus’ letters to the churches. But if a person thinks they don’t have to repent, and can remain in sinful lifestyles because God loves them no matter what, they could become entangled on a dangerous road away from God for eternity.

Whatever your opinion is on this subject, there is one thing you can't deny- **Jesus clearly states that Christians like these will not be ready for the Rapture.**

Jesus is at the doorstep, getting ready to snatch away his ready followers. Are you ready? Are you fearful of his coming? Will you be ashamed? Again, Jesus told of two groups in the Parable of The Ten Virgins. **Half were expectant that he could return at anytime so they stayed prepared and were found ready.** They were able to enter the wedding feast. The other half did not take his return serious and were not ready and so were locked out of the wedding.

Jesus is coming with one reward, the right to heaven and all that it offers. In the letters to the churches, **Jesus told us how a Christian can be prepared and ready for his coming.** In each of these letters, his instructions had the same theme- holiness, and continuing in the faith. He said to keep our robes clean, to continue, to overcome and to hold on to what we have **so that no one can take our crown.**

Revelation was given to John so that we would have a picture of our heavenly hope and to help us understand the signs and order of the end-times events. **But the most important purpose for this Revelation has to be to call all Christians to be ready** for his return by remaining in the vine and continuing on the path of obedience.

Throughout this Revelation vision to John, Jesus interjects warnings to the reader that he is coming soon and to be ready so they can escape all the terrible things that they read will happen. Jesus says, ***“Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophesy in this book.”*** Rev 22:7

Our prayer is that you will continue to read, obey, and take to heart all the words of Jesus...Be ready!

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.”

Summary of End-Times Chronology

Today we live in the period of the first five Seals of Revelation.

Sixth Seal: The breaking of the Sixth Seal is the next major biblical event to take place.

Jesus will rapture the ready church at the Sixth Seal or seconds before it's breaking.

The first "Day of the Lord" will commence immediately after the Rapture and will be the start of the Last "Seven" Year Great Tribulation.

The First 3 1/2 Years: After the first "Day of the Lord," the first 3 1/2 years of the Tribulation will also be a Silence in Heaven period, while the earth semi- recovers from its devastation.

The silence will be broken with the blowing of the Seven Angel Trumpets. (The elapsed time during these Trumpets is uncertain, but most likely will be no longer than a period of months since scripture shows us the Tribulation will only be about seven years.)

With 3 1/2 Years Left of the Tribulation:

The two witnesses will prophesy.

The positive identification of the Antichrist will be realized.

The Antichrist will set up the "destroying terror" in the Temple.

The Mark of the Beast will be mandated, and many martyrs will be killed for refusing it.

After the Martyrs are Killed, Seven Bowl Judgments will be poured out.

(The Third Bowl will likely mark the last week of the Tribulation.)

Jesus Will Return with Believers to destroy the Antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon. Satan will be thrown into the bottomless pit for 1000 years.

Millennial Reign of Christ: After the Battle of Armageddon, Earth will be populated by the Jews for a thousand years as Christ rules with the Saints of God.

At the End of the Thousand Years, Satan will be loosed and will fool some to go against God.

Jesus will destroy Satan and those on his side and throw them into the Lake of Fire.

Time will end.

The Resurrection: All who died without Christ throughout history will be raised and judged for eternal Hell.

The New Heavens and New Earth: This will be the eternal reward for those who remained faithful.

How to Be Saved:

God loves you and wants to change your life.
You can be with him in Heaven for eternity.

Accept that you cannot be saved by your own works.

Believe in your heart that Jesus died for your sins.

Confess that he is Lord of your life.

Tell God that you choose to live for him, and ask him to help you to never turn back to your old life.

Read the Bible, pray, and attend a Bible-believing church so you can benefit from the prayers and fellowship of other believers.



“God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

John 3:16 (NIV)

“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”

Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

Romans 10:13 (NIV)

About the Author...

Craig A. Opal is chief editor for www.RealChristian.net. The website features articles and videos on biblical end-times topics and includes recordings of his radio program, “*Echoes of the Spirit*.” Craig established RealChristian.net in 2007 out of his passion for end-times prophecy and especially for the book of Revelation. He also has a burden for the lost and for those who call themselves Christians, but live a different way.

Craig believes that some who grew up in the church have taken Christianity, as a way of life, for granted. He gave his life to the Lord at the age of eight and served him faithfully. However, as years went on, Craig started to wander and began to live a lukewarm lifestyle. In 2006, he found himself in a life-changing situation that brought him fully back to the Lord.

Today, Craig lives in Western Massachusetts with his wife, Marisa and stepdaughter, Rebekah. He has two daughters, Olivia and Stephanie.

Craig has been a part of the Interchurch Softball League for more than 30 years and wrote a successful book, *The Guaranteed Hitting Solution* with an instructional video.

Craig also loves to play drums. He is a member of the Christian rock band, *Joe Reed & Synergy* and is involved in the music ministry at his church. His all-time favorite musician is guitarist and Christian, Phil Keaggy.

