

I HAVE TOLD YOU EVERYTHING AHEAD OF TIME

MARK 13:23

# ANTICHRIST

THE BIBLICAL END OF DAYS



EDDIE TURNER



The end times message of the Bible paints a beautiful picture of God's grace. If you reached a different conclusion, you may have been swayed by books full of conspiracies and political agendas. In his follow up to ***Looking Up: Living in Anticipation of Christ***, author Eddie Turner sets out to honor God above all by using Scripture alone to provide a comprehensive look at our future from day one of the tribulation period to the end of our first thousand years in God's presence.

***Is the antichrist alive today?***

***When exactly will the rapture occur?***

***What will life be like on the new earth?***

Learn to identify the answers to these questions and more in ***Antichrist: The Biblical End of Days***.

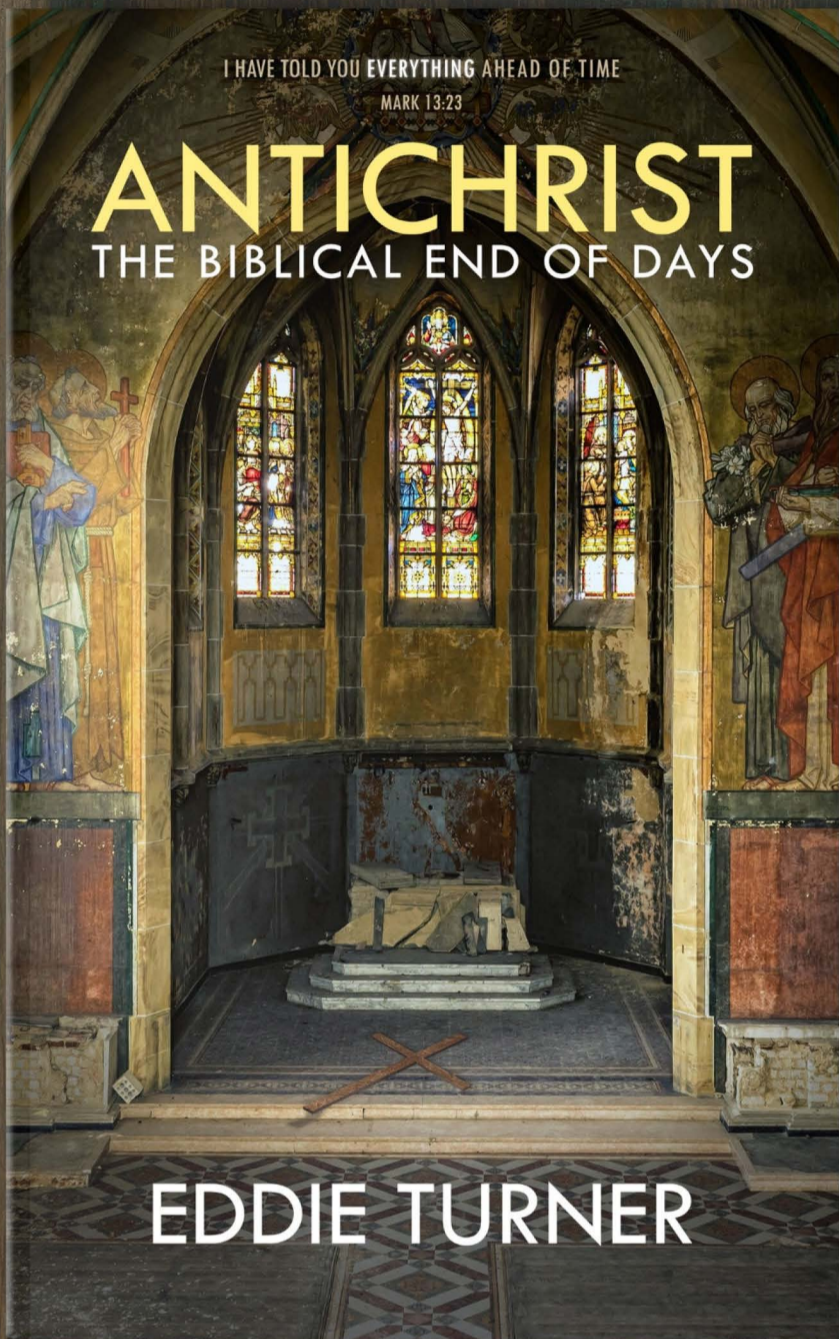


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This book is about the future. The events discussed in this book are both factual and presumptive. Factual events are those whose occurrences are undisputed, while presumptive events are drawn conclusions based on those facts. For instance, if you were told that a tree was going to fall, you could use logic to conclude that the tree would move toward the ground during its falling motion. Without actually seeing the tree, there's really nothing more to be said. If you were given the tree's location, however, you could then investigate it and presume the direction in which it would fall based on its weight and leaning position. Further examination might reveal whether nearby trees may keep it from falling to the ground completely.

Each of these conclusions is logical and effective so long as they are drawn solely from the facts. If we were to suppose wind would be the force that causes the tree to fall, we might draw a whole new set of conclusions. Because the wind was not present among the facts, however, the potential for error is much higher. And so, while the wind may very well be the culprit, it should not be a factor in our investigation.

Drawing conclusions is essential to our understanding of the world around us. Doing so, however, can be of no benefit if the information we're investigating is unreliable. In the pages that follow, you and I will be examining passages of Scripture from the Holy Bible that inform us of events that will occur on a later date. Some of these events have already taken place. And still others may occur between the time this book was published and the date you read it. Regardless, we can be confident that each future event was made known to us in a prophetic manner.

If you find the Bible to be a source of unreliable information, this book may serve you as mere entertainment. Even so, I do want to point out that skepticism and unbelief have no impact on the truth. In other words, the existence of an object will never be dependent upon whether one believes it exists. The truth simply is. And it is my intention to honor God by sharing with you my understanding of His truth as it appears in our holy Scripture. May God bestow upon you His wisdom and draw you close as you read.

## CONTENTS

<b>ONE PROPHECY</b>	7
<b>TWO SIGNS</b>	13
<b>THREE DECEIVER</b>	20
<b>FOUR APOSTASY</b>	33
<b>FIVE TRIBULATION PART 1</b>	46
<b>SIX TRIBULATION PART 2</b>	61
<b>SEVEN RAPTURE</b>	84
<b>EIGHT RENEWAL</b>	101
<b>NINE JUDGMENT</b>	113
<b>TEN CLOSING</b>	122

## CHAPTER ONE

# PROPHECY

If you've ever participated in a word association study, you may recall being instructed to say a word out loud that you associate with a word that appeared on a flashcard. The facilitator may have shown you, for example, the word *puppy*. If you love animals, you may have chosen to respond with the word *cute* to describe the appearance of the puppy that popped into your mind. If the word *wreck* was on the card, you might have chosen *train* or *nervous*, depending on the mental image you attach to that word. I chose to begin with this example because I'd like for you to associate a word with the title of this chapter. I'm no psychologist, but I recognize that the word *prophecy* tends to evoke all kinds of emotions. And I'd just like to see where you guys are on this topic. No need to raise your hands. Just call out your answers. Ok, I'm hearing *creepy*, *psychic*, *scary*, and . . . *chocolate*??? Really? Odd choice, but ok.

Prophecy's association with words like these stems from the many movies and books that feature the topic to add an eerie atmosphere to their stories. Prophecies in the Bible often had this same effect, as many of them include words that were meant to spark fear in their intended audiences. But they also included messages of hope. Here are some examples of prophetic Scripture that were meant to spark reactions of both fear and hope.

**Behold, I, even I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.**

Genesis 6:17

**Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey...**

Zechariah 9:9

## DEFINING PROPHECY

If you're a dictionary nerd like me, you may have paid to enable the full version of Merriam-Webster's app on your phone. Mine includes Roget's Thesaurus, which I also use while crafting my written communication. You can let me know how well these tools are working for me when you finish reading. Much like our word association exercise, the English dictionary gives us a single word to define prophecy. This word is *prediction*.

Depending on the version you have, you may see *forecast* instead. If we were to rest on these definitions alone, we might assume that our local meteorologist makes prophecies about the weather.

What causes these synonyms to define prophecy so poorly is the lack of a guarantee. Even when a weather prediction is right on the money, it's still an educated guess. Instead of telling us what will *likely* occur in the future, prophecies inform us of events that *will* occur. The absence of God in the definition is also a red flag. After all, only He knows the future.

**For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.**

**Revelation 9:10**

Prophecies are messages from God. When He wasn't delivering them Himself, these messages were relayed by human beings called *prophets* who either spoke them aloud or wrote them down for the benefit of those who needed to hear them. Why am I referring to these people in the past tense? It's because there are no modern-day prophets in our world. None of us have what is often called the *gift of prophecy* despite the many claims to possess it. Today, instead of seeing new prophecies, the old ones are being fulfilled before our eyes. This fulfillment has been happening ever since the very first prophecy was declared as recorded in the book of Genesis.

**Then the Lord said, "My Spirit will not contend with humans forever, for they are mortal; their days will be a hundred and twenty years."**

**Genesis 6:3**

Also, here's the very last prophecy in the Bible.



**Yes, I am coming soon.**

**Revelation 22:20**

Not all prophetic verses in the Bible are clear cut. Key phrases like 'I will' or 'there will be' do not appear in every one of them. Our ability to recognize prophetic Scripture, however, may improve as we become more and more familiar with the stories in the Bible. Singling out one or two verses of a prophecy without considering the entire message is an unwise practice. Scripture is often taken out of context this way. And if we twist God's words intentionally to add weight to our human agendas, we are treading on dangerous ground.

**...if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book.**

**Revelation 22:18**

## **TRUTH INTACT**

Not too many years ago, I read about a scandal concerning a movie review. If you enjoy watching movies as I do, you've seen the review quotes that appear on movie posters and on the covers of the DVDs and Blu-ray discs that you can buy in stores. These, of course, are added to convince consumers that a movie is worth paying to see in theaters or owning as part of one's movie library. What sparked an uproar was a film studio's manipulation of a critic's review of their movie. I don't recall the critic's name, so I'll make one up for this example. But this is pretty much how it went. Here's the review quote that appeared on a movie poster.

**"It's amazing."**

**Skip Showers, Cinema Magazine**

And here's the actual quote from the critic.

**"It's amazing just how bad this movie is."**

**Skip Showers, Cinema Magazine**



As funny as this seems, this kind of thing happens. The film studio's supporting argument was that it did not misquote the critic. And it didn't. The quote was indeed what the critic had stated about the film. Even so, the decision to trim it down was obviously made with the intent to mislead moviegoers. And I'm pretty sure the film studio came out on the losing end of the battle.

As both a student and teacher of God's Word, I feel led to choose verses of Scripture to present in this book very carefully. As much as I'd like to paste in large blocks of text, and I will on occasion, I've chosen to include only the portions that compliment my desire for a book that is easy to understand. I do urge each of you to have your preferred translation of the Bible handy to examine the verses that precede and follow each one you read. At times, you may need to read a chapter or even an entire book of the Bible to fully understand each passage. Knowledge of Scripture in its entirety, however, will be your greatest asset and for purposes far beyond the scope of this book. I also highly recommend taking some time to pray each time you sit down to read. Whether you're studying the Bible or a book like this one, all sincere prayers for clarity will surely be answered.

**Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son.**

**John 14:13**

God desires communication with us in all that we do, so pray after you read as well. Then pray again before you go to bed, when you wake up, during your drive to work, etc. Being in constant conversation is how our bonds with Him and with each other become unbreakable. My goal for this book is not to simply educate you on all the earth-shattering events that God has planned for this world. It is that you may come to have a greater understanding of who God is and of the great love He has for you and me. The book of Revelation is like a jigsaw puzzle depicting a beautiful picture of Jesus. If you've read Revelation before and failed to reach this conclusion, you may have come up short a few pieces of the puzzle. The remaining pieces can be found among the 65 books that come before it. After all, the



end times message *is* the Bible. And God's message to us concerning the end times is complete. We're given the whole story. It's when we fail to take this into account that we plug in our own ideas that are refuted by verses found elsewhere in Scripture. More on this practice in a bit.

Conspiracy theories are also commonplace in books concerning the end times. While theorizing can be exciting and productive, a conspiracy theorist casts a negative light on certain people or groups who may be undeserving of the image the theorist has created. Their made-up stories tell of secret information or evil deeds that are being hidden from the public eye. Whenever Scripture is involved, these types of theorists often accredit human beings for God's handiwork. For these reasons, I can say with confidence that you will find no conspiracy theories in this book.

## **GOD'S CHOSEN**

In your studies, you may have noticed how Israel tends to be the center of attention in prophetic Scripture. If you did, you likely detected this in nonprophetic Scripture as well. From Genesis to Revelation, Israel never ceases to be God's chosen people. They will always be His beloved sheep despite their history of wandering off. In the Old Testament, we read how God answered the Israelites' call for help by delivering them out of bondage and into a new land that He set aside for them. They had to fight for this land, of course, but God handed their enemies over to them with the assurance that they would conquer for as long as they obeyed Him.

Unfortunately, with each new generation, the Israelites became increasingly disobedient, causing God's patience to wear thin. When the last straw was pulled, God uprooted them from their promised land and scattered them among the nations with a promise to one day bring them back.

While a portion of Israel was re-established in 1948, the remainder of the Promised Land was finally taken back by their rightful owners in 1967. You can read the stories of how God once again handed Israel's enemies over to them during this Six-Day War. Now that the Israelites are back in business, the many prophecies associated with their return are being fulfilled. As we



watch God at work, we are commanded to ready ourselves for the end of our days on earth and for the new life that awaits us in His presence.

**When these things begin to happen, look up and lift your heads, for the day of redemption draws near.**

**Luke 21:28**



## CHAPTER TWO

### SIGNS

In the 24th chapter of the book of Matthew, we read how Jesus appeased his disciples' desire to know when he would come back for them. He did this by telling them about the future and about the happenings that will signal the nearness of his return. While some of the events he spoke of—namely the appearance of the antichrist—were fairly specific, others represented trends that cannot be tied to a clear-cut date or time period. For example, wars, famines, and earthquakes (Matthew 24:6-7) have been on the rise for so long that it's tough to know which part of the upward slope we're currently sitting on. Thankfully, the Bible does not leave us hanging.

In this chapter, we'll look at several of these events that have already taken place. God revealed each of these in the Bible and urged us to recognize them when they occur. If you've read my previous book, *Looking Up: Living In Anticipation of Christ*, you may recognize this chapter as mirroring its 19th. I chose to include much of that text due to its relevance and for the tremendous value it adds to the end times study. Ready to begin? Awesome. Let's get started.

The following events were prophesied to occur in the latter days; each one foretold by an Old Testament prophet long before the birth of Jesus. I highly recommend having both your Bible and internet browser available to corroborate the historical data.

#### DAMASCUS

In the 17th chapter of his book, the prophet Isaiah reveals what God would have us to know about the future of Damascus, Syria.

**See, Damascus will no longer be a city but will become a heap of ruins. In that day their strong cities, which they left because of the**



**Israelites, will be like places abandoned to thickets and undergrowth.  
And all will be desolation.**

**Isaiah 17:1,9**

In these verses, not only are we told of Damascus' imminent demise, but also who'll be responsible for its destruction. If you're into world history, you likely know that Damascus has been deemed the oldest continually inhabited city in the world. Today, whichever city is second in line for this title has great potential to steal this record as Damascus was destroyed by Israel in 2013. The city's remains are not completely desolate, though. Its war-torn structures and crumbled buildings serve as torture chambers and starvation camps for terrorist regimes. Needless to say, there is no welcome wagon for returning residents who heeded Israel's forewarning to evacuate. And, also per Isaiah, we can expect the city to remain in this broken and abandoned state. Take a moment to do a Google image search for the current state of Damascus. You'll get the picture—literally.

There are some who will challenge this biblical correlation with the claim that Damascus was destroyed much earlier; in 732BC, to be exact. While the city was indeed captured in this period of history, we do know that its state of being inhabited continued on to become renowned in the 21st century.

## **EGYPT**

God continues to use Isaiah to warn of judgment coming to the Egyptians. In chapter 19, the prophet speaks about a time in the latter days when a merciless ruler would come into power over Egypt, resulting in a civil war among the Egyptian people.

**“I will stir up Egyptian against Egyptian, brother will fight against brother, neighbor against neighbor, city against city...”**

**“I will hand the Egyptians over to the power of a cruel master, and a fierce king will rule over them,” declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.**

**Isaiah 19:2,4**



The year 2012 saw Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi, who turned his back on the values he touted to the Egyptian people during his campaign. Once elected, Morsi granted himself absolute power that allowed his Muslim Brotherhood to rewrite the Egyptian constitution according to Islamic law. When this occurred, a deadly civil war broke out between Egyptians who supported Morsi and those who opposed him.

If you watched this event unfold on the news, you might recall segments that were shown to inform the world of Egypt's environmental and economic conditions. The news correspondent I watched may as well have been reading directly from the Bible.

**The waters of the river will dry up, and the riverbed will be parched and dry. The canals will stink; the streams of Egypt will dwindle and dry up. The reeds and rushes will wither, also the plants along the Nile, at the mouth of the river. Every sown field along the Nile will become parched, will blow away and be no more. The fishermen will groan and lament, all who cast hooks into the Nile; those who throw nets on the water will pine away. Those who work with combed flax will despair, the weavers of fine linen will lose hope. The workers in cloth will be dejected, and all the wage earners will be sick at heart.**

**Isaiah 19:5-10**

At this time, I invite you to set this book aside, or simply switch apps if you're reading on a device, and search YouTube for *Nile River drying*. Choose one of the videos whose thumbnail image shows a heap of trash. These trash dumps were once underwater and have become exposed as the canals that stretch off of the Nile's main waterway became dry. The stench is appropriately described, as is the crumbling fishing industry. The exporting of fine linens by boat has also taken a hit as a result of the Nile's steadily diminishing water levels.

Each aspect of God's judgment is present in this news story that aired in 2010. Well, there was one that wasn't mentioned, but only because it hadn't



happened yet. But it eventually did, just as all prophetic events do at one point or another. So, what happened? Locusts happened.

**The Lord will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the Lord, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.**

**Isaiah 19:22**

In 2013, a swarm of locusts, unprecedented in size, arrived and began to ravage Southern Egypt, which is where 90% of the population resides. These fist-size locusts darkened the skies in some areas and blanketed the ground with eggs that rapidly produced even more. YouTube also has this event captured by Egyptian locals who reference the book of Exodus to describe the size of the swarm. Ironically, these locusts appeared just before the Passover Festival in Israel. You can see a video of this event by searching with *Egypt locusts 2013*.

## **KING OF THE NORTH**

Let's now hear from the prophet Ezekiel regarding an attack on Israel that, as we'll learn shortly, will occur during the infamous seven-year tribulation period. This battle represents a clash between the two major forces of the end times story—the *king of the North* and the *king of the South*.

**You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them**

**riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army. You will advance against my people Israel like a cloud that covers the land.**

**Ezekiel 38:15-16**

In chapter 38 of Ezekiel, we are told who the players will be in this monstrous attack on Israel. They include armies from the Persian nations of Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Turkey, along with Southern Egypt, which was once known as Ethiopia. Leading these armies is the king of the North, a



kingdom whose identity is tied to the names *Gog* and *Magog*, the latter being the son of Japheth (Noah's eldest son). These two were among the Scythian people, who were the earliest settlers of the land we call Russia.

Today, Russia celebrates its Scythian origins with an exhibit inside the Moscow Kremlin Museum featuring artifacts that are believed to have existed during that period of history. While the Scythians also occupied Ukraine and Crimea, these nations dissolved the Soviet Union when they gained their independence from Russia in 1991. And so, Russia is understood to be the Bible's king of the North. Because both Scripture and the country of Russia itself have affirmed this information for us, I see no reason to proceed as if the identity of this role is open for debate. As for the king of the South, this role will be the central focus of our next chapter.

**Ships will come from the shores of Cyprus; they will subdue Ashur and Eber, but they too will come to ruin.**

**Numbers 24:24**

In this passage from the book of Numbers, the prophet Balaam tells us a bit more about this battle by describing how Russia will advance on the Holy Land. In the same way that Gog and Magog point to Russia, the names *Ashur* and *Eber* represent the descendants of the Hebrews, or Israel. In August of 2013, Russian warships assumed a permanent position in the Mediterranean Sea ward off the United States' intrusion in the Syrian conflict. In turn, Syria provided these ships with a docking port for fuel and supplies. When conflict within Syria depleted its resources, the Russian military was forced to dock elsewhere.

In February of 2015, the Russian docking port was moved to Cyprus, an island coastal to Israel, where the seagoing Russian military replenishes its needs to this day. In 2022, the number of these warships increased significantly amidst Russia's effort to reclaim Ukraine by force. In the 11th chapter of Daniel, we are told that this behavior will be synonymous with Russia at the time of the end.



**...he [king of the North] will enter countries, overflow them, and pass through.**

**Daniel 11:40**

Since God is orchestrating all of this unbeknownst to the orchestra, you may be wondering what motives exist among Russia and the nations who will be joining forces to attack Israel. Politics aside, there actually is something physical that I believe God strategically placed to dangle in front of their faces. Instead of being on a string, this bait is underground.

**And you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates, to capture spoil and to seize plunder...**

**Ezekiel 38:11-12**

In 2009, one of the world's largest natural gas fields was discovered, conveniently tucked away beneath Israeli soil. And then they found another one, and then another and another. These discoveries have made Israel a very wealthy nation and a major player in the exporting of energy. Surrounded by nations who are far less financially sound, the Holy Land has become a huge target. As the leader of this future band of thieves, Russia's crumbling economy puts them in a position to salivate over Israel's prosperity. As for the absence of walls, the Bible assures us that the large concrete barrier walls that serve as protection for Israel will come down after a peace agreement puts Israel's tensions at ease. It is during this period that a vulnerable Israel becomes surrounded by plunderers.

## **COMING SOON**

As tough as it is to imagine that the same prophets who foretold the birth of Jesus also spoke of events that would occur in our current generation, the proof is "in the pudding" as they say. For those who believe that there is no correlation between the selections of Scripture and the events I have presented in this chapter, I ask that you consider the motive behind your



skepticism. After all, these events have already taken place. If your disbelief is rooted in the notion that Jesus could return 100 years from now and it would still be considered soon, think about why this is comforting to you.

Lastly, realizing just how little time we may have left on earth should not be what prompts us to jumpstart a Bible study and scramble hastily toward a relationship with God. What you learned here may be new and exciting, and maybe even a little scary, but our motive to seek God cannot be a lack of time to do so. Loving relationships are not formed out of fear or anxiety. Our motive must be Jesus, who has been present since before the earth began. If anything, these signs should make our already pounding hearts beat a little faster in anticipation of coming face to face with our beloved Lord and Savior.

Analyzing the fulfillment of prophecy often requires little effort above the examination of our historical record. A devotion to God's Word, however, can help us to recognize these signs as they occur. Things get a lot trickier when we attempt to analyze the future, which is what we'll be doing together from this point forward. Thankfully, the Bible makes this task a breeze.

**I have told you everything ahead of time.**

**Mark 13:23**

While I serve as the presenter of this teaching, I'm in this to gain a greater understanding of our God, just as I hope you are. Also, because there's no rule I can think of that requires end times content to be studied with a furrowed brow and scowl on our faces, I plan to have some fun along the way. To me, this study is just another part of the grand celebration of our salvation in Jesus Christ. And I'm hugely excited that you chose to join me for it. Now, if everyone's ready and no one needs to go to the bathroom first, let's continue with introductions to the antagonists of this amazing drama the Bible calls the *end of days*.



## CHAPTER THREE

### DECEIVER

Who is the antichrist? Given our impulses to peg everyone from Adolf Hitler to Donald Trump for the role, a more relevant question might be, who *isn't* the antichrist? As for Hitler, I do find it odd that the belief in him being the antichrist did not die when he did. Equally baffling is the notion that the rapture event occurred ages ago. But these beliefs do exist. So, how do people come to these wild conclusions? Let's find out.

**...every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.**

**1 John 4:3**

Antichrist is as much an attitude as it is a physical being. In this verse, John states that the antichrist was present in his day and is also yet to come. The antichrist he claimed was "already in the world" is the mindset of being in opposition to God. We see this same opposition in the lives of those around us today. Being opposed to or against various things has created many labels for us. If we feel strongly against military conflict, we are *antiwar*. Those who appear to avoid human interaction are called *antisocial*, and so on. Antichrist, however, is not a name we're apt to call ourselves or each other for obvious reasons.

Regarding the antichrist that is yet to come, the Bible refers to him as both a man and a beast. While his notoriety leans heavily toward the latter, there is much to learn about the man who will one day become this beast figure. We'll begin with the book of Daniel, which contains several of the 27 chapters in the Bible that speak of this man. If you recall, it was Daniel whose rise to stardom began with his ability to interpret the troublesome visions of King Nebuchadnezzar. And, before the book ends, we learn of



Daniel's struggle to interpret his own. Chapter 7 is where our quest to identify the antichrist begins.

**I was looking in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts were coming up from the sea, different from one another.**

**Daniel 7:2-3**

## **BEASTS & HORNS**

In his vision, Daniel sees four beastly animals. As we read further, we find details about each of their

appearances. The first resembled a lion with wings, and the next two looked like a bear and a leopard. As for the fourth, Daniel did not attribute its likeness to a specific animal. Instead, he described this beast as being all kinds of terrible.

**After this I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrifying and extremely strong; and it had large iron teeth. It devoured and crushed and trampled down the remainder with its feet; and it was different from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.**

**Daniel 7:7**

If you've read through the book of Revelation, you may recall John, the author, naming these same animals along with his use of the words *beasts* and *horns* to describe what he saw. We'll visit these passages of Scripture shortly as they have been the source of much confusion and debate throughout the ages. Thankfully, both John and Daniel had angels at their disposal to clarify the meaning behind what they were seeing.

**The fourth beast will be a fourth kingdom on the earth, which will be different from all the other kingdoms and will devour the whole earth**



**and tread it down and crush it. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings will arise.**

**Daniel 7:23-24**

Here the angel explains that the beasts Daniel saw represent kingdoms and that the horns refer to kings or rulers who will emerge from the big bad fourth kingdom. Bear in mind that no specific kingdom is named among these four. But this hasn't stopped the tireless pursuit of identifying them. In my research, I have encountered a great number of thinkers whose claims to have uncovered the antichrist's whereabouts are attributed to the study of animal behaviors and how they identify a nation or country. Their conclusions, however, vary wildly from one study to the next as there is little agreement upon how a leopard best represents Pakistan, for example.

## **HIDDEN AGENDA**

There is immense joy in performing this kind of research. I certainly commend anyone whose passion for God has led them to invest time and energy toward a greater understanding of Scripture. Many of these studies, however, are focused on finding pieces of information that are believed to be encrypted using symbolic references and secret codes. I'm sure you saw the movie.

If you're old enough to remember owning a record player when vinyl was the popular means of playing music, you may recall spinning a record in reverse to hear a hidden message that you heard about on the news. They called this backmasking. If you did this, you likely heard the words you were listening for after a few tries. I did this myself when the word got around that you can hear the phrase *learn to smoke marijuana* while playing "Another One Bites the Dust" by Queen backward. So, did I hear this message? I sure did. But I only heard what I *wanted* to hear. I could have picked out the lyrics to a nursery rhyme just as easily. According to the news, however, all these messages were about drugs and Satan for some reason. And they weren't spinning Stevie Wonder's records backward either—only the bands' whose music featured loud distorted guitars.



This whole backmasking movement was started by individuals who felt that rock music was of the devil. Because there was no real evidence to support such a claim, that evidence was manufactured. This is a practice I see quite frequently in books about the end times. You can see it too. Just browse the summaries of these books on Amazon. Very quickly, you'll detect a common desire among authors for the United States to have a central role in the events described in Revelation. You'll also find books whose authors are fixated upon reinterpreting symbolic references in Scripture, just like the pairing of nations with beasts scenario. Today, entire ministries are built around this practice. And it's of the utmost importance that we recognize them and steer clear of their false teaching. God has never, nor will He ever, prompt sinful human beings to go fishing for words to put in His mouth.

**But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation.**

**2 Peter 1:20**

Back to Daniel's vision, the Bible teaches us that these beasts represent a geographical timeline that demonstrates how progress will impact the people of Israel. Rather than a single corresponding nation, each beast represents the same Middle Eastern territory. The progression from one type of beast to another demonstrates how changes in powers, rulers, and in the division of lands will result in a growing hostility toward Israel. So, why didn't the first three beasts have horns (kings)? I'm sure they did. But Daniel was only shown the kings that are present in the last days to set the stage for the appearance of the antichrist. And so, amidst all these depictions of the Middle East, Israel serves as our point of reference just as it does frequently throughout the Bible. Hopefully, we're all on the same page as we move forward. Or, in the case of this next verse, move *southward*.

**Then the king of the South will grow strong, along with one of his princes who will gain ascendancy over him and obtain dominion; his domain will be a great dominion indeed.**

**Daniel 11:5**



## KING OF THE SOUTH

The verse you just read describes a king whose rule over a Middle Eastern nation south of the Holy Land will be succeeded by a crown prince, which is a title given to a prince (traditionally the son of a king) who is chosen by the king to one day take his place on the throne. The king in question will have multiple princes as we just read, yet only one will be given the crown as can be expected. The prince's gaining "ascendency over" the king informs us that he may begin running the show before he "obtains dominion," or takes the throne. Referring back to the vision of the beast with horns, Daniel calls our attention to this overzealous prince figure.

**While I was contemplating the horns, behold,**

**another horn, a little one, came up among them, and three of the first horns were pulled out by the roots before it.**

**Daniel 7:8**

If you're keeping count, we now have eleven horns to ponder over. Well, eight if you factor in the uprooted three, but we'll get there. The inclusion of the little horn whose significance is lesser than each of the original ten is consistent with a prince parading among kings. And it is this little horn who starts shaking things up. This is the antichrist.

**I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them until the Ancient of Days came and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.**

**Daniel 7:21-22**

## COUNTING KINGS

In Revelation, we see a shift in the use of the word beast. Whereas Daniel uses it to refer to a specific locale, Revelation calls the antichrist a beast outright. In this next verse, we've jumped ahead into the future to see that the prince has become a king.



**The beast who once was, and now is not, is an eighth king. He belongs to the seven and is going to his destruction.**

**Revelation 17:11**

Here we are given another significant clue about the antichrist's identity. He will be the successor of the seventh king to rule over his nation. This makes him king number eight and a member of the seven horns (kings) that are counted in Revelation. At first, there were ten horns. Then the little eleventh showed up and took three of them out. That left us with seven kings and a prince ( $10+1-3=8$ ). When the prince becomes king, his father will no longer be one. This leaves us with seven kings ( $8-1=7$ ). As for the "once was" and "now is not" states of being, we see them used multiple times in Revelation, each instance referring to the beast that is the antichrist. Here they are again.

**The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because it once was, now is not, and yet will come.**

**Revelation 17:8**

There has been much speculation over these patterns and how they may be used to identify the antichrist. Some have used these to identify his family history, but the Bible uses them to describe him alone. Soon we'll look at verses that point to his transition from man to beast. While this may shed some light on the angel's meaning of "once was" and "now is not," I've chosen to leave this alone due to our inability to determine when "now" is. After all, this is the dialog of an angel who is speaking about a time that has not yet occurred.

## **KINGDOMS COLLIDE**

At this time, I'd like to address what some of you who study eschatology may have been stewing over for a bit. Several paragraphs back, I presented a verse that introduced us to the king of the South and matched this role with the



antichrist. Many people will fault me for claiming that the two are the same. And here's the verse that will cause this friction.

**At the end time the king of the South will collide with him, and the king of the North will storm against him with chariots, with horsemen and with many ships; and he will enter countries, overflow them and pass through.**

**Daniel 11:40**

There are two forces at work in this verse from Daniel. They are the king of the North, who we've already identified, and the king of the South. The inclusion of the word "him" suggests that the antichrist is a third party in this clash. However, it is my understanding that this pronoun is directed at each of the two attackers. The king of the South collides with him (the king of the North) and the king of the North storms against him (the king of the South). Revelation also agrees with the antichrist's actions as mirroring those of the king of the South. Separating the two just throws things completely out of whack.

**The two kings, with their hearts bent on evil, will sit at the same table and lie to each other, but to no avail, because an end will still come at the appointed time.**

**Daniel 11:47**

Imagine the dinner conversation between these two.

"You know, Israel makes the best coffee."

"I totally agree! Let's never attack them."

If I lost you during this little detour, don't sweat it. Daniel has to be one of the most challenging books to comprehend, in or outside of the Bible.

Chapter 11 alone will make your head spin. In it, there's a whole slew of prophecies that are tied to each of the periods that the four beasts represent. Because they are not in sequential order, the text can seem like notes written by a person who was watching four episodes of a TV show at the same time.



This may not be how these prophecies were presented to Daniel. But it's how he presented them to us. The man obviously had an awful lot thrown at him at once, so I say we cut him some slack.

My being able to decipher any portion of Daniel's writing still baffles me. But, then again, it isn't me doing the deciphering. As a follower of Christ, I must rely solely on God to provide the clarity that I pray for as I study. And it's of the utmost importance that I share this clarity with my fellow believers who seek to understand His Word. Even so, I'm still a human being with a finite mind attempting to comprehend the infinite mind of our all-knowing God.

Returning to our prince's pre-king status, Daniel gives us more info about behaviors you and I might witness should he be present in our world today.

**He shall enter peaceably even into the richest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers.**

**... he will intend to change the times and the law**

**Daniel 11:24, 7:25**

## **GAME CHANGER**

A person of authority who strives to change laws and alter the way things are done politically is called a reformer. Reformers initiate significant changes that usually draw a lot of attention. As the prince of a wealthy nation whose reforms are radically different from those of his father and the previous kings, we can expect to see his name included in many headlines.

Regarding the father-son relationship, there is a popular belief that this man will be the son of the devil. Although he is indeed called the "son of perdition" —perdition meaning destruction or damnation, I've encountered no portion of Scripture that suggests Satan will have a paternal relationship to this man. To be sure, there is nothing good that the Bible has to say about the antichrist. Calling him the spawn of Satan certainly seems fitting. When he emerges, however, he may appear quite the likable fellow.

According to Daniel, you and I can expect the antichrist to enter peaceably. This means that, instead of exalting himself above God, which we know he will do eventually, the crown prince will have some goodwill to share. Otherwise, he would have an enormous opposition of Christ's followers to deal with. Publicly denouncing Jesus Christ just doesn't seem like a constructive way to advance up the royal chain. Instead, I believe we'll see a prince charming the masses with intriguing ideas for easing the unrest in the world.

**Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the day of Christ's return] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction, who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship.**

**2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**

There are many names given the antichrist in the Bible. The *man of lawlessness* is one such name that speaks of his character. If you're wondering how this name jives with his claims to desire peace, join the club. I'm sure there are many peaceful crooks in the world we can learn from though. This situation, however, may be worthy of me breaking out my super analysis powers! Of course, you don't have them. They're only given to *super nerds*.

So, what does it mean to be lawless? My first thought was that it must pertain to someone who is notoriously reckless with the law or a lawbreaker. But that notion alone seemed unfitting for someone who tricks the world into believing he's a nice guy. I knew there had to be more to this. You don't just trust someone who can't be trusted, let alone a royal world leader. So I decided that it makes more sense that he would appear to be above the law. I mean, this guy is going to be important. Right? And the Middle East conflict serves as a thorn in the side of every nation. There have been countless attempts at achieving peace over there, and every single one of them have failed.



So, if this prince charming is to be seen as the man who can finally get the job done, he may be regarded as too important to be strung up for his misdealings. His royalty alone may keep him out of arm's reach of anyone who would dare try and cross him anyway. As for the laws he'd be breaking, I imagine they would need to be of the humanitarian variety if the entire world is to recognize his lawlessness. While I do love playing detective, only time will tell how well my Bible vision goggles are working for me. Mine were in the clearance aisle at Walmart.

### THREE SIXES

Now to discuss the one identifier that both Christians and nonbelievers alike are all too familiar with. It is the number 666, otherwise known in the book of Revelation as the *mark of the beast*. We've seen this number used in everything from movies with demonic themes to politically charged comic strips. Due to its iconic association with this man of sin, you may wonder why I didn't address it first. I do have a reason. It's that this number's significance is largely misunderstood.

Before we get into this, let me point out that, until 666 is used according to its purpose in Scripture, it is merely the number that follows 665. There's no bad omen attached to it that we should be concerned over. So go easy on your neighbor who has 666 on his license plate or your sister-in-law who has three consecutive sixes in her cell phone number. They aren't evil. If they are, it won't be because of the number, I assure you.

**This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.**

**Revelation 13:8**

Here we have a unique challenge that God has laid out for us concerning this number. On the surface, God appears to be telling us that we can know who the antichrist is if we can somehow tie this number to his identity. As straightforward as this seems, I do feel strongly that the popular

understanding of this challenge is way off base. Before I present my reasoning, let me call your attention to the prerequisite of wisdom that God requires of all who desire to take on this challenge. Without this wisdom, we may as well not even try.

An example of how people take on this challenge without wisdom is the crafting of archaic methods of slapping 666 on public figures who act evil and then slandering them with the worst name known to humanity. This is not Christ-like behavior and certainly not what God is prompting us to do. A person with wisdom would know that the antichrist will not be identified among known liars, bigots, and dictators. A person with wisdom would, instead, be looking among royal peacemakers who get away with murder, so to speak, and are outspoken in their support for Israel. And a person with wisdom would be praying for people instead of trying to turn them into the object of God's wrath. So, where do we get this wisdom? Let's find out.

**For the Lord gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.**

**Proverbs 2:6**

**... from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.**

**2 Timothy 3:15**

Wisdom and knowledge go hand in hand. The two are so closely related that many people refer to them as one and the same. Knowledge, however, does not make us wise until we put that knowledge to good use. Wisdom is the application of God's Word. We attain wisdom as God transforms us into beings who come to desire Him above all things. This is not something you and I will be inclined to do or even have the ability to do on our own. God does this for us. And it will be His work in us that solves this puzzle. With this in mind, if you feel that you meet God's criteria and would like to take a stab at this challenge, I'm with you.



If you read Revelation 13:8 carefully, you'll see that we are given three clues. The first two clues reveal who the number pertains to—the beast and a man. And clue number three is the number. Because there's only one beast and a multitude of men to choose from, the man must be the mystery. Right? It would seem that way. There's just one problem with this approach. This man's identity is no mystery.

If you weren't napping during this lesson, you know that God has already identified this man for us. We know his gender, his location, his lineage, his title, his character, and his specific behaviors that will be made public for the whole world to see. We don't need 666 to identify this man. Rather, we need the man to identify the number. This challenge is all about the "calculation" of 666. God isn't just the great physician. He's also the great mathematician! And we can only begin crunching His numbers when we know this man's name. Until we do, the game is not yet afoot. In the meantime, we have the assurance that God is not leading us into an oblivion with this challenge. We have all the information we need to steer us clear of going about it the wrong way.

So far, we've reached some solid conclusions about the antichrist, and we've barely touched the book of Revelation. Next, we'll focus the aim of our study on these false prophets who, like the antichrist, are said to exist today in great numbers. And yet one of great significance is about to take the stage.

## REVIEW

To conclude this chapter, I'd like to recap all that we've learned about this man Jesus calls "the deceiver." The Bible paints a picture of a royal prince chosen from among his brothers to take throne of his father, who is the seventh to rule over a wealthy nation that lies to the south of Israel. This prince may begin taking on kingly duties before he is king, making waves with reformed laws that represent a departure from the way his father and the previous kings had run things. He will have a pleasant demeanor, and many will follow his lead despite his disregard for the law. And he will speak out on behalf of Israel with compelling visions of peace.

As you can see, God has made it crystal clear that these attributes, when applied collectively, may reveal only one man. If we follow His Word in its entirety, there will be no mistaking him for someone else. Also, our motive for studying Scripture cannot be limited to a desire to identify the antichrist. We will be lost if this is our directive. Only when our intention is to truly know God will His truth be revealed to us. This leaves me to address the one question that has been on your mind since you began reading. Is there someone in our world today who matches the Bible's description of this man?

Yes, there is.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### APOSTASY

At the beginning of chapter 17 in the book of Revelation, we are introduced to an entity of great significance during the tribulation period. We're not told right away what this entity actually is. But we do learn very quickly that it serves as the object of God's scorn. If you turn to this chapter in your Bible, you'll see the title, "The Whore That Rides the Beast." The word whore may be substituted with prostitute depending upon the version of Scripture you have.

Before we move forward, let me point out that this is not an easy chapter to read. I recall choosing to skip over it during an overview of Revelation I led years ago in my Sunday school class. At that time, it was as confusing to me as Daniel's 11th chapter. Today, I've come to understand its text quite well, and I recognize its vital importance to the end times story. So, instead of skipping it, I'd like us to examine it together very carefully. But first, let's back up for a brief moment.

From chapter 4 of Revelation to the end of the Bible, we encounter lengthy vision of the tribulation period. John, the disciple who Jesus loved, is the only human member of the audience whose view of the opening credits includes—you guessed it—four beasts. Unlike Daniel's vision, however, John's attention was directed to the riders of these beasts. And, very much like Daniel's vision, each rider represented a significant event that will shape the tribulation timeline. This time around, the guesswork has been eliminated as each rider's purpose is explained. We'll get to know these four beast riders a bit better in the next chapter. Now let's return to our introduction of the second major player in the earth's endgame story—a "woman," who also happens to be a beast rider.

**Come here, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters.**

**The name written on her forehead was a mystery: BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.**

**Revelation 17:1, 5**

If you've read chapter 17 before, you may already know that the woman it speaks of isn't a woman at all. Not in the literal sense anyway. This isn't the first time God has used the female persona in this manner. Throughout Scripture, feminine pronouns are given to Israel, Zion, Judah, and Jerusalem in addition to human women like Mary and Ruth. At this, we can know that God's use of *she* or *her* refers to a place or a city when it's not directed toward a female human being. The angel who is present to enlighten John about his vision confirms this for us.

**The woman you saw is the great city that rules over the kings of the earth.**

**Revelation 17:18**

## **UNDUE AUTHORITY**

If the "Babylon the Great" title prompted you to check your Bible atlas for the location of Babylon, you can rest with the assurance that it's still in Iraq. Knowing this, however, will not be helpful here. While Babylon was indeed a kingdom, God applies its name to other kingdoms whose bad reputations mirror that of Babylon—the arch-enemy and captor of Israel. He does this with the name Sodom as well, and for reasons you can probably imagine. Being that the land described in this chapter was smeared with "Babylon The Great," we can conclude that this place is the pinnacle of lands that God detests. Today, the area in Iraq that the kingdom of Babylon once occupied is called Hillah, Babil Governorate. And, honestly, there's just not much going on over there. Now that we know *what* this woman is, we can better understand the information that tells us *who* she is.



In the verse we just read together, we see that the city has authority over the leaders of our world. Does this mean that our presidents and prime ministers all bow before it? Not likely. Instead of having authority *over* kings, the Hebrew text describes this authority as being *above* or *beyond* them. This implies that the city acts independently of world powers. It also places the city in the same class as the antichrist if we are to believe that he and his lawlessness are untouchable. The antichrist and the city would be respected for different reasons, of course. But that's neither here nor there. God despises them both.

**With her the kings of the earth committed adultery, and the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated with the wine of her adulteries.**

**Revelation 17:2**

Here we read that this city's *whore* status represents an unhealthy relationship with world leaders. We just learned that this relationship is one that involves authority. And now God is telling us that this authority is wrong for the city to have, and that exercising this authority is akin to committing adultery. We also learn that this city influences people who are *not* world leaders. Bad city. Check. Now, what about this riding the beast business? Wouldn't the beast become squashed if an entire city were riding on it? If the city were stronger than the beast, it certainly would. But we know that the beast is stronger. We also know that this city is not literally riding on the beast's back. Nope, this city is merely riding the beast's *coattails* as we'll learn shortly. Ok, so the beast doesn't actually have coattails. But it does have horns! And seven heads! Really, I'm not making this up.

**Then the angel said to me: "Why are you astonished? I will explain to you the mystery of the woman and of the beast she rides, which has the seven heads and ten horns.**

**The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits. They are also seven kings.**

**Revelation 17:7, 9-10**

Here we see that the beast is given two descriptions. One is consistent with Daniel's beasts, which represent lands or kingdoms. The other is the group of seven kings that we used my math problem to count in the previous chapter. And we determined that the antichrist is one of these seven kings. Since we already know the second beast, let's zoom in on this first one—a land recognized for its seven hills.

So, how can there be two beasts when Scripture only names *the* beast? Revelation is merely telling us what this city is known for. The city *rides the beast* in the same way a person *plays the guitar*. This person is known for having played the guitar on numerous occasions over a lengthy period of time. Such a person would very likely have played more than one guitar as well. Otherwise, we could hardly call them a guitar player. The same applies here.

Going back to the seven hills reference, this piece of geographical info is important, especially since we're not told where this city sits in relation to Israel like we were with the kingdoms to the north and south. Shortly, we'll learn that this city exists today. So it may be helpful to Google this info. Due to its affiliation with the antichrist, we might narrow our search for these seven hills within the eastern hemisphere. Just remember that we're using only the Bible as our GPS. If you feel you've already got a handle on which city this is, please don't spoil it for everyone else. We still have more clues to investigate.

**And he said to me, "The waters which you saw where the harlot sits, are peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues."**

**For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality.**

**Revelation 17:5, 18:3**

Here we are informed that this city's unhealthy behavior influences the citizens of every nation. This is huge! What on earth has been going on in this city that so many people would follow its detestable practices? You're about to find out.



**I saw that the woman was drunk with the blood of God's holy people, the blood of those who bore testimony to Jesus.**

**In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth.**

**Revelation 17:6, 18:24**

## **MARTYRDOM**

The two verses you just read give us our first clue that this is not just some crooked outfit that has sold drugs or spread poisonous propaganda. Instead, the organization associated with this city had it in for Jesus and his followers specifically. Because the motive for killing Christians has historically been fueled by religion, we may conclude that this organization is religious in nature. While we are not told at what point in time these martyrs were made, we do know that this institution serves as the object of God's wrath both prior to and during the tribulation. So, we have a religious institution with an independent government and a worldwide following. This sure sounds like a church to me.

So why does the Bible reference a city instead of a place of worship? Being that its congregation exists all over the world, a safe conclusion is that this city serves as the headquarters or leadership of its religious affiliation. Regarding the killing of Christians, while there are indeed extremist groups who do this today for reasons they claim are faith-fueled, nothing about them matches the details in the Bible that describe this city/church, especially the ones we'll look at next. So, instead of reading the news, looking back into the history of Christian martyrdom will likely land us a match.

**The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality.**

**Revelation 17:4**

## WEALTH AND VENGEANCE

Revelation 17:4 is one of several verses that speak of this church's great wealth. Here, God expresses his disgust over the precious materials that adorn its structures. We also read of the scarlet (crimson red) and purple colored clothing associated with this church.

**And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more—cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil...**

**Revelation 18:11-13**

These merchants are obviously making their living off the sale of these goods to this palace of a church. So, why is it that they weep and mourn? They do this when the church's entire city is destroyed.

**'Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!' And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?'**

**Revelation 18:16-18**

As the people on the earth mourn, a celebration over its destruction begins in heaven.



**Rejoice over her, O heaven, and you saints and apostles and prophets, because God has pronounced judgment for you against her.**

**Revelation 18:20**

And the celebration continues into chapter 19 of Revelation.

**Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God; because His judgments are true and righteous; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and He has avenged the blood of His bond-servants on her.**

**Revelation 19:1-2**

If you're wondering why gold and jewels are an issue when there's already a rap sheet with murder on it, God is calling our attention to how riches and authority together lend themselves to the church's high regard for itself above all other churches.

**To the degree that she glorified herself and lived sensuously, to the same degree give her torment and mourning; for she says in her heart, 'I sit as a queen and I am not a widow, and will never see mourning.'**

**Revelation 18:7**

This is an interesting analogy that Scripture uses to inform us of this church's self-centeredness. Traditionally, a woman may only become queen as the wife of her husband, the king. And only when a king becomes deceased during their rule together may she remain as the sole ruler of the kingdom. So, a queen claiming that she is "not a widow" implies that she regards herself as above any queen who would need to be married to a king in order to rule. Since the king in question is Jesus Christ who is the true head of the church . . . you can do the math this time.

## UN SOUND DOCTRINE

So, what is being taught in this church that has God so up in arms? The Bible does not say specifically. But we can safely conclude that its teaching is extra-biblical. In other words, you could study the Bible through and through and never find the basis for its doctrine. If a church discourages reading the Bible, it stands to get away with all the extra-biblical teaching it wishes to impose upon the congregation. This is the only way I can think of that such a church could grow so large and continue to operate. The false teaching is not questioned because the congregation is steered away from the one tool that exposes it. It's also our sole means of acquiring a deep and intimate relationship with God. Judging by our unwillingness to read the Bible, I can see this church being a popular place if it indeed operates that way.

**For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

**2 Timothy 4:3**

So, what makes us believe that the Bible is being taught at all in this church? It is the name *false prophet*, whose affiliation with this church we'll examine shortly. As we learned earlier, prophets are human beings who were chosen by God to be His spokespersons. While prophets are synonymous with prophecy, the messages they shared were not entirely about the future. God also spoke through them to alert audiences of their past and present behavior, along with consequences that would occur on down the road should those behaviors persist.

So, does this mean that Jesus was a prophet? This question is often met with both yes and no answers. He certainly did the *work* of a prophet. The fact that he was God, however, often causes some confusion. Sometimes you have to go directly to the source to find the answer. Here is Jesus' response to his neighbors who thought he was off his rocker when he began teaching.



To them, he was just another kid from the neighborhood. And now a prophet??? Whatever, dude.

**Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his hometown and among his own relatives and in his own household."**

**Mark 6:4**

Unlike Jesus, a false prophet merely *claims* to be the bearer of God's will, relaying messages that never actually came from Him. Some false prophets claim that God has revealed to them information about the future, such as the day Christ will return. Others speak of new attributes of God and updates to His expectations—updates that often apply only to a specific group or denomination. The result is the further division of God's people; each group touting a different set of requirements for salvation. Once again, we are not informed of the specific practices this church is guilty of. We only know that it does have its own set and that God calls the church an *apostasy* for having it. This word refers to the abandonment of biblical teaching in favor of unbiblical teaching. In the book of 1 Timothy, we are given some examples of false teaching that churches will embrace as the end of days approaches.

**The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.**

**1 Timothy 4:1-5**

Since God has pointed out some specifics for us, I decided to do some checking up on these false teachings. After all, the Bible does say that they

will occur "in the later times." Given all that we've gone over so far, I think we're there. For the record, I found the practice of abstaining from certain foods within a denomination very quickly. Also, for the record, it does not fit the description of the church we've been learning about in Revelation. So, without revealing any names, I am going to show you several relevant statements as they appear within that denomination's summary of foundational beliefs. And I'll point out whether each statement is biblical or unbiblical. Ready? Here we go.

"We do not earn our way to heaven by being vegetarians."

Biblical.

"Erroneous eating and drinking result in erroneous thinking and acting."

Biblical.

"It is God's direct instruction to all of us to eat a balanced and appropriate plant-based diet."

Unbiblical.

"The Lord counsels the church to discard meats, tea, coffee, and other harmful foods."

Unbiblical.

"God is trying to lead us back to His original design where man subsisted upon the natural products of the earth."

Unbiblical.

"This is a work that will have to be done before God's people can stand before Him."

Unbiblical.



You see the problem here, don't you? This practice went from being a mere suggestion to a full-blown requirement for one's salvation. And coffee??? I think we should pause and pray for these deprived individuals right away! Because false teaching exists in so many varieties, each church it divides may be under the impression that only its members can be saved. After all, if what they do makes them right with God, those not doing it cannot be right. Right? Regarding the abstinence of certain foods, Jesus already set this record straight with the Pharisees.

**"Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean.) And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man."**

**Mark 7:18-20**

These rituals may seem trivial to you and me, but God takes them very seriously. Any church that adds to, takes away from, or weaves its way in and out of His Word to be seen as having completed works of merit will suffer God's wrath. Moses' two nephews might have testified to this had they not been incinerated for their "special offering." You can read their story in chapters 9 and 10 of Leviticus.

Humans are incapable of doing anything worthy of salvation. A suggestion that a mere wiggle of one's little finger makes people more ripe for salvation completely strips Jesus of his divinity. Why? Because it makes him a liar. We're all expected to do good works; to behave in a manner that reflects our gratitude for his sacrifice. But those works are flawed because we are flawed. Even on our best days, our praises to God are marred by our self-centered and unforgiving hearts. This is the human condition. We are to strive for goodness, but that bar is set way above our heads on purpose so that we will be completely reliant upon Jesus, who did for us what we cannot do for ourselves. In Christ alone means in Christ *alone*.

**And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.**

**Acts 4:12**

Earlier, we looked at a verse from 2 Thessalonians that pairs the apostate church of Revelation with the antichrist. I'll add it here for you once again.

**Let no one in any way deceive you, for it [the day of Christ's return] will not come unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed...**

**2 Thessalonians 2:3**

The purpose of these chapters in Revelation is to acquaint us with the leader or spokesperson of this church, known as the false prophet. In the absence of the raptured church, this person will be faced with a tough decision as he attempts to restore the trust of his worldwide congregation. There are far fewer verses in the Bible that tell us about the actions of this false prophet than there are of the antichrist. But there are far more about the condemnation of his church. Of these verses, I believe this next one may be the most important.

**Come out of her, my people, so that you will not share in her sins, so that you will not receive any of her plagues; for her sins are piled up to heaven, and God has remembered her crimes.**

**Revelation 18:5**

## **REVIEW**

Let's take a moment and review all that God would have us to know about the church this false prophet represents. The Bible speaks of a denomination whose members exist in every nation of the world. This church is responsible for the martyrdom of people who opposed its false doctrine in favor of the truth in Jesus Christ. Its headquarters is described as a city whose geographical location features seven prominent hills, and whose independent government exercises authority above and beyond the leaders of



every nation. The buildings and structures within this city are palatial in appearance with adornments of gold, precious stones, pearls, marble, ivory, and other rare and expensive materials. The church is also associated with the burning of incense and the wearing of red and purple garments. Lastly, the church's doctrine inspires the teaching of unbiblical rules and practices that its congregation may be discouraged from corroborating with Scripture. Now for the big question. Is there a religious institution operating in our world today that fits the description of this apostate church?

Yes, there is.

## **SEEK THE TRUTH**

If you recognize this church as your own and feel the conflict between the softness and hardness of your heart, know that this is the work of God's Holy Spirit. He speaks only the truth and will confirm your suspicion if you will only reach out to Him. Realizing you have been led astray by your church will be as frightening as it is painful, especially if you have been a life-long member alongside family and loved ones. Ignoring this will not avert the life-shaking event you may associate with leaving your church. Another one will surely come for all who resist the truth. God knows how hard this can be, and He has provided a beautiful Savior who waits for you with outstretched arms to help you during this time, and during every struggle you will face from this day forward.

If you are a friend or family member of mine, please reach out to me if you suspect you have been led astray by false teaching at your church. I'd love nothing more than to pray with you and to explore the truth of God's Word together.

**Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray.**

**1 John 3:7**

For those with wisdom, please join me in praying that God will break our hearts for the misguided and use us to lead His precious children away from false teaching and into the everlasting arms of his son, Jesus Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TRIBULATION PART 1

In this chapter and the next, I will present an overview of the events that make up the tribulation period. We'll go over each one, step by step, and conclude by identifying which of these events you and I can expect to witness should we be alive when this all goes down. We'll be following Revelation for the most part. Just be prepared to jump back and forth between its text and supporting Scripture found in several other books of the Bible as we go along.

As I stated earlier, Revelation does not give us a complete picture of the tribulation period. Relying on its text alone is like watching only the last 15 minutes of a movie. We can't expect to know the whole story without watching the film from beginning to end. While God hasn't told us everything we'd *like* to know, what's included in the Bible is all we *need* to know. Those unsatisfied with this notion may be missing the purpose of Scripture. Because there's certainly enough content to move our hearts to fall head-over-heels in love with our Savior. This I know from first-hand experience. Only through God's Word have I developed such an overwhelming love for Jesus.

As we progress through this study, we should all expect our balanced scales of knowledge and understanding to tip toward knowledge at all times. There is much we can know but even less that we can understand. None of us may ever possess a perfectly balanced scale without supplementing our lack of understanding with an additional counterweight. This extra weight we need is faith—faith that our salvation lies in Jesus Christ, who balances our scales for us when we place our trust in him. My prayer for you is that you may obtain the blessing that is reserved for all who desire this balance, and who



ready themselves for our fast-approaching day of redemption.

**Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear it and take to heart what is written in it, because the time is near.**

**Revelation 1:3**

## **VISION IN EXILE**

As the curtain rises in chapter 1 of Revelation, we encounter John, the youngest of the twelve disciples, who was banished from society for his testimony of Jesus. According to historical data found outside of the Bible, John's exile immediately followed his execution, where he was thrown into a large vat of boiling oil. When he climbed out completely unscathed, those who heard his testimony believed. To prevent further crowds from exposure to the gospel, John was labeled a witch and confined to a secluded island off the coast of Israel called Patmos, that served as a prison camp. And it was here that this youngest disciple was given an account of the tribulation period in the form of a vision.

An intriguing aspect of these visions is how they were perceived. While there are numerous visions described in the Bible, we'll continue focusing on those experienced by Daniel and John. The initial manifestation of the visions witnessed by these men was detected by the naked eye. Each described their physical locations as well as their reactions in astonishment as a man with the physical features of the glorified Jesus Christ appeared. Daniel, of course, had not seen Jesus before as his vision occurred long before the Savior was born. But his description closely matches that of John, who spent a great deal of time at Jesus' side before his encounter.

**His head and His hair were white like white wool, like snow; and His eyes were like a flame of fire. His feet were like burnished bronze, when it has been made to glow in a furnace, and His voice was like the sound of many waters.**

**Revelation 1:14-15**

For those who figure these visitors might be angels, these next two verses confirm that it was indeed Jesus who paid these men a visit.

**When I saw Him, I fell at His feet like a dead man. And He placed His right hand on me, saying, "Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore**

**Revelation 1:17-18**

Following their interactions with the son of man, John and Daniel both described a change in their perception of what was happening to them. For Daniel, this change involved the feeling of being in a deep sleep.

**While he was speaking to me, I was in a deep sleep, with my face to the ground. Then he touched me and raised me to my feet.**

**Daniel 8:18**

John describes his own experience as having been "caught up in the spirit" (Revelation 1:10), which involved the relocation of his consciousness. Both, however, were aware of the presence of their human bodies during these visions. When something appeared to them, they reacted by looking in its direction. When the things they saw affected them emotionally, they responded with expressions of those emotions, such as crying. While you and I might recall dreams in the same manner, the actions of these men actually impacted the heavenly realm they were visiting. As cool as this sounds, you might check Netflix's existing library before running to tell them about a new idea for a sci-fi movie. This one's been done.

In Revelation, John's vision is captured in vivid detail. As we read, we must retain our own awareness of his limited vocabulary, just as we should of all whose ancient writings were selected to be a part of the biblical canon. What John wrote down on paper were words that he knew. And those words were of the Greek language. While there are more words in Greek than in English, there are fewer variations.



## ANCIENT WORDS

Today, the multitude of alternates for any given word in the English language can complicate matters for us as we read the Bible. To demonstrate this, I'd like to use an example I put together for a Sunday school lesson. I'll start with a familiar passage of Scripture and then rewrite it substituting only the verbs as many times as I can while keeping the meaning of the text intact. This might be a fun exercise for your own study group. Here we go.

**Then God looked over all he had made, and he saw that it was very good!**

God surveyed and determined

God examined and concluded

God searched and found

God studied and believed

God witnessed and resolved

God reviewed and decided

God beheld and ruled

God observed and established

I'm sure you can come up with more to add to this list. As you encounter words that can have multiple meanings according to how we use them, consulting a Greek lexicon (dictionary) can help you to nail down the intended meaning of these words. This practice may also expose our incorrect usage of the English language. For instance, it's quite common that we say a pool *is filled* with water. The correct way to express this is to state that a pool *is full* of water and that it *was filled* with water. Otherwise, we'd be putting a present tense and a past tense verb right next to each other. But that's how we speak. Being from Tennessee, I'm as guilty of this as anyone. But this example may be particularly helpful for those studying how people in the Bible are *filled* with the Holy Spirit.

Moving on to Revelation, it is essential that we know up front that this is not an account of purely chronological events. I'll do my best to present them in order, but this calls for the supporting verses I present to appear *out* of order. You may have detected this already. I do have some examples that will shed some light on this, but they can keep until later. Lastly, it's important to know that our understanding of the New Testament is largely dependent upon our knowledge of the Old Testament. I could give you some examples of things that go together like these do, but I sense you're getting anxious to move on. So that's what we'll do. I won't mention peanut butter and jelly, I promise. No references to peas in a pod either. Nope, we're moving on!

The first chapter of Revelation provides information we've already touched on, including John's whereabouts and his encounter with Jesus. So, for the purposes of this study, we're going to jump to chapter 4, which is where John's vision begins. An awe-inducing view of God's throne room is described in chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation. I recommend taking some time to read through these chapters before we revisit the beasts John recalls in chapter 6. I can't begin to imagine what John felt as he stood in God's immediate presence. But I certainly can imagine what he saw, as can you, thanks to his vivid description. Amidst the wonders and visual splendor of his surroundings, John's attention was directed toward a scroll that lay sealed in God's right hand. This is believed to be the same scroll that Daniel was ordered to seal up as his vision came to a close.

**But you, Daniel, roll up and seal the words of the scroll until the time of the end.**

**Daniel 12:4**

We aren't told whether John knew what was written in this scroll. But we do know that he began to cry when no one was found worthy of opening it. At this, we may suppose he knew of its importance at the very least. In any case, John's tears of sorrow became tears of joy when Jesus finally stepped up to the plate.



**And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.**

**Revelation 5:9**

Some people have speculated that this scroll contains the entire text of the book of Revelation. I am not among this group for reasons that I hope are obvious. So I will not be going down the road of refuting that notion despite having heard it many times. Throughout our Christian walk, you and I will encounter many people whose ideas about the Bible do not match our own. I'll be shocked if there are no disagreements expressed among this book's reviews. As you detect opposing points of view, choose your responses wisely. Not all of them will be faith-breaking errors by which one's salvation hangs in the balance. In heaven, we will live and worship alongside many whose understanding of the Bible once differed from our own.

Now, about those seals. Many moons ago, letters and scrolls were sealed by applying paraffin shellac instead of licking envelopes. For those unfamiliar with this terminology, *letters* are pieces of paper, often folded, that retained hand-written messages from one person to another. Oh, the shellac! That's just hot candle wax. When sealing a document, the melted wax was dripped over the seam where the folded or rolled edges overlapped. Before the wax cooled completely, the impression of a ring with one's engraved initials or personal symbol was pressed into it. The impression of the ring identified the person who either wrote or sent the document. These rings were called signets. Back then, owning a signet ring pegged you as an esteemed nobleman. Today, having one of these rings means you wasted fifteen bucks on Etsy. Just saying. So this scroll had seven of these seals on it. And each time Jesus broke one, John would be shown something new.

## **FOUR HORSEMEN**

As we learned earlier, these beasts John saw were horses and their riders. When the first seal was broken, a white horse appeared whose rider was given

a crown and a bow to symbolize victory. An announcement was also made to this effect.

**Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" I looked, and behold, a white horse, and the one who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.**

**Revelation 6:1-2**

In this verse, the "four living creatures" are not to be confused with the horses. If you already read chapters 4 and 5, you know who they are. As for the second seal, it brought forth a red horse whose rider was to end peace and start a war. When the third seal was removed, a black horse appeared. Instead of an announcement of what this rider will do, the voice John heard spoke of the unusually high cost of food.

**Then I heard what sounded like a voice among the four living creatures, saying, "Two pounds of wheat for a day's wages, and six pounds of barley for a day's wages, and do not damage the oil and the wine!"**

**Revelation 6:6**

Being no scholar, I had to hit up a pastor and a theologian for the meaning of this one. Both agreed that this rider was to bring about a famine on the earth. Because famine is one of the plagues that Jesus said would occur during this time, I concurred. As for the last horse, it was ashen (gray) in color with a rider whose name was also its purpose—Death. Hades was also named as following behind Death. Apparently, he didn't get a horse. Sorry, Hades.

**I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given**



**to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth.**

**Revelation 6:8**

These horsemen represent only four of the seven seals that Jesus removes. We'll see what happens when he breaks open the rest of them a little later. If you haven't already picked up on it, these horsemen aren't real. Rather, they are visions like the ones Daniel saw. I know this entire encounter is a vision, but we can look at these as just part of the movie. Some of the text does, however, suggest that John was whisked away into the future where he witnessed actual events that were playing out in real-time. Determining which one is which can be tricky, but we'll give it our best shot. So we have a time of victory when peace is established followed by war, famine, and death. This sums up the tribulation period quite well, don't you think? I think we're done here! Just kidding.

## **TIME AND A HALF**

The tribulation period can be presented in many different ways. Explaining the timeline according to its two halves has worked best for me. We have events that mark the beginning of the first half, the midpoint and the end, which isn't really the end. It's just the end of this period. Before we go over these events, I'd like to point out the name that is often attached to the second half of this timeline. It's the same name as the first half. We've just added the word great to it.

If you've come to refer to the second half of these seven years as the great tribulation period, don't worry. I imagine there are millions of people who do. The Bible, however, refers to a single period, during which there is *great tribulation* happening. So, when the Bible tells us about people who come out of the great tribulation, it's referring to the extreme level of distress they were experiencing when they made their exit. I do understand that this is a trivial matter at best, but it's something to talk about.

Being that our first horseman has already given away what goes on at the

beginning of the tribulation period, we should expect to see some more verses that agree with this. And we do. Here's one from Daniel that speaks of the beginning as well as the midpoint.

**He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering.**

**Daniel 9:27**

In this verse, *he* is the antichrist. And the victory associated with the first horse is peace that is "supposed" to last for the full seven years, but doesn't. We know this because it is the antichrist who brings peace at the beginning of this period and then strips it away in the middle. These actions in Daniel 9:27 are mirrored in multiple verses, including one that we examined back in the third chapter of this book. If your translation of the Bible has the word *week* instead of seven, just know that it's a Hebrew thing. The week in this text is derived from the word *seven* without regard to 24-hour days. Also in Daniel, we see how 70 weeks equals 490 years. Without knowing this, we might assume that the covenant of peace will be made on a Sunday and that it will be broken by noon on the following Wednesday. This is hardly enough time to get the animals ready to sacrifice. If I still haven't convinced you, here's another verse that corroborates this.

**From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days.**

**Daniel 12:11**

This verse completes our seven-year period by counting 1,290 days (three and a half years) from the midpoint when the sacrifices stop. We'll dive into these sacrifices and their significance momentarily. We'll also learn what this desolation thing is all about. Right now, we're simply establishing the length of the tribulation period. And I think we've done it. We have peace promised for seven years, a broken promise halfway into the covenant duration, and then another three and a half years after that. So, when does the rapture occur in all this? Patience, my friends. We'll get there.



## COVENANT

If you're at all familiar with the Jewish faith, you likely know that those who have not converted to Christianity do not recognize the covenant of Jesus Christ. To them, no promise of eternal life was made, and no messiah has ever been present to make it. Israel's expectation of a messiah does not include a divine being at all. In fact, the use of the word *messiah* is discouraged as it points toward Jesus who, in their mind, was anything but a savior. Instead, Israel awaits their *Mashiach* (anointed one) who will be a normal human being.

According to Jewish doctrine, the Mashiach will be a male political leader with the warrior qualities of King David. This man will usher in peace and prosperity for Israel by establishing a new government that will allow the Jewish people reinstate their sacrificial worship. In short, they're looking for God to raise up a hero who will lead them out of the fix they've gotten themselves into. This hero is called a *judge*. You can read about the many judges God sent to aid Israel in the Bible. Which book? I think you can figure that one out. As for the final judge, the antichrist will be playing the part of Israel's Mashiach, having filled the role's requirements quite perfectly.

Regarding the sacrifices, it is Israel's intention to return to the style of worship that God set for them during the days of Moses. Back then, in exchange for His forgiveness, the Israelites were to give up their choicest cattle or livestock as burnt offerings that emitted an aroma pleasing to God. They suffered for their sins, and God got to smell some barbecue ribs. I may just have to incorporate this punishment at home. The way my kids roughhouse, I'd be eating like a king all week! While I'd never urge anyone to stop cooking meat, I do recognize that the need for these sacrifices was eliminated by Jesus' own sacrifice. But this practice will indeed resume at some point, much to the chagrin of animal rights groups like PETA, I'm sure.

Turning our attention back to the antichrist, one has to wonder what this guy

will have up his sleeve that no other leader seeking peace has laid on the table. My first guess would be the cooperation of more nations than Israel and Palestine. An agreement between these two alone would have a minimal impact on the threatening climate that countries like Iraq, Jordan, and Libya have created for the Jewish state. More nations have to get involved. How many, exactly? I believe the number we're looking for is seven—seven kings in the Middle East, the antichrist being one of them, will seal the deal.

Regarding the seven nations who'll be signing this peace accord, watching the world news will likely give us a clue who they might be. I can easily name seven suspects, but I'm hesitant to. Why? Because I can also name eight. Maybe even nine. One thing I can say for sure is that the conflict in the Middle East has an impact on nations across the globe. So, when this conflict is resolved, the antichrist stands to become the hero of the entire world. This, I believe, is what Satan is counting on. So, in addition to these seven kings, the Bible tells us that the antichrist will become associated with ten more. He will not be a part of this group, though. Why not? Because its members aren't really kings. They just think they are.

**The ten horns you saw are ten kings who have not yet received a kingdom, but who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast. They have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.**

**Revelation 17:12-13**

These ten characters appear to be the antichrist's cronies. We'll see the bidding they do for him a bit later. Right now, let's see what it takes for them to sell their souls to the devil. According to Pablo Escobar, everyone has a price. He obviously did.

**...he will give great honor to those who acknowledge him and will cause them to rule over the many, and will parcel out land for a price.**

**Daniel 11:39**



Ahh, real estate! But wait. What real estate? The last time I checked, much of the unoccupied land below Israel on the map is in the desert. There's land available overlooking the seas, but much of that is in the mountains. And what about all those people they're supposed to rule over? Kings have economies to maintain, so it doesn't seem feasible that a kingdom would be divided up and handed over for others to rule. Maybe the land in question will have belonged to the three kings we learned about earlier who will become "uprooted." This is a tough one. But I do have a theory.

Since the antichrist is a deceiver, he may simply promise these guys something that he never intends to give them. After all, that promise only lasts an "hour," which Scripture refers to as a brief period of time rather than 60 minutes. Even so, there has to be something in the works that these ten can envision; a new land development perhaps that will attract new residents for them to become glorified landlords over. This is another one of those things that the Bible is not clear about. We just know that the antichrist will have recruited a team of individuals who will serve him in exchange for land and people to rule. Whether this team is assembled before the big peace deal goes down is also not clear. But we do know they'll be around afterward.

So this peace event will likely be of the highest-profile we can imagine. Based on past events of this caliber, we might expect musical performances and attendees that include celebrities, diplomats and leaders from nations all over the world. The false prophet may make an appearance as well. As far as musicians go, I suspect fellow Israeli, Matisyahu will be on hand to perform his song, "One Day," an anthem for Middle Easterners who share this dream of peace. The man of the hour, of course, will be the antichrist, who'll have been crowned king before this all goes down according to Revelation. The whole world certainly will be watching as the signing of this seven-year peace treaty marks a historical event that sets the tribulation period in motion. So, why only seven years? This duration will likely serve as an initial trial period, after which the agreement's terms can be renegotiated. It's a common failsafe element designed to ensure the continued safety and satisfaction of all the parties involved. Unfortunately, it's going to fail—big time.

## ISRAEL AT REST

While many people refer to this entire seven-year period as one of tribulation, we do know that the first half will be a time of peace, during which several things are accomplished. We've already discussed Israel's moves toward the reinstatement of sacrificial worship. But we haven't yet touched on where this worship will take place. During the Israelites' journey from bondage to freedom, God provided his chosen with a very detailed set of plans for building a mobile place of worship, called a *tabernacle*. An exhausting list of these instructions is found in Exodus, starting with chapter 25. This tabernacle was to be set up during rest stops and then broken down before they set off again. Managing this enormous tent was no small feat. But, then again, this was no small group.

There were literally tens of thousands of people on the pilgrimage from Egypt to the Promised Land; each traveler belonging to one of twelve tribes that were divided according to family bloodlines. Every tribe had a part to play in the management of the tabernacle, except one. The men of this tribe, called Levi, were ordered not to partake in any of the physical labor. Instead, the Levites were designated to be ministers to the remaining eleven tribes. Today, the men of Levi are easily recognized among Israelis. Wearing long beards, wide-brim hats, and black suits, these men might be mistaken for members of the Amish community.

After the Israelites had settled in their new land, a permanent temple was constructed in place of their makeshift tabernacle. A quick Google search will reveal how both of these buildings may have looked. You can also check out how the third temple will look after it is rebuilt during this first half of the tribulation period. Why a third temple? It's because the original temple was destroyed twice. How does a single building get destroyed twice? It doesn't. I just goofed. Let me rephrase that. The original temple was destroyed only once. Then they built a new one. It, too, was destroyed only once, but not completely. A trace of the second temple still remains. It's called the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem. When it was whole, the temple occupied the area known today as the Temple Mount—you know, because it's where the temple was mounted. Pretty clever!



So, if the Temple Mount is in Jerusalem, and Jerusalem is in Israel, why would they need to wait for this peace agreement to start building? It's because the Temple Mount is under Islamic control. In 2007, the political parties that make up the Palestinian Authority seized a portion of Israel located at the southern-most border that meets the Mediterranean Sea. This land is known as Gaza. And, as you may know, its Palestinian citizens oppose Israel's right to their God-given land. When Gaza began to import weapons that Israel learned were to be used against them, the Israeli Defense Force created a blockade around their seaport, forcing all incoming ships to be subject to rigorous inspections. In 2010, a ship filled with terrorists attempted to break through this blockade. Having learned about this breach attempt ahead of time, Israel was ready for them. As the ship approached with no signs of stopping, Israeli troops quickly boarded the vessel in order to commandeer and steer it to the designated inspection area. And when they did, all hell broke loose.

When it was all said and done, Israel was blamed for the deaths of nine Palestinian sympathizers, who the media chose to call "activists" rather than terrorists. Israel's claims to have been fired upon first were met with opposing stories of a premeditated bloodbath. While Israel never backed away from its motive of self-defense, pressure from the United Nations forced the Jewish state to accept responsibility for its actions publicly. This coerced apology included large sums of money paid to Gaza and the management of the Temple Mount to Islam as a good-faith gesture. In a return of thanks, Jewish men and women were barred from all acts of worship while visiting the Temple Mount plaza. An Islamic temple, the Dome of the Rock, was also built on the Mount. Eventually, it would become the home of a large stash of rocks for its members to throw at Jewish men and women. You can almost smell the irony here. So, am I partial to Israel in all of this? You bet. I take after my Father.

**I will establish My salvation in Zion, my splendor for Israel.**

**Isaiah 46:13**

Now, after this peace treaty becomes finalized, everything in the Middle East should be hunky-dory for a while—no rock-throwing, no shoulder-fired rockets, no drones targeting ships in the Mediterranean Sea. The people of Israel will settle into their newly built temple and begin worshipping the way they want. Little will they know of the dark days that lie ahead.

**For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now, and never to be equaled again.**

**Matthew 24:21**

Before Jesus gave us this spoiler alert, he made it known that he was reiterating what Daniel had already told us. I'll point this out again later when we compare his notes to Daniel's. While many have speculated over whether Jesus alluded to a nuclear attack in the future, there is no evidence of this great distress will be something that humans will initiate. Personally, I envision the ultimate distress as being a world dominated by the people of my daughter's generation who use the word "like" in every sentence. I hope I'm like gone before that happens. Or I'll just like freak out or whatever. The fact that my editing software did not detect an error in those last two sentences is quite distressful indeed.



## CHAPTER SIX

### TRIBULATION PART 2

So far, we've covered the highlights of the first half (1,290 days) of the tribulation period. In the second half, we'll see the next phase of the antichrist. This time, instead of making peace plans, he'll be selling life insurance. Before we continue our journey, I'd like to back up and talk about a significant event that will occur during the first half. Initially, I had written this discussion to be a part of chapter 5. After a review, however, I decided that it should not be presented separately from its impact on events during the second half. Enter the two witnesses.

**And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.**

**Revelation 11:3**

In visions experienced by biblical figures other than John and Daniel, these two human men were seen in God's throne room. Keep in mind that they appeared only in visions. A verse we'll look at later lends support to them not actually being there. But we do know they will be on the earth during this period. Anyway, the Bible does not give us their names. But we're not without clues to their identities. Let's get to know these two mysterious fellows who seemingly appear out of nowhere.

**These have the power to shut up the sky, so that rain will not fall during the days of their prophesying; and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to strike the earth with every plague, as often as they desire.**

**Revelation 11:6**

Here we learn that these men will have the power to do two things—turn water into blood and stop the rain during their ministry, which spans the majority of the first half of the tribulation period. In the Old Testament, we read about two men who did these same things. Elijah stopped the rain for three and a half years (1 Kings 17-18), and Moses is known for having turned water into blood (Exodus 7).

Being that both men were present during Jesus' transfiguration (Mark 9), this would be their second reappearance on the earth. And so, while these men are merely speculated to fill the roles of Revelation's two witnesses, I'll be referring to them as Moses and Elijah for the sake of not having to write two witnesses over and over. I'm actually more confident in pegging Elijah than Moses because of this next verse, but I'm good with both of them.

**Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.**

**Malachi 4:5**

So why are these guys here? Their purpose is to preach the gospel. More specifically, they will be preparing missionaries for the second half of the tribulation. Where do these missionaries come from? They come from Israel. If the idea of Jews preaching the gospel sounds odd, just picture Jesus, who pioneered this movement. Being Jews themselves, Moses and Elijah will be given the hefty task of converting 12,000 people from each of the twelve tribes of Israel. That's a whopping 144,000 Jewish converts!

**And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.**

**Revelation 7:4**

## **TWO TARGETS**

When Moses and Elijah arrive on the scene in Jerusalem, it will be during a time of peace. At first, these Old Testament icons will likely be dismissed as homeless street preachers, given their sackcloth attire. As their teaching gains momentum, I suspect their notoriety will progress from a minor annoyance

to a newsworthy spectacle. If history has taught us anything, it's that rogue teachers of the gospel in Israel will eventually be seen as a threat.

**And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed.**

**Revelation 11:5**

If Moses and Elijah had not gained the entire world's attention before this, we know they will have after displaying this supernatural power that ensures their ministry will not be interrupted. God's seal also ensures this, as each individual bearing it is given immortality. No doubt, there will be many who strategize over ways to take these fire breathing preachers out. As hostility toward them increases, however, so do the intimidating displays of God's power. By the time their mission is complete, they'll be responsible for the deaths of their attackers, a major drought in the Middle East, and the poisoning of clean water sources with blood. Now that you're up to speed, let's continue where we left off.

## **PEACE INTERRUPTED**

When last we left the Israelites, they were enjoying the high life. With the new temple having been completed, their happiness will be overflowing, as will the blood of the animals they'll be sacrificing. Yeah, that was a bit crude. I'm just not good at ignoring openings for jokes. So the border walls that surround the West Bank will also have been removed, thus prompting a certain king to begin his attack strategy.

**'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan, and you will say, 'I will go up against the land of unwalled villages. I will go against those who are at rest, that live securely, all of them living without walls and having no bars or gates...**

**Ezekiel 38:10-11**



Here, once again, we read that the king of the North (Russia) will rally the armies of multiple nations to quietly advance toward Israel. I say "quietly," but this may be a rowdy bunch for all we know. What we do know is that Israel will not suspect a thing. These moves, however, will not go completely unnoticed. Somehow, their position becomes compromised. Shocker? Not really. There's always that one soldier who can't resist posting a selfie on Instagram.

**But rumors from the East and from the North will disturb him, and he will go forth with great wrath to destroy and annihilate many.**

**Daniel 11:44**

Here in Daniel, we see that the antichrist (king of the South) gets wind of what's going down. The peace he set in motion is about to come unraveled. More importantly, the wealth of Israel that he'll have been scheming over could very well be stripped from his grasp. And so, out of desperation, he and his own army rush forward to be the first to invade Israel. And it is during this invasion that the antichrist takes over the newly rebuilt Jewish temple.

**Forces from him will arise, desecrate the sanctuary fortress, and do away with the regular sacrifice. And they will set up the abomination of desolation.**

**Daniel 11:31**

In some Bible translations, this event is described as an abomination "that causes" desolation. Either way, it is understood that, when the antichrist moves in, everyone worshipping inside the temple moves out. *He* is the abomination that causes the temple to become desolate. So, where does everybody go? They run to the mountains. Jesus referenced the verse above when he gave this instruction.

**Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then those who are in Judea must flee to the mountains.**

**Matthew 24:15-16**

Today, the people of Israel participate in evacuation drills that involve taking refuge inside caverns within the nearby mountains of Samaria. The high elevation of these caverns is said to provide an escape from the effects of chemical warfare should it ever occur. Such good Samaritans! So, with the temple takeover complete, the antichrist will then set his sights on Moses and Elijah. Having finished their mission to recruit the 144,000 missionaries, God will reinstate their mortality and allow the antichrist to kill them both. And when he does, the world will declare a new Christmas holiday.

**And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them...**

**...and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth.**

**Revelation 11:7, 10**

To celebrate his victory, the antichrist will create a morbid exhibit for the world to see. Instead of burying the two men, he gives an order for their corpses to rot where they fall.

**For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb...**

**Revelation 11:9**

As the antichrist turns his attention to the armies advancing from the North, the celebrations over the deaths of Moses and Elijah cease when God brings them both back to life.

**But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them,**

**"Come up here!" And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them.**

**Revelation 11:11-12**

In the verse that immediately follows these, we learn that an earthquake will devastate Jerusalem when this occurs.

**And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.**

**Revelation 11:13**

At the beginning of this chapter, we read Revelation 11:3. This verse informs us that these two witnesses will be present on the earth for 1,260 days. That's 30 days short of the 1,290 that serve as the entire first half of the tribulation period. Because their deaths will occur at the midpoint when the antichrist invades Israel, we can expect them to arrive a month after the covenant of peace is signed. Whenever I teach this lesson, someone usually asks if these two guys will actually breathe fire. While this is indeed a good question, I simply find it entertaining that, between immortality, altering the weather, and turning bodies of water into blood, breathing fire seems to be the unbelievable feat. Yes, I believe that fire will be among the supernatural powers these men will have at their disposal. I do understand that Jesus' words are described as being like a weapon coming from his mouth (Hebrews 4:12). But I think it's clear that we're dealing with the real thing concerning these two. Real breathing. Real fire. Real cool!

**"It will come about on that day, when Gog comes against the land of Israel," declares the Lord God, "that My fury will mount up in My anger. In My zeal and in My blazing wrath I declare that on that day there will surely be a great earthquake in the land of Israel."**

**Ezekiel 38:18-19**

## **BATTLE PLAN**



Now, about that earthquake. We just learned that it occurs three and a half days into the second half of the tribulation period when the two witnesses awaken. In this verse from Ezekiel, we see that that king of the North finally shows up on this same day. The tides, however, will have changed considerably. Instead of his original plan to take the land from the Israelis, he must now take it from the antichrist's army. Being that the Israeli military is among the strongest in the world, the king of the North may feel that the odds had just swung greatly in his favor. Because that's exactly how they swing.

**He [the antichrist] will pitch the tents of his royal pavilion between the seas and the beautiful Holy Mountain; yet he will come to his end, and no one will help him.**

**For the king of the North will again raise a greater multitude than the former, and after an interval of some years he will press on with a great army and much equipment.**

**Daniel 11:45, 13**

Here we see the death of the antichrist (king of the South). With him out of the way, the North prevails over the South in this battle over Israel. And, as Scripture confirms, we'll not have heard the last of this bunch. Another war is coming—Armageddon. Israel is going to have a rough day. The two menaces to society rise from the dead, a massive multi-nation battle occurs, and a section of Jerusalem becomes a giant pit after a massive quake kills 7,000 people. As if things weren't bad enough, this pit serves as an open door to hell, which is located deep beneath the earth's surface. This is confirmed through the Bible's teaching of fallen angels who will exit this pit after being released from their bindings in hell. More on this later. So this day's activities will not be pretty. Nor will the antichrist be when he makes his not-so-grand reappearance. According to this next verse, the South will rise again! Too cheesy? Yeah, I hear ya.

**And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority. I saw one of his heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal wound was healed. And the whole earth was amazed and followed after the beast.**

**Revelation 13:2-3**

## **FATAL WOUND**

As Scripture tells us, the dragon in John's vision is Satan. Again, what he's looking at is likely an image of a dragon rather than the devil himself. These images are essentially telling the story of the tribulation. God also uses these images to tell John the story of Satan's banishment from heaven.

**And there was war in heaven, Michael and his angels waging war with the dragon.**

**And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.**

**Revelation 12:7, 9**

As I'm sure you know, Satan has no power to do the things that God can. Satan does, however, like to make people think that he does. We see this through his attempts to mimic several of God's great works. His first attempt appears to be a mock resurrection. After being dealt a fatal blow, the antichrist reappears and shows off the scarring of his wound to convince the world that he is the resurrected messiah. This marks the antichrist's transition from man to beast.

Throughout the Bible, we read about angels who take on the form of human beings. They appeared in their native form too, which usually resulted in reactions of fear. An example of angels appearing as humans can be found in the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. When the townspeople saw the angels who came to rescue Lot and his family, they commanded Lot to send the men out so they could have their way with them sexually. Also, two “men”

who were obviously angels were present in white robes at the time of Jesus' ascension. So, might you and I encounter angels in this manner? It's certainly possible.

**Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.**

**Hebrews 13:2**

Because there's no evidence that a human body is required in order for an angel to take on the human form, we may conclude that Satan will merely clone the appearance of the deceased king of the South, wounds and all. In doing this, Satan's little resurrection scheme will take full advantage of the trust people had in this king who brought peace to the world. If they followed the king before he died, they would certainly follow him now. Those who don't follow him will have a fresh new reason to submit. After all, who can stand against a resurrected king?

**...they worshiped the dragon because he gave his authority to the beast; and they worshiped the beast, saying, "Who is like the beast, and who is able to wage war with him?"**

**Revelation 13:4**

Using death and resurrection as his blueprint, Satan will use the image of the king the same way a puppeteer uses his puppet. In doing this, he will be taking advantage of a process that has already been proven to produce followers. In his mind, what worked for Jesus should certainly work for him. This line of thinking only exposes the same delusions of grandeur that got him kicked out of heaven. Despite his many failed attempts throughout history, Satan still believes he can circumvent God's will by killing every last one of His chosen people. The holocaust? That has Satan's name written all over it.

## **THE FALSE PROPHET**

Now that he's a beast, the antichrist will make the acquaintance of yet another beast. This is the false prophet, whose world-wide influence lands



him a job in the antichrist's public relations department. That job is to proclaim to the world that the antichrist is its new lord. As I mentioned previously, this may be an attempt to regain the trust of the millions he led to miss the rapture, which will have already occurred at this point. Hint, hint!

**Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed.**

**Revelation 13:11-12**

When the people become hesitant to jump on his new bandwagon, the false prophet takes drastic measures to get the world to fall in line.

**He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.**

**Revelation 13:13-14**

The false prophet's act of calling down fire from heaven has raised more than a few eyebrows among students of the Bible. Surely this human being has no supernatural powers. One thing we must keep in mind is that, in the Bible, heaven is often referred to as the sky. In the book of Genesis, heaven is defined as the expanse between the water on earth and water above the earth. The mention of water *above* the earth has led many to entertain the possibility of a layer of water above the atmosphere that once protected the earth from direct exposure to the sun. This protection may explain why the ages of people on the earth began to taper off after the flood. The release of this water to flood the earth may be why we don't see it today, and why people no longer live to be hundreds of years old. Food for thought!

Regarding this fire, its falling to earth on demand suggests that the schemes of man will be behind it. I picture an impressive light show designed to sway people to believe that this false prophet had been given supernatural powers from the antichrist. This could also be God's doing. Soon, we'll look at a similar event that the false prophet may simply take credit for. If this is the case, I imagine he'll be as surprised as anyone else when it occurs.

"Uh . . . yeah, that was me! Now bow!"

Along with the orders he gives to worship the antichrist, this religious leader will call for "an image of the beast" to be constructed. Based on similar references in Scripture, this image may be a statue of sorts. In this next verse, we see yet another seemingly supernatural power associated with it

**And it was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed.**

**Revelation 13:15**

A talking statue. Very creative. Weak, but creative. I saw this done years ago in the Hall of Presidents at Disney World. Whether this will be a similar mirage or something real that God orchestrates is uncertain. But we do know that the speech it gives mirrors the Bible's prophecies concerning the antichrist being given the power to overcome the saints—a topic we'll spend time fleshing out in the next chapter. Once the statue gets everyone's attention, the false prophet gives the mandate for the infamous mark of the beast.

**And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead so that they could not buy or sell unless they had the mark.**

**Revelation 13:16-17**

## THE MARK

Not too long ago, a seminar concerning the tribulation period appeared among my suggested videos on YouTube. The presenter was a pastor who appeared to be somewhat tech-savvy. Being a fellow techie, I became glued to this hour-long session. I recall smiling in agreement with what was being presented until the man began to refer to his theories as facts. He did this by claiming that each individual who submits to receiving the mark of the beast will have a microchip with tracking capabilities embedded beneath their skin. He even outlined a somewhat detailed process that he claimed will make this a reality.

Today, this microchip conspiracy is pretty popular. Regardless of whether people associate it with the Bible, there are many who live in fear over our government's "secret plan" to embed tracking devices in our bodies against our will. Never mind that we're already glued to smart devices with cameras, microphones, fingerprint scanners, and facial recognition that can triangulate our precise location at any given moment. The fact that we can play Pokémon on these devices makes them less of a concern, I guess. Anyway, the two verses we just looked at are the only ones in the entire Bible that tell us about the receipt of this mark. How it will be administered is anybody's guess. The process could be quite primitive and involve a branding iron or a tattoo for all we know. The information we have is limited to the nature of the mark and its purpose. As for the placement of 666 on hands and foreheads, this is another of Satan's attempts to mock Scripture.

**Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.**

**Deuteronomy 11:18**

As we'll learn shortly, this mark will part of a world takeover that the antichrist will lead under the guise of protecting citizens from the mass disorder brought on by the rapture. Some people refer to this initiative as a one-world government, but the Bible does not use this phrase. You'll also



find no mention of a one-world currency. This is merely supposed due to the antichrist's rule over commerce during this time.

At some point, the antichrist will grow tired of the false prophet for reasons not made clear in the Bible. I suspect that his insistence on sharing the spotlight is what will drive the antichrist to order his ten cronies to torch the false prophet's precious city on seven hills. This is just my own intuition. The city does burn, however, as we learned back in chapter 4.

**And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire...**

**Revelation 17:16**

## **REBELLION**

As with any authoritative movement, reactions to this one will include both submission and rebellion. Those who submit will receive bogus life insurance policies while everyone else runs for their lives. This is what the 144,000 missionaries will have been prepped for. Much like their two mentors, they too will be given God's seal of immortality. I tell ya, there's going to be an awful lot of people running around with marks on their foreheads!

**Then I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun...saying, "Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, 144,000, sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel.**

**Revelation 7:2-4**

Here we have an angel declaring that God's wrath should not commence until all of the missionaries are good to go. When the starting pistol goes off, they will travel to take up various positions all over the earth in order to be found by those who don't want to be found. In addition to the missionaries,

God will send an angel to tell everyone waiting in line to receive the mark that this is their last chance to repent.

**And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel to preach to those who live on the earth . . . and he said with a loud voice, "Fear God, and give Him glory, because the hour of His judgment has come...**

**Revelation 14:6-7**

Unfortunately, for those who avoid getting the mark, these Jewish missionaries will be tracked and followed, making easy prey of those they lead to make public professions of faith in Christ.

**Those who have insight among the people will give understanding to the many; yet they will fall by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for many days.**

**Daniel 11:33**

As these martyrs begin to show up before the throne in John's vision, he asked his angel companion who they are.

**And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.**

**Revelation 7:14**

**...and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been...**

**Revelation 6:10-11**

Regarding the number of people who must be killed, it is this number that, when reached, triggers Jesus' return to earth where he gathers the remainder of his ninja warriors who avoided the mark and survived the plagues. If you're considering a quest to find out what this number is, you might as well try to figure out what the four winds say in John's vision while you're at it. Good luck!

**And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and**

**True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

**Revelation 19:11, 13**

The 144,000 missionaries also join Jesus when he emerges from the fiery cloud over Israel and descends to the earth to prepare for the second and final war.

**Then I looked, and behold, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads.**

**Revelation 14:1**

## **ARMAGEDDON**

The name *Armageddon* comes from a location in northern Israel called Meggido. This ancient city was located in the Jezreel Valley where King Saul led the Israelites into a losing battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 29). This is the site where this infamous battle between good (Jesus) and evil (Satan) will take place. This time around, the attackers will consist of people from all over the globe who have turned to the dark side.

**And I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing**



**signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty.**

**And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.**

**Revelation 16:13-14, 16**

Considering how long it might take to assemble such an enormous army, the Jesus cloud may be present for some time. Whether Jesus will be visible the entire time is not known. I do, however, believe that Satan will know exactly what this cloud represents, having been present on the earth to witness God's manifestation of Himself on numerous occasions. As infamous as this Armageddon war is, we're given absolutely no information about the methods of attack this world army will use. But that's not important. Any measures it takes will be completely ineffective and insignificant. After all, who can stand against a resurrected king?

**From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."**

**Revelation 19:15-16**

Hallelujah! It's time for church, people! Our God is an AWESOME God! I just can't read those verses aloud without my voice escalating to a shout. Try it. I bet you can't either. Victory in Jesus will erupt in celebration every time. After Jesus does his bidding with this massive army, he tosses both the antichrist and his partner in deceit into the massive Jerusalem pit. More victory!

**And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped**

**his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse...**

**Revelation 19:20-21**

As Jesus exits, a final earthquake makes mincemeat of our earth's surface. The Bible goes on to tell us that every mountain on earth will crumble, and every island will disappear as a result of this quake.

**... and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty.**

**Revelation 16:17-18**

Now that we have a good idea of how the tribulation period plays out, it's time to talk about the plagues God will use to smite the earth during the second half. Almost. We do have a few things to go over first. The reason I haven't already worked the plagues into these two chapters is that we aren't told when each one will occur. The earthquakes are fairly easy to pinpoint. But the plagues stand to confuse the timeline if we were to try and insert them. If my choice to go over these separately seems frustrating, you can drop by my website and send me your complaint. Or you can just blame John, who tends to group related events together in ways that you and I typically would not.

## **READING JOHN**

In Revelation, we read about seven trumpet blasts, seven golden bowls, and three woes in addition to the seven seals. And all of these are associated with an event. In some cases, a symbol represents several events, each one with its own individual symbol. So there's some overlapping going on that John's style of grouping complicates. I know I can be clearer about this, so I'll give

you an example. Imagine four friends hanging out in a kitchen preparing desserts. Each of them bakes a cake. When the cakes are done, each person cuts a cake. And when they are cut, each cake explodes. We're about to get into some serious stuff, people! Laughs are good. So, if John's vision was of this scene, he would place the four instances of cake baking in one group, and the cake cutting in another group. The four explosions would be in the last group.

The normal way to do this would be to group events according to each individual. The result would be four identical groups, each one describing the cooking, cutting, and exploding chain of events. To be fair, John is just describing what he saw. And this is how he chose to describe them. There's also evidence that some his descriptions may be divided between heavenly and earthly perspectives. Ok, I realize that I'm reaching my maximum nerd capacity with my meticulous explanations, so I'll move on. Sheldon and I can continue this discussion later. Just keep in mind that, when John introduces a topic with a linking word like "then," it doesn't always mean that the topic it's linked to follows the previous one chronologically. You'll see what I mean in a few. Anyway, to avoid confusion, I will be discussing these plagues without associating them with their corresponding trumpets, bowls, etc. First, let's finish up our discussion of the seals since we already got started on those.

## SEALS 5-7

When last we left Jesus, he had just opened the fourth seal, which triggered a vision of the fourth horseman. If you haven't already detected it, these seals represent high-level events, whereas the trumpets and bowls are tied to much more specific ones. Clear as mud? Great. Let's move on to the fifth.

**When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne.**

**Revelation 6:9**



This is the same bunch that John was told had been killed during the tribulation period. They're being pointed out a second time in Revelation because their martyrdom is tied to the breaking of a seal. Before, John was just telling us that he saw them.

**When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place.**

**Revelation 6:12-14**

This is the last earthquake in case you didn't already draw that conclusion. Regarding the vanishing sky, this represents the disappearing divide between the earthly and heavenly realms. Heaven and its host of angels will finally be seen by people on the earth when this occurs. As for the seventh seal, only one event is triggered by it. But you'll think there are two if you aren't paying attention. This is, for the most part, due to John's infamous "then" that appears in multiple translations.

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

**Revelation 8:1-2**

In these verses, “silence in heaven” is the only event tied to the breaking of the seventh seal. The handing out of the trumpets occurs earlier. We know this because the fourth trumpet triggers the same events that are tied to the breaking of the sixth seal. And you’ve got to have a trumpet before you can blow it. See what I mean? I included the second verse in this passage just to point this out. If we're not careful as we read, many events, including Satan's banishment to the earth, will seem to occur more than once. For the record, I was indeed able to successfully coordinate the seals, trumpets, bowls, and

woes along with their corresponding events. It's a messy spreadsheet that no one I've shown it to fully understands.

Ready to start on the plagues? I am. Keep in mind that the culmination of these plagues represents God's wrath that followers of Christ will be spared. While you and I associate plagues with widespread and devastating diseases, the Bible refers to each of the following events as plagues. They may not all be diseases. But all of them will be widespread and devastating.

## **PLAGUES OF THE TRIBULATION PERIOD**

### **Sores (Revelation 16:2)**

People who received the beast's mark will suffer painful malignant sores that may be similar to those described in the book of Job.

### **Hailstones (Revelation 16:21, 14:20)**

Hailstones, weighing approximately 100 pounds each, will fall on people. Water from these melting hailstones mixed with the blood of their victims may explain how blood rises to the height of a horse's bridle.

### **Locusts (Revelation 9:3-11)**

Only resembling locusts, these flying demons from hell will emerge from the pit in Jerusalem to torture people with a sting equivalent to that of a scorpion. This swarm will be present for five months, targeting only those who received the mark of the beast.

### **A Third of Humans Killed (Revelation 9:13-19)**

One-third of all humans on the earth will be killed by four fallen angels who will appear on horseback, along with their armies, when they are released from their imprisonment in hell. These armies will have two hundred million members collectively.

### **Stars Striking the Earth (Revelation 8:8-9)**

A flaming star the size of a mountain will fall into the ocean and turn a third of its water into blood. A third of all sea life will be destroyed as a result,

along with a third of all seagoing vessels. A second star with a similar appearance will poison a third of the earth's rivers. This second star is called Wormwood.

### **Sun, Moon & Stars Darkened (Revelation 8:12)**

One-third of the sun will be darkened, thus shortening daylight hours by the same portion. The illumination of the moon and stars will also be reduced by a third.

### **Sun Scorch (Revelation 16:8-9)**

Fire from the sun will burn humans on the earth. This may or may not be the intended effect of the darkened sun. This scorching heat may be the agent that causes the Euphrates River to dry up, as described in verse 12 of Revelation 16.

### **Blackened Sun, Red Moon, Fallen Stars (Revelation 6:12-13)**

The sun will be darkened completely, resulting in an almost invisible dark red moon. Every star will also fall toward the earth. These phenomena are paired with the disappearing sky that exposes heaven to those who remain on earth.

## **EYES TO SEE**

Once again, you and I, as followers of Christ, need not be anxious over these scary events. God has promised us that His church will not suffer His wrath before being presented as a bride for His son. As for the end times-related events that will occur during the lives of Christians, many of them are already behind us, as we discussed back in chapter 2. Looking ahead, Christians can expect to recognize the antichrist before he becomes a beast and also witness the signing of the multinational peace treaty in the Middle East. God's church will also be present on the earth to see the new Jewish temple, whose construction may be completed in about two years according to unofficial data from undisclosed sources affiliated with the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. This information is off the record, of course. The sacrificial worship inside the temple will also have begun before the rapture,



as will the ministry of the two witnesses, who may or may not be Moses and Elijah if they identify themselves at all by name. Lastly, the attacks on Israel, the death of the antichrist, and the first earthquake all appear to occur prior to our big exit.

Beyond these, there are no events worth speculating over whether they will happen before the rapture. My being hesitant to add any more to this group stems from an obscure verse that I must have overlooked a hundred times while studying. I know I had read it before, but my attention was never drawn to it. Others must have overlooked it too because I'd never heard it spoken aloud in a sermon or Bible lesson before. If you're guessing I'm going to analyze the heck out of it, you're probably right. I still haven't written that part yet. But I have a sneaking feeling that it will be there when you begin reading the next chapter. It involves numbers and Daniel. Yay!

Before we move on, there is one final event within the tribulation period that may be worth mentioning. Then again, it may not be. I'll let you decide. At the very end of the seven years when the Armageddon battle is over and the earthquake has demolished everything, an angel calls out . . . well, I'll just let you read it.

**Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God"**

**Revelation 19:17**

If it isn't obvious, this angel will order all the birds to fly down and gorge themselves on the bodies of dead people. Yeah, it's pretty gross. I told you it may not be worth mentioning. It's just that, for some reason, each time I read this verse, I envision the scene in the movie "Home Alone," where Joe Pesci suspects Daniel Stern of leaving the water running inside the house they had just looted. In my vision, the back and forth is between angels.

"You did it, didn't you?"

"Did what?"

"That thing with the birds. I told you not to do that!"

"Hey, all the great angels leave their mark."

"You're sick, you know that? You're sick!"

This concludes our overview of the two halves of the tribulation period. Next, we'll examine the rapture event and the potential fallout from the perspectives of those who miss the boat because of their rejection or their half-hearted recognition of the gospel message. As we'll learn, partial obedience to the commands of Jesus is given no leeway. While salvation remains available to those who are left behind, the rules of the game will have changed significantly.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### RAPTURE

And now, the moment you've all been waiting for. It's time to dive into the most anticipated event in the history of the world. Do note that it is our level of anticipation that I'm calling historic. What we're anticipating hasn't happened yet. But we all know it's going to. The big question is concerning *when* it will happen. A popular understanding of this event is that we simply can't know when it will occur. I urge you not to rest on that notion, though. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised at how much information you'll find in the Bible. What you *won't* find in the Bible, however, is the word *rapture*. *Tribulation period* isn't in there either, but it doesn't really have a name. Rapture, however, does already have name. But that name has three syllables. And we like to keep things simple, apparently.

Concerning the word *rapture*, the Christian church adopted it as a representative for the action that will be taking place on the day of redemption. Originally, Latin speakers used the word *rapio* to describe the movement of an object as it is being seized or taken away. Today, many sources include a sense of speed to further define the act of a rapture — something taken away quickly. Based on its definition alone, *snatch* might be a more fitting term. But that word just doesn't sound nice. Then again, neither does *rapture*. If you envision a better word or phrase to identify this event, I would suggest not putting any effort toward getting it changed universally. Rapture has been chosen. Call it what you will, though. I certainly haven't been deterred from calling it our “big exit.” I just had to do something to get that Blondie song out of my head.

#### THE CONUNDRUM

Before God moved my heart toward eschatology, I had a single answer that I



repeated many times to questions about when the rapture will occur. It included three words in a very specific order—I don't know. I might have even said I *have no clue*, but that would've been inaccurate because the Bible gives us plenty of those. I did, however, believe that, between the *pre-trib*, *mid-trib*, and *post-trib* scenarios, only one of them was correct. Eventually, I became determined to find out which one it was.

For those of you who are new to this conundrum, a *pre-trib* (pre-tribulation) stance represents one's belief that the rapture will occur at the very beginning of the tribulation period. *Post-trib*, conversely, is the idea that the rapture will occur at the very end. And, of course, *mid-trib* points to it happening in the middle. After doing some investigating, I concluded that, if a post-tribulation rapture were to be a reality, there would be no rescue for those who trusted in Jesus. Instead, everyone would go at the same time after suffering through the horribleness that followers of Christ are promised they'd be spared. A pre-tribulation rapture was easier to embrace. After all, we do get rescued from tribulation, and the entire seven-year period is given that label. I just couldn't find a single verse in the Bible that convinced me we'd be leaving at the beginning. The mid-tribulation rapture idea seemed the most feasible, but I wasn't totally convinced. So I ended up creating a new scenario on my own that did not rely upon the rapture occurring at any of those three points in time. I called it *pre-wrath*.

My unique pre-wrath idea consisted of having no official position aside from the assurance that Christians will be taken out of the world before God's anger shows up. And I stuck by this until I learned that my idea had become popular in certain circles, and not because people heard about it from me. Unfortunately, this new version turned out to be a mid-trib/post-trib hybrid chocked full of conflicting ideas. They even used the "pre-wrath" label that I was kind of proud of having come up with. And so, I was back at square one and yet still determined to uncover the truth.

Eventually, I came to terms with defeat. My quest for solid evidence that pointed to when the rapture will occur just wasn't panning out. As I was about to give in to the notion that we just can't know, God showed me that

we can. Before we proceed, let me stress the importance of approaching the rapture topic with the understanding that it and Christ's return are two separate events. The Bible confirms this for us over and over. It's when we view the two events as occurring simultaneously that verses like this next one confuse us.

**But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.**

**Matthew 24:36**

Despite widespread understanding that this verse is about the rapture, the Bible assures us that it isn't. If you read the passages leading up to this text, you'll see that Jesus was answering a question about when he would be coming back. When he does, the earth is the last place you and I will want to be. Jesus never described the day of his return as a joyous occasion. Rather, it served him as a warning to us against becoming spiritually complacent.

**Remember, then, what you received and heard. Keep it, and repent. If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.**

**Revelation 3:3**

Verses found in the Old Testament mirror this teaching. In the book of Malachi, Jesus' return is compared to a burning furnace when the arrogant and evildoers will be set ablaze (Mal. 4:1). This day is called both great and terrible (Mal. 4:5). Returning to Jesus' *thief* reference, it accompanied not knowing the hour of his return each time he used it. Here's a more familiar verse from the book of Matthew that expounds upon Jesus' statement.

**But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. For this reason you also must be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will.**

**Matthew 24:43-44**

Here Jesus teaches us that being present on this day can be averted by being ready and alert. Otherwise, we will experience the horrible feeling of having been robbed while we were sleeping. Jesus takes this teaching a step further by describing what being caught off guard on that day will be like.

**For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.**

**Matthew 24:38-39**

As you can see, Jesus' coming unexpectedly like a thief is what we are to avoid at all costs. And yet many people associate this teaching with the rapture, which is the day Jesus' followers are all looking forward to. Why is this happening? It's because of a similar event that Jesus says will also occur on the day of his return. Instead of describing the rapture, these next two verses are part of his warning concerning the flood that we just looked at.

**At that time there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left.**

**Matthew 24:40-41**

Earlier, we learned about God's decision to delay Jesus' return until a certain number of saints are killed during the second half of the tribulation period, which will be given over to Satan to rule. Upon Jesus' arrival, there will be people on the earth who will have become saved during this time and who are still alive. These are the ones who are taken according to the verses in Matthew we just read. They're the very last ones. Whether these people will actually be grinding at the mill seems questionable. I don't know, though. If you're fleeing the mark of the beast and hiding out in the wilderness, you may very well be tuned into Primitive Technology on YouTube for survival skills. I do love that channel.



Now that Jesus has confirmed that the day of his return is the one that no one can anticipate, we can turn our attention back to a completely separate event that we can. Of course, I'm talking about the rapture. Here's our friend Daniel, once again, with the verse that Jesus was quoting in the book of Matthew.

**And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.**

**Daniel 12:1**

If you've been following along with your Bible, you already know that the "abomination of desolation" is the trigger for this distress that both Jesus and Daniel are talking about. Back in chapter 5, we learned this abomination (the antichrist) causes the desolation exactly three and a half years into the tribulation period. Jesus and Daniel also both confirm that the distress will not have not occurred before this. There is one thing, however, that Daniel mentioned in the verse above that Jesus didn't. In case you don't see it, Daniel is giving us a clear reference to the rapture—the rescue of everyone whose names are written in the book of life. With the words "at that time," Daniel is informing us that the rapture will occur in close proximity to the midpoint of the seven years when the abomination shows up and the distress begins. This assures us that the rapture will not occur at the beginning nor at the end of the tribulation period, but in the middle. Let's break this down, shall we?

**What is it that people will be rescued from?**

Distress.

**Who gets rescued?**

Those whose names are in the book of life.

**When are they rescued from it?**

When the abomination shows up.

**When does the abomination show up?**

In the middle of the tribulation period (day 1,290 to be exact).

But wait, there's more! Do you recall that obscure verse I was building up just before you started reading this chapter? I didn't actually tell you which one it was. But we're going to look at it now. Ready? Don't everybody get excited at once.

From Genesis to Revelation, God has provided us with numbers to help us understand time. By the numbers, we know how old Noah was when he built the ark, how long it took him to build it, how long the ark remained afloat, and how long Noah's family had to stay inside it until the ground became solid enough to walk on. The framework of the tribulation period is also built around numbers. We know when to start counting the first 1,290 days and when to start counting the next 1,290 due to the events the Bible ties to these numbers. All the major events have one. So, shouldn't the rapture also be mapped out with a number? I believe it should. I also believe it *is*.

In these next two verses, we see the angel's reply to Daniel's inquiry about the completion of all the events that he was shown in his vision. We looked at the first of these two verses earlier to obtain the number of days that make up the second half of the tribulation period. This time, I included the verse that follows, which appears to pinpoint the rapture to the very day.

**From the time that the regular sacrifice is abolished and the abomination of desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!**

**Daniel 12:11-12**

When I first took notice of this number, I made multiple attempts to insert it into the seven years. Because there is no clear event attached to this number of days, anywhere I inserted it offered no insight whatsoever. I knew that number had to point toward something. But I was stumped. So, I decided to pray about it and ask God for His wisdom. And that's when the word "blessed" finally jumped out at me. I had seen this verse before.

**But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved.**

**Matthew 24:13**

Patience and endurance are two attributes that Jesus often paired together. According to him, having both of these is vital to those awaiting their blessing on the day of redemption. This day, of course, refers to the rapture. It's when we, who have placed our trust in Jesus, are redeemed by the blood he spilled on our behalf. Blessed are those who stand firm until the day of our rescue. This message is loud and clear, as are the many verses whose pattern matches this one. Here are some of these verses.

**How blessed are those who dwell in Your house!**

**Psalms 84:4**

**How blessed are those who keep justice, who practice righteousness at all times!**

**Psalms 106:3**

**How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the LORD. How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart.**

**Psalms 119:1-2**

**How blessed are all those who long for Him.**

**Isaiah 30:18**

**How blessed is he who keeps waiting and attains to the 1,335 days!**

**Daniel 12:12**

These are just a few of the many verses that speak of blessings to the saints in this same manner. If I were to include all of them, this chapter might be two pages longer. So, how do these 1,335 days fit within the timeline? I believe day one coincides with the first day of the tribulation period. This places the rapture 45 days after the events that occur at the midpoint. While it's not smack in the middle, calling it a mid-tribulation rapture seems appropriate for those who insist on labeling it. Because this blessing is tied to those who will "keep waiting" and "attain" (successfully reach) this day, I feel it is without question that those who are called to be patient and endure (the



church) will be present on the earth to receive this blessing. Once again, this blessing appears to be our *redemption*, which is the three-syllable word that *rapture* has replaced. Yeah, I'm baffled too. Why a word so beautiful needed to become something that belongs in the title of a horror movie, I'll never understand.

While knowing when the rapture will occur within the tribulation timeline certainly adds to our education, we must know that this information is not at all vital to our salvation. And it's definitely not something we should argue over. I can certainly be wrong about this as it's not imperative that I be right. God has all of this under control, so we need not worry ourselves over whose understanding is correct. In God's sight, *none* of us are correct. We're all flawed human beings whose views are nowhere close to matching His. I take great comfort in knowing that none of this is up to me. We'd all be in distress if it was.

Now that we've reached a clear distinction between the two major events of the tribulation—one we are to prepare for (the rapture) and one we are to avoid (Christ's return), we might choose to rethink what it is we're waiting on. There's nothing remotely wrong with being excited about the day Jesus comes back. We as Christians are simply not expected to be on the earth when he does. The rapture is all about the transformation of our human bodies (more on this soon) as we move from earth to where Jesus is. We'll certainly see him on this day. But our line of sight will be more horizontal than vertical. Based on the numbers, we'll have been with our Savior for more than three years when the day comes for him to return. According to this next verse, we may very well be alongside the 144,000 missionaries when Jesus emerges from the fiery cloud. Hope you like horses!

**And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.**

**Revelation 19:14**

## **FIRE BY NIGHT**

Concerning the fiery cloud that I just mentioned, the manifestation of God

in a cloud is by no means limited to Christ's return. In the book of Exodus, we read how the Israelites followed God's cloud as He led them away from Egypt. This same cloud became saturated with fire during their travels at night.

**By day the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night.**

**Exodus 13:21**

God's cloud also appeared over Jesus as he approached John the Baptist on foot, and as he died on the cross. The absence of fire likely points to these two instances occurring during daylight hours, whereas the fiery cloud that escorts Jesus back to earth will appear after the sun is darkened.

**For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not flash forth their light; the sun will be dark when it rises and the moon will not shed its light.**

**Isaiah 13:10**

This darkness won't last for long, though. And it won't be because the sun's light reappears. It will be because the *son's* light reappears.

**At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.**

**Luke 21:27**

Another phenomenon that we can expect to see is the dead in Christ being raised to life. While Jesus and his disciples performed these awakenings on a one-off basis, a whole slew of dead saints were raised all at once when Jesus died. And when he left his tomb, they left theirs too.

**At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life.**

**They came out of the tombs after Jesus' resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.**

**Matthew 27:51**

## **DEAD RISING**

We're never told about the lives of these who arose when Jesus did. Based on his earlier miracles, however, we can safely conclude that these individuals resumed their lives on earth; each with a testimony of Jesus to share with the world. This same mass resurrection of saints will occur once again on the day of the rapture. The dead who were not saved will resurrect as well. But their rising will happen later, as will our discussion about it.

**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**

**Daniel 12:1-2**

Revelation refers to this awakening to everlasting life as the "first resurrection" (Revelation 20:6). The words "second death" appear in the same verse. These names represent the eternal reward and eternal punishment that each group receives. The first resurrection obviously speaks of heaven, while the second death is eternal separation from God. Between "these" and "the others" in the verses from Daniel we just read, I think it's clear which group receives what. Interestingly enough, there is no mention of a second resurrection or a first death. Somebody up there must be toying with us.

Now that I think of it, a young lady in my class named Jenny, whose mind was working overtime, made an interesting observation about the second death. She pointed out that Death's buddy, Hades, the horseman without a horse, represents hell and that he was the second in line between the two. And so, he was the second death. I honestly had no argument for Jenny. And that was all she had to say about that.

Another verse concerning this awakening that gets everyone talking is



1 Thessalonians 4:16. In it, we are told that the dead in Christ will *rise first*. At this, many believe that Christians who had died will be given the privilege of leaving the earth before the living Christians do. The verse that follows, however, assures us that they will rise to meet Jesus at the same time those who are alive will. What the dead in Christ will do first is rise *from the dead*.

**After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.**

**1 Thessalonians 4:17**

If somehow you get a mental image of an episode from "The Walking Dead," you can dismiss it. What people who are alive will see on that day are newly transformed glorified bodies rather than walking corpses. Followers of Christ who witness this will have their very own new bodies as this transformation will likely occur simultaneously for both the living and the dead. A related topic that many people struggle with is the state of our souls between the time of death and this future resurrection. Let's talk about that.

## **SOUL CUSTODY**

To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We've all heard people say this. Right? I know I have. This has been taught many times in Christian churches of all denominations. This teaching derived from the Apostle Paul in a letter he wrote to the Corinthians. Here's the verse that has it.

**We are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.**

**2 Corinthians 5:8**

Regarding our souls' absence and presence, Paul did not teach this in the form of an equation. In other words, one doesn't necessarily *equal* the other. Paul was simply remarking on the desire to be with God instead of here. And yet everyone seems to present this differently than he did. From what I've gathered, it may be that we don't want to envision ourselves anywhere but

heaven at moment our bodies expire. For the record, there is indeed a verse in the Bible that addresses this concern we have over our souls. And, wouldn't you know it, it's in the book of Daniel.

**But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age.**

**Daniel 12:13**

I know this likely isn't the answer you're looking for should this topic concern you. I mean, it doesn't really tell us where the soul is or what it's doing while we're dead. First off, we must understand that a soul is not a physical object. It doesn't have to be in one place or another the way our physical bodies do. It must, however, be inside either a glorified body or a human body in order to experience heaven and earth. Regarding our souls between death and the rapture, there's no hard teaching in the Bible about whether the state of rest we're told about in Daniel is one of consciousness or unconsciousness. You'll also find no verses of Scripture that describe a soul being *in between* bodies. Sometimes we just have to settle for uncertainty, knowing that whatever happens does so in our best interests.

**And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.**

**Romans 8:28**

## **RAPTURE REACTION**

For the remainder of this chapter, I'll like to address the human condition when the church is no longer a thing on this planet. I'm sure my mind goes just as wild as yours when envisioning the lives of those who are left behind. In our world, there is a driving force bent on explaining away the existence of God. This same force will surely exist after the rapture to dismiss the disappearance of loved ones, neighbors, and coworkers as having anything to do with their religious beliefs. What will be supposed will likely be dependent upon what was seen when the rapture occurred. Will people have vanished into thin air, or will they be seen rising from earth?

Another interesting question might address which group of people will be quicker to recognize the common thread of Christianity among those who disappeared. Will it be those who attended church or those who didn't? As startling as the rapture may be to those who remain on earth, it may not leave people completely dumbfounded. After all, there will be multitudes of people left on this earth who know Scripture. Of those who will have at least some knowledge of the rapture, some will have heard about it in church or on TV. Others will have been told about the rapture by loved ones who were among those that took flight. People who had always referred to themselves as Christians will know what had just occurred. And they'll be completely distraught, having been certain in their minds that they were saved.

**Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'**

**Matthew 7:21-23**

Here we are given examples of actions that people in Jesus' day associated with salvation. Affirming our earlier discussion, none of these will have saved anyone. Today, we might defend to our baptism, church membership, or perfect attendance at mass as being deserving of salvation. None of these actions, however, result in a relationship with Jesus.

**Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?**

**Luke 6:46**

Preachers who find themselves left behind may have a particularly rough time as members of their congregations hold them responsible for leading them in the wrong direction. But it will eventually be realized that blame cannot be placed on other humans. There will also be many who refuse to own up to their own negligence, but not because they don't believe. By the



time these seven years are complete, people will have seen angels, heaven, and Jesus himself. Instead of disbelief, pride will usher them to their doom.

**They were seared by the intense heat and they cursed the name of God, who had control over these plagues, but they refused to repent and glorify Him.**

**Revelation 16:9**

## **THE FALLOUT**

If you're an avid reader, you may have invested in the “Left Behind” series of books by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins. These books, along with popular movies about the rapture, portray the devastating fallout expected at the very moment the church makes its big exit. Unmanned vehicles crash while passenger jets plummet to the ground. This visual includes widespread death, gridlocked roadways, and fields of flames. My heart wrenches at the thought of all this. And yet I can't say the scene will appear differently. Areas saturated with members of the Christian faith could make the depictions in the movies look serene in comparison. Even more heartbreaking is the thought of communities who'll be oblivious to the rapture. With no concentration of faith in Christ among its members, it may be hours before these people learn what has happened.

As history has taught us, people tend to come unglued amidst confusion and frustration. The presence of the Holy Spirit inside the members of God's church serves as this glue for the entire world. When it disappears, order will disappear along with it. With this in mind, it may not be an exaggeration to expect widespread rioting, looting, quasi-operational police forces, and broken governments without sufficient means to respond militarily. Toss in a diminishing food supply, and you have an unbridled level of tribulation that had not occurred until that time. And things will only get worse, which brings us to the famine aspect of the tribulation period.

## **FOOD FIGHT**

As I try to imagine some of the contributing factors to this famine, I see vast

and numerous areas of farmland left unattended. Could this be because there are a lot of Christian farmers out there who'll be taken during the rapture? Certainly. But I also suspect there will be many unsaved farmers who'll either close up shop or restrict the distribution of their crops to family members and loved ones. As grocery stores are ransacked by looters, there may be no motivation to restock their shelves. The industrial sectors of the food industry may be of this same mindset. As for the farms, they'll likely become targets for the desperate who are bent on surviving. Because many citizens are already prepared to take up arms in situations like these, it would be a huge omission on my part not to mention the likelihood of widespread first-degree murder. I also recall having a Bible verse flagged that referenced the scarcity of alcohol during this time, but I haven't found it. And you thought war over corn was bad!

In a society chocked full of drinkers without beer, smokers with no tobacco, and caffeine junkies without a Starbucks, people will line up by the droves for the 666 membership ID to once again obtain these things without risking their life. When the antichrist announces death to all who would threaten the order he's trying to restore, those who'll be using the Bible as their survival guide will go into hiding to elude enforcers who'll likely be designated through this same mark of the beast process. This is how I imagine the antichrist will achieve his plan on a worldwide scale. As for how people who received the mark will be kept track of, that ought to be interesting. It'll be impossible to know who's alive, dead, hiding, or raptured.

**Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.**

**John 21:18**

## **LIFE AND DEATH**

This verse above serves as the reality check that Jesus gave to Peter when he appeared to his disciples after his resurrection. He wanted Peter to know

what he'd be getting into should he choose to devote his life to spreading the gospel. This same sentiment rings true for all who become his disciples. Those who flee the beast's mark during this time may not know of the harsh reality that awaits them. For many, the choice to rebel will include their capture and murder. In the verse we'll look at next, we're told of a gruesome act whose prominence died off during the 1800's. While the practice never ceased completely, its resurgence in our world today is a grim reminder that Scripture's reference to it during the tribulation may not a simple generalization.

**And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their foreheads or on their hands.**

**Revelation 20:4**

It's quite possible that not everyone who flees the mark of the beast will have done so with their minds set on Jesus. Some may simply detect the danger in following the antichrist and decide they have a greater chance of survival as a refugee. Without Christ, however, and even with him in many cases, all roads lead to death over the next three and a half years. As we learned previously, there will indeed be those who will come to trust in Jesus after an encounter with one or more of the 144,000 missionaries, evade the 666 police, and survive the plagues. But I suspect these will be few and far between.

**For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

**Matthew 7:14**

I could seriously go on for days making suppositions about the state of the world in light of the tribulation period. We could talk for hours about underground bunkers, deadly militias, and even fire sales at Target. I simply find that the most exciting aspect of the tribulation period is that it is not



the end. The same is true of this chapter. Regarding my writing, I cannot stress enough how wonderful it is to be used by God to share this teaching with you. Each time I sit down behind the clacky mechanical keyboard that drives my wife nuts, an amazing partnership with the Holy Spirit begins. Some days, I look back over all that I have written. Instead of regarding it as good, I often wonder how on earth I was able to do it. Today, I stand in awe over my heart's transformation that God is solely responsible for. He is the reason I do what I do. I am merely a tool, however flawed and imperfect, that He found useful for reasons I can't begin to explain. God wants to use you in the same manner. If not for writing, then for creating music, teaching, caring for the elderly, or any other direction your heart leads you to express love and gratitude for all He has done.

If you would like to read my testimony, I invite you to grab a copy of my first book, "Looking Up: Living in Anticipation of Christ." In it, you will be prompted to examine your life as a professing Christian in light of the expectations Jesus set for all of us. Its message was definitely a wake-up call for me, and may be for you as well. I do hope you'll check it out. Now that we've fleshed out the Bible's teaching about the rapture, it's time to begin a new study. This one should be a bit more uplifting. Feel free to stretch or grab a cup of coffee. I'll give you a few minutes before we begin.

Oh, I almost forgot! In a moment, you'll see a timeline chart I created for those who enjoy visual representations of apocalyptic timetables. I know I do. Hopefully, this one will be easier to read than my plagues spreadsheet. In this chart, the events that appear to the left of the timeline are those that Scripture ties to specific numbers of days within the tribulation period. The ones on the right occur in between those events or alongside them according to the Bible's teaching. I also provided some verse references for you. Hopefully, you'll find it useful. In the next chapter, we'll explore life on a new earth after these seven years have transpired. If you're guessing there'll be no more tribulation, well . . . guess again.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### RENEWAL

As we begin this new area of study, we turn to John once again as he continues to describe his vision of our future. Previously, we read about the devastating effects of the last earthquake, which included the crumbling of every mountain on earth. In this next verse, John is introduced to the bride of Christ from the vantage point of a new mountain.

**And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.**

**Revelation 21:10**

As John looked on, an angel took on the task of measuring the dimensions of heaven, which appeared to John as a city contained within an enormous cube. And so the angel only had to measure one side. As you likely know by now, I do enjoy math problems. But I confess that I had to consult an expert (Alexa) to get an idea of just how big heaven is. So, how big is it? The Bible tells us that heaven is 1,500 miles in all directions. That's pretty darn big!

For those of you whose versions of the Bible include measurements in furlongs, I'm told that the conversion to 1,500 miles is pretty accurate. So, when this city fixes itself on the new earth, it will take up as much space as half of the United States—all fifty of them. As John watches, the city begins to descend from within the walls of heaven to the surface of a new earth. This city is called the new Jerusalem. This is appropriate since the other one will be kinda ruined. While the city's height is equal to its width of 1,500 miles, John does describe a sizable foundation made up of twelve layers of varied precious stones. Whether any portion of this foundation will be underground remains a mystery. If not, residents of this new Jerusalem can

expect to inhabit parts of the city at altitudes nearly 25 times the height of our current earth's atmosphere. As for what we'll see when we look down, the sight will be similar to what we'll see at ground level. We will see God's glory.

**And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.**

**Revelation 21:23**

While Jesus spoke of heaven and earth “passing away,” some verses suggest our existing earth will instead get a new coat of paint. So, which one applies? That's a tough one. I do know one of the two options is correct. The fact that we can debate this at all may just be another example of how our modern vocabulary can muck things up. I'll point out a verse or two as we go and let you decide.

## **ALL THINGS NEW**

Speaking of things being made new, you may recall our brief discussion about our bodies' transformation at the time of the rapture. This is the glorification process that Jesus' body also experienced. According to the Bible, only those whose bodies become glorified will be granted entry into the new Jerusalem. Conversely, those on the new earth whose bodies were *not* glorified will be denied entry.

**...and nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying, shall ever come into it, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.**

**Revelation 21:27**

One of the most perplexing realities our Scripture presents is the existence of sin on the new earth. How is this possible? Allow me to explain. During the rapture, the earth will be wiped clean of everyone whose names are written in the book of life. This wiping clean will have an adverse effect on the earth, of course. It just gets dirtier. And yet there will be multitudes of people left



behind whose salvation is not recorded in the book of life. And so, instead of obtaining glorified bodies which are reserved for raptured saints, these will be brought to the new earth in what appear be the same human bodies they had on the old earth. I do realize that I can only talk about saints so many times before clarifying what one is. I know we're quite a ways into our study, but this is actually a good time to talk about it.

## **SAINTHOOD**

If you've ever heard an actor use the word *saint* in the movies, he or she was probably accusing another actor of not being one. In the dictionary, we find that a saint is someone whose life resembles God. According to the Catholic faith, saints are human beings who are regarded as being holy due to their unwavering devotion to the Catholic Church and to God's will. Deceased saints, who are believed to be in heaven, serve as intercessors for Catholics, who call upon the saints in prayer in order to have their requests presented before God. The Bible, however, paints a very different picture.

According to Scripture, a saint is a person, dead or alive, who has received salvation. Contrary to the Catholic doctrine, saints are those who were selected by God rather than by humans. And His selection process was completed before the earth was created. I am a saint, as are each of you who have placed your trust in Jesus Christ. And yet none of us are holy. But we will be someday as the glorified bodies we receive will make us holy.

Will there ever be a saint who does not receive a glorified body? Absolutely. The multitudes of people who will become saved during the years following the rapture are also called saints in the Bible. Some saints will be made holy; others won't. It all depends on whether you become a saint before or after the rapture. The sole criterion for sainthood is faith. So, are there saints in heaven right now? As much we like to think our saved loved ones are already in heaven, this next verse strongly suggests that they are not. Not yet, anyway.

**No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.**

**John 3:13**

As we learned earlier, every saint who has died remains in a state of rest until they are awakened at the time of the rapture. The rapture is what brings humanity into heaven. It's also when we receive our glorified bodies, which are required for our entry into heaven as we just learned. And so, unless you're reading this book after the rapture has occurred, you can be certain that there are no humans in heaven. Now that we have this point nailed down, let's move on to explore even more evidence of this division between those who are saved before and after the rapture.

**... and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"**

**Revelation 6:10**

Here, once again, is the scene after the angel identified this group as having come out of the great tribulation. The demeanor being displayed among this group gives us some info to examine. First, there is an attitude of vengeance among them that those who are made holy should not have. The very next verse includes God's response that we also looked at earlier. He tells them they must wait a while longer until a certain number of saints are killed just as they were. This confirms for us that every individual in this group will have been killed during the tribulation period, and that more martyrs are expected. Their awareness of their deaths on earth is another red flag that points to this group as being separate from those who are made holy. In the book of Isaiah, we are told that our memories of earth will be completely erased. Our identities, however, will not be.

**For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be remembered or come to mind.**

**Isaiah 65:17**

We may additionally recognize those who were members of our families on earth. This is definitely exciting. I can finally spend time with my uncle Willard without being teased for wearing women's clothing. I was five, ok??!!

**For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the Lord, so shall your offspring and your name remain.**

**Isaiah 66:22**

While we will surely know each other in heaven according to Scripture, I suspect that we will not know who is *not* there. Thus, the burdens we carried over our children or loved ones who rejected the gospel will be carried no longer as sadness and mourning will no longer have a place.

**... be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing and her people for gladness.**

**Isaiah 65:18**

## **WHO'S WHO**

Regarding the people we will know in heaven, I feel certain that our recognition of others will not be limited to those we knew on the earth. In fact, we'll get to interact with all the people we learned about in the Bible. We'll pet lions with Daniel, share an apple with Eve, and play hide and seek with Jonah! We may want to use caution when interacting with biblical characters in heaven, though. For example, it might be wise to drop the word "doubting" when calling Thomas by name. He probably has no clue that the entire Christian population calls him that.

"Excuse me, what did you just call me?"

"You're doubting Thomas."

"I'm what???"

"You know, because you doubted Jesus was risen."

"Yeah, but that was like . . . one time."

"It was a pretty big one, dude."

"Who else calls me that?"



"Uhhh . . . pretty much everybody."

"WHAT???!!!"

"Yeah, your buddy John totally ratted you out."

"John, huh? Where is that little twerp??!!"

Seriously though. Imagine being able to walk up and embrace someone whose face you've never seen. If that seems awkward, just picture a victory celebration after a college football game where singing, dancing, high fives, and hugs break out between total strangers. Victory is the common bond that causes these types of celebrations to erupt. It's also what ties us together as followers of Christ. Only we don't have to wait for the playoffs to see who wins. Our victory has already been won! The fact that our celebrations suffer greatly in intensity compared to football fans' is a bit concerning though.

Getting back to the who's who on the new earth, do you remember when we talked about the first resurrection and determined that it refers to our heavenly reward? Matthew has a few more details for us to chew on concerning our relationships with one another.

**For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.**

**Matthew 22:30**

On the new earth, we as members of God's church will serve as the bride of Christ. Therefore, it only makes sense that there will be no extra-marital affairs going on between us. Keep in mind that this is specific to raptured saints who possess glorified bodies. Those who become saints *after* the rapture are not held to this standard as we'll learn in a bit. Will there be any interaction between the two groups? This next verse from Revelation suggests that there will be. Remember the Levites who God set aside to be His ministers to the rest of the Israelites? That torch will be passed. Hats and beards are optional.

**Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection;**

**over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.**

**Revelation 20:6**

This verse and Matthew 22:30 that we also just read provide us with clear evidence of this separation between raptured saints and tribulation saints on the new earth. The rest of the story makes this division even clearer. I just felt that, had we not nailed this down this early on, things would start to get weird. Anyway, it's going to be an interesting 1,000 years. Oh right! We didn't actually talk about this 1,000-year period, did we? We'll do that now. Thanks for reminding me.

## **MILLENNIUM**

Often referred to as the *millennial reign*, this period reflects the dominance of the saints who appear to the world as a bunch of needy thirty-somethings who nitpick about their Instagram accounts. Yes, I'll be here all week. Did you ever think we could have this much fun studying the end times? Me neither. But I am indeed enjoying our time together. Ok, let's get back on topic.

The millennial reign represents our first 1,000 years on the new earth. There are two event markers that the Bible uses to define this period of time, and they're both at the end. One is the purging of sin from the new earth, and the other is judgment. Unfortunately, I'm not ready to begin discussing either of these. There's still a lot of cool stuff to talk about first. Since we've already touched on the appearance of this new earth, we'll continue in that direction.

**Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea.**

**Revelation 21:1**

Here's one of the verses that reference heaven and earth “passing away.” Earlier, I expressed having no position on whether the earth will be

completely destroyed. There is another verse, however, that might get our wheels spinning again on this topic when we get to it. I know I said we'd stick to the pleasantries for a while. But I regret to inform you that, on the new earth, there will no longer be any seafood. The upside to this is that we may not even know what seafood is. Or steak! Ok, I've really gotta move on from this. It's starting to get depressing.

**Then he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne of God and of the Lamb.**

**Revelation 22:1**

**I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.**

**Revelation 21:6**

Here we see that there will indeed be a single flowing river whose origin is God Himself. The Bible tells us that those who come out of the great tribulation will be led to drink from its water and will thirst no more (Revelation 15:16-17). Because the members of this group will not have their names in the book of life and will not be granted access to the new Jerusalem, we may conclude that this river stretches beyond the city limits and winds throughout the entire surface of the new earth.

**On either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.**

**Revelation 22:2**

If you recall having read this verse before, you may have pictured a single gigantic tree standing in the midst of the great city like I once did. It was John's use of the words "the tree" that sparked that image for me. Given what we know of this river, John likely described the *type* of tree that will be found growing along the river's edge on both sides. We may also conclude that this fruit will be eaten to satisfy hunger among those who reside outside of the new Jerusalem. Those inside the great city may very well enjoy this fruit too.



After all, Jesus ate with his disciples when he appeared to them after his resurrection. There's also a marriage supper planned to celebrate the union of Jesus and the raptured saints. So there will indeed be food to enjoy. Whether a glorified body will hunger the way our bodies do today, however, is not made clear in the Bible. If it does, there will certainly be no pain or death associated with our hunger.

**... and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.**

**Revelation 21:4**

**No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days...**

**Isaiah 65:20**

## **BODILY FUNCTION**

In the 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul fleshes out the differences between our earthly bodies and the new ones that the saints will receive on the day of redemption. He describes this new body as immortal, imperishable, and one that radiates the nature of heaven rather than earth. Natural and earthy will give way to spiritual and heavenly, tree huggers will hug Jesus, and so on. Back in the days when cars had cassette players, I listened to a series of lectures from Ken Ham, who you may know as the founder of the Creation Museum. In his "Answers in Genesis" teaching series, Ken raised a fun and yet intriguing question about the nature of the first human bodies—did Adam and Eve have belly buttons? Being that belly buttons are where umbilical cords were once attached, and because Adam and Eve were not born to a human mother, there's no good explanation for them having one. I, for one, find no flaw in his conclusion that they didn't. I also can't picture God actually saying "belly button." I bring this to your attention because I have some fun questions of my own concerning our glorified bodies.

Question number one. Will there be bathrooms in heaven? Hear me out on

this one. It's pretty clear that we'll be eating and drinking in heaven. The reason I questioned our need for food earlier is that our glorified bodies will be imperishable. In other words, we shouldn't need food to possess energy or survive the way our perishable bodies do today. And so, if God's food is perfect, why would our bodies need to expel any portion of it?

Ok, I probably shouldn't refer to my next question as *number two*, but I do have another. Will there be coffee in heaven? Unlike my first question, I don't have any supporting information that suggests whether there will or won't be. If you figure it out, let me know. My daughter was wondering about animals too. Fortunately for her, the Bible doesn't leave us in suspense.

**And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord**

**Isaiah 11:6-9**

## **TREASURES**

As we learned earlier, references to animals in Scripture can be purely symbolic. The ones in these verses from Isaiah, however, appear to be actual animals rather than kings or kingdoms. In this selection, we learn about the nature of animals on the new earth. Not only do we see harmony between familiar species who regard each other as predators on the earth today, but also their docile behavior toward people. If you've ever wanted to curl up next to a lion or cuddle with bear cubs, you'll very likely get your chance. These appear to be among the many treasures that lie in waiting for God's children.

**Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth ... But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven....**

**Matthew 6:19-20**

Regarding these treasures, Jesus urged us to begin earning these now. Mind you, this act of earning is not tied to our salvation. That's the one reward that none of us can earn. These treasures are awarded based on the fruits of our labor—the things we do to express gratitude over all that God has done. So, what other kinds of treasures does the Bible tell us about? One that immediately comes to mind is a place of our own. In the book of John, Jesus spoke of the many mansions in his Father's house that he was going to prepare for us (John 14:2). While I can't imagine a greater treasure than being with Jesus, I am indeed looking forward to the “rest” that he also promises us.

**Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest.**

**Matthew 11:28**

Ahhhh! Eternal rest! No more schedules, deadlines, or gym memberships to feel guilty over not using. No more math homework for our children to trouble us with either! If you're like me and envision no longer having to rush to get to church on time, this relief won't be because we'll all have better time management skills. It's because there won't be a physical church in the city at all.

**And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.**

**Revelation 21:22**

When it comes to these heavenly rewards, one might assume that such treasures will be spread evenly among God's people. This is due to our earthly desire for fairness. God also has a standard concerning fairness. His, however, is radically different from ours. To Him, we are all equally undeserving. Even so, because the fruits of our labor vary from one



individual to the next, we all can expect to be rewarded accordingly and with treasures beyond our wildest dreams.

**Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done.**

**Revelation 22:12**

**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined the things that God has prepared for those who love him.**

**1 Corinthians 2:9**

This is the long and short of the information available to us regarding the future and permanent home of Christ's followers. As time moves quickly toward the day of our big move, one must weigh the importance of the energy spent on renovations to our current temporary dwellings. While I would never suggest ridding ourselves of all our personal belongings in preparation for our new home, the old saying "you can't take it with you" rings loud and clear in Jesus' command for us to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth. In the next chapter, we'll take a closer look at the lives of our current and future neighbors whose names are *not* written in the Lamb's book of life. As much as I'd like to thumb through and find my name in this book, I definitely don't wanna be around when it's opened.

## CHAPTER NINE

### JUDGMENT

Hey, you're back! You just missed my daughter trying to pinch-zoom a sheet of notebook paper. It was pretty funny. Anyway, thanks again for hanging with me. If you were paying attention during the last chapter, you learned that there will be a group of people on the new earth who are:

- not kept from marrying one another
- not given glorified bodies
- not allowed to enter the new Jerusalem
- not named in the Lamb's book of life

Each individual within this group will have been alive on our current earth at the time of the rapture. They are our parents, our children, and our neighbors who'll come to their senses upon realizing they have been left behind. Again, we call them the *tribulation saints*, as opposed to the *raptured* saints. As for the remaining group, it consists of people who both raptured and tribulation saints will have seen the last of, but not because they didn't believe. Rather, members of this group will have made an effort to suppress the truth, and no effort to turn away from their sins. As a result, these people will not have a home on the new earth. We'll call them *the others*. Why? Because that's what the Bible calls them. Duh!

**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.**

**Daniel 12:1-2**

This is a verse we looked at earlier during our discussion of the rapture.

According to the Bible, if you're sleeping in the dust, you're dead. The only people who will not have experienced human death are the saints who are alive at the time of the rapture and the ninja warriors who survive the second half of the seven years after placing their trust in Jesus. Everyone else sleeps with the fishes.

## SECOND DEATH

As for those who claim to have experienced heaven before being sent back to earth, I can only say that I've never met anyone who died and lived to tell about it. If you're alive, it's only because you haven't died. Oddly enough, the choice to refer to these events as *near-death* experiences is appropriate. Each person who *has* died, however, will one day awaken at one of the two awakenings that we already discussed. The first awakening (first resurrection) occurs at the time of the rapture. The second one (second death) occurs at the end of the thousand-year millennial reign. Now that we've reached the end of our review, we return to John as he tells us what he saw during this second awakening or, as we like to call it, Judgment Day.

**And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.**

**Revelation 20:12**

## BOOK OF LIFE

So we have *the book* and also *the books*. The lone book, of course, is the book of life whose pages are filled with the names of every saved soul from the beginning of time until the rapture. As for the *set* of books, they serve as a record of wrongs that are pinned on the others who rejected God. I imagine these books will fill the shelves of a Barnes & Noble. Maybe several. What evil deeds are recorded in these books? Pretty much all of them. For every sin that Christ's followers will have been forgiven, there will be an identical



sin whose forgiveness was never sought. Here are some of the profiles that the Bible associates with these acts of sin.

**Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.**

**1 Corinthians 6:9-10**

If we stopped reading after these verses, we might be led to believe that none of these people can receive salvation. The verse that immediately follows, however, assures us that every single one of them can be saved.

**Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.**

**1 Corinthians 6:11**

## **REPENTANCE & JUDGMENT**

As you can see, turning away from these sins instead of embracing them is what allows us to become

*sanctified* or cleansed. Because each of us was born with a natural inclination to sin, no one person is more guilty than another. It all comes down to whether God's Spirit leads us to kick our sinful habits out of love for Him. Can you love God and *not* repent? You can certainly claim that you can. I'm sure there will be many with this outlook who'll never lay eyes on the new earth. Embracing or intentionally ignoring sin is not a reflection of gratitude for the blood Jesus spilled so that we may be forgiven. God doesn't take the death of His son lightly. He requires our *full* surrender.

**This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.**

**1 John 4:10**

Back to this group we're calling 'the others,' its members consist of everyone who experienced human death without first having been saved. Their deaths will have spanned the entire timeline on earth from creation to the end of the tribulation period. At the second awakening, whatever fame or status was enjoyed on earth among these who are not called saints will be reduced to utter humility. This may be said of the young and attractive recording artists who succumb to being molded into objects of sexual energy in order to lure fans to desire them for reasons far beyond their vocal talent. They appear half-naked in their videos and sing with breathy and sultry tones that complement their profane and suggestive lyrics and then call themselves role models. The young people who allowed themselves to become more drawn to these individuals than to God will likely not be asking for autographs when they see them awaiting judgment. They will be too overcome with agony for having ignored the teaching of their parents and peers to seek God instead of wicked and worldly pleasures. These examples will not apply to everyone in this group. The punishment, however, will.

**And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.**

**Revelation 20:15**

As we learned earlier, judgment is not reserved for those who are doomed to hellfire and eternal separation from God. The saints will be judged as well. Instead of being judged for our wrongs, we shall be judged according to the effort we put forth to achieve of God's will on earth. This is the reward ceremony for the fruits of our labor. Unlike the judgment of the others, ours will occur at the beginning of these thousand years. As for the sin on the new earth, it will be dealt with in the same manner our sins are today—through forgiveness and eternal punishment. Also, like today, God will allow Satan to do the tempting.

**When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison...**

**Revelation 20:7**

## EVIL UNLEASHED

While this thousand-year period marks the beginning of the eternal reward for Christ's followers, it also serves as a new era of trials for those living outside of the new Jerusalem. Apparently, you can lead tribulation saints to the river of life, but you can't make them drink. This next verse assures us that the reason Satan will be allowed to wander the new earth is the same reason he was allowed to wander the old one.

**[Satan] will come out to deceive the nations ... to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore.**

**Revelation 20:8**

Once again, God will initiate his plan to separate the wheat from the chaff. This applies to the tribulation saints as well as their children who'll serve as a whole new generation of sinners. While the Bible does not say outright that these people will have children, we can conclude from other verses we've looked at together that there will be an abundance of people on the new earth who behave like normal human beings. Scripture has already alluded to these being able to marry. If they may also have children, we can expect there to be a new baby boom that results in a thousand years' populous of people who were born on the new earth without first having made a choice to follow Jesus. If so, we can also expect these humans to do what humans do today. What do humans do? We build stuff.

The idea of a new earth that becomes increasingly like the old one may be as baffling as the presence of sin. But it's something to think about. Does this mean that there will be human-designed suburbs and cities surrounding the majestic new Jerusalem? New technologies? I honestly don't know. I simply envision humans using the resources on the new earth to do what being made in the image of God prompts them to do. Like Him, humans love, humans communicate, and humans create. Unlike Him, unfortunately, humans sin. This is the one thing we know without question that will occur among those without glorified bodies. What will they do exactly?



For starters, they will attempt to take over the new Jerusalem.

**And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them.**

**Revelation 20:9**

## **TEMPTATION TACTICS**

At this point, you may be wondering how anyone could reach the conclusion that they could overpower Jesus. If you are, let me remind you that the ultimate cheerleader for this kind of activity will be present on the earth. Satan, who God will let loose at the end of the thousand years, actually believes he can rule by making moves that God hasn't anticipated. Having already been proven wrong, you've got to think that Satan isn't very smart. He is, however, determined. And he wants nothing more than to gather like minds to share his absurd delusions.

Satan's strategy, of course, will be the same one he used in the Garden of Eden—stirring up jealousy and anger over the treasures his subjects "deserve" and yet were denied. So, does this mean that Satan will be present in physical form? I believe he will be. Since the division between the earthly and heavenly realms will no longer exist, there's no reason to suspect that we will not finally see this great deceiver in the flesh, or whatever stuff he's made of. We already know what he's full of. Himself! And you thought I was going to say he's full of that other stuff. This is a Christian book, people! Come on! Ok, fine. He's full of that too.

**And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.**

**Revelation 20:10**

## **THINGS UNKNOWN**

Earlier, I we defined 'the others' as those who will stand in judgment at the

end of the thousand years after having died without salvation before the thousand years commenced. Adding people who were born on the new earth and who were deceived by Satan makes this group a bit more diverse. Now we have people who will experience the second death without having experienced a first death. This would also confirm that not everyone on the new earth will be guaranteed eternal life.

Because the second death will be experienced by everyone whose names are not found in the book of life, we may also conclude that everyone residing outside of the new Jerusalem will only be there for 1,000 years. After all, the Bible does tell us that those who come out of the great tribulation will reign with God for a “thousand years.” While there is no text that specifies *only* 1,000 years, the second death equation suggests a mere life extension rather than eternal life for these who committed the unpardonable sin of rejecting God despite having changed their ways during the tribulation. After all, if their names were in the book, they would have exited at the time of the rapture.

There is another way we can interpret this period, though. Instead of only 1,000 years, this could simply reflect the time that tribulation saints will reign before being judged, at which time some will be deemed worthy of escaping eternal punishment for having repeated the act of denying Satan a second time. If this is the case, those who are rewarded instead of being punished might continue to have a presence on the new earth. I do like this scenario as it seems to radiate the nature of God’s grace. But my first idea, should it be a reality, may equally demonstrate God’s grace. Both scenarios can be fair and just despite how you and I might feel toward either one. This is His design rather than ours.

**“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways,” declares the LORD.**

**Isaiah 55:8**

Earlier, I told you that I would point out a verse that might challenge your understanding of a renewed earth verses a totally new one. Revelation 20:10

is that verse. Take a moment and read over it again. It's only a few paragraphs back. It's also in your Bible, but you knew that. Here we are informed that the lake of fire and brimstone will be accessible from the new earth. And this next verse confirms what we learned previously about hell's location being beneath the surface of our current earth.

**...then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lower parts of the earth, like the ancient waste places, with those who go down to the pit...**

**Ezekiel 26:20**

Are you with me so far? Good. Now, on the new earth, God will be playing cornhole, using Satan as His beanbag. When He scores, Satan falls into the lake of fire where his buddy the antichrist and the false prophet are already. Because these two will have entered hell via the pit in our current earth, you've got to wonder where the pit is at the end of the thousand years when Satan is tossed into it. If this is the same pit, it could be that our current earth is resurfaced rather than destroyed. Otherwise, we might look up from the new earth and see the charred remains of our old earth hanging in space like the Death Star in Star Wars. I realize this information doesn't really help us to nail down whether our earth continues to exist. Not to worry. It's not vital that we know this anyway. But it's a fun discussion, nonetheless. Hopefully, my fellow Bible nerds will agree.

I do realize that we still have lots of questions. If Satan never returns to the new earth, will there be no more sin? If the 1,000 years is not the limit for tribulation saints, will those who are redeemed finally be given glorified bodies and access to the new Jerusalem? Will there be a library in heaven with an audio Bible read by Jeff Goldblum? Questions like these are sure to go unanswered for the remainder of our stay on earth. Given all the signals we are witnessing today that the Bible urges us to recognize, I'd say that our end of days is not very far off. For followers of Jesus Christ, there's no end to anything that we should be concerned about. For us, eternity has already begun. And yet we wait—some patiently, some impatiently—for our



promised day of redemption when we will look upon our savior for the first time. At this, it can only be pertinent to end our lesson with the very last passage in our holy Scripture.

**He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming quickly."  
Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.  
Amen.**

**Revelation 22:20-21**

Amen, indeed!

## CHAPTER NINE

### JUDGMENT

Over the previous nine chapters, we have explored together our past, present, and future as they have been revealed to us in God's Word. As for the commentary, it represents my own individual understanding of the Bible's teaching. While I have spent many hours in prayer and more than nine years preparing to write this book, I urge you not to rest upon what you have learned from it. Relying solely on educational material or even sermons that include only snippets of Scripture is the same as placing your salvation in the hands of what someone else has told you. Many nonbelievers in our world have come to reject the gospel message by this same means.

In a society that has come to thrive on instant gratification, the thought of not having to open that huge book filled with incomprehensible language may seem like a relief. Those with this attitude simply deny themselves of our sole means of truly knowing God. Because one cannot truly love God without first knowing him, we can conclude that our love for God can only be as strong as our love for His Word. For as long as we regard the Bible as a dreaded burden, we can never experience the hunger and thirst for God that exist within a heart that has been transformed by a devotion to Scripture.

If you are reading this book after the disappearance of those you know are followers of Jesus Christ, you have every reason to be afraid. But you are not without hope. Even now, you can confess to God the remorse you feel over having lived a life on your own terms rather than His. You may have even rejected Christianity completely up until this point. Regardless of your life's choices, and despite what you may be going through right now, you must know that God still wants a relationship with you. Nothing you've done will make Him love you any less. For He created us all out of love. And when He

saw that we were helpless to be anything but sinful human beings, He took it upon Himself to make a way for our sins to be forgiven.

This means of forgiveness is God's son, Jesus Christ, who came to earth in the form of a man to teach us about God's love and how to live our lives in a manner that reflects our gratitude. He then gave himself up to suffer a horrible death by crucifixion, spilling his own blood so that the sins of all who would come to love and trust in him may be forgiven. Three days after his body was placed in a tomb, Jesus arose from the dead to validate his divinity as the only son of the one true God.

Upon your recognition of this truth, you can speak to God directly by praying aloud and admitting that you are a sinner in need of the forgiveness that Jesus' death on a cross made possible. Ask for God to place His Holy Spirit inside you to guide you through the terrible times ahead. While this is all you need to do in order to receive the free gift of salvation, I urge you to seek out one of the missionaries from Israel that you may have learned about in the news. These individuals are moving about the globe in search of people like you to whom they can minister and encourage. Gather others as you are able and tell them about your salvation experience while you travel. I do hope this book has helped you to prepare for what lies ahead. Please refer to it only as a companion to the Holy Bible. If you've never opened the Bible before, I recommend reading the book of John first and without delay.

If you can survive for three and a half years from the day war first broke out in Israel, you'll have the privilege of seeing Jesus himself emerge from the strange cloud that may already be hanging above the earth. Even if you don't survive, Jesus will be waiting for you on a new earth that he is preparing for all of us who have chosen to trust in him as our Lord and as our Savior. Until then, be strong and encourage others with the truth of the gospel. I have been praying for you and will continue to. Although we may not recognize each other as having this teacher/student relationship, I do hope to brush shoulders with you as we begin new lives in the presence of our gracious and merciful God.



For the remainder of you, for whom the rapture is still a ways off, please join me in prayer over these who will come home by another way. Pray for God's chosen people Israel who will finally become the ministers to the gentiles that their disobedience once thwarted. Pray for our children whose battle against succumbing to the ways of this world is more fierce than it has ever been. And, most importantly, pray for yourselves—that God may use you to accomplish His will on this earth.

It may be easy to regard the message above as geared toward people other than yourself. You might even take comfort in the notion that you will not live to see any of these events unfold. Just know that these attitudes will be shared by each person who called themselves a Christian and yet found themselves left behind. But don't take my word for it. The assurance of your salvation lies in God's Word alone.

**If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.**

**John 8:31-32**

Thank you for joining me in this study of a very exciting portion of our holy Scripture. After reading, if you decide not to add this book to your library, please pass it on to a friend or loved one. The end times message is one that should be shared with people all over the world. Finally, if you feel led to do so, please pray that the teaching in this book will guide many who remain in the darkness to the light that is Jesus Christ, our Lord. May God pour down His blessings upon us all.