

ARMAGEDDON

for beginners



David Mckay

Armageddon for Beginners

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INTRODUCTION

There is a growing interest in endtime prophecy. People want to know whether world events are leading toward some predetermined end, and whether that end has personal significance for them. That much is fine ... but the end result may not be. Interpreting prophecy can be complex, and it is easy for the uninitiated to be drawn into making or believing conclusions that go beyond the actual intent of the prophecies.

Sadly, many of the widely recognised experts in theology have little faith in anything except their own expertise. They dismiss Bible prophecy along with anything else that they cannot dissect and explain on a human level. On the other hand, many of the self-professed experts are blindly committed to making everything fit some pet theory of theirs. They come up with contrived interpretations which confuse and frustrate anyone looking for real truth.

What the public wants (and needs) is an explanation that is simple without being simplistic, and clear without being contrived. They want to know if the Bible really does predict the future, without being conned into a lot of double-talk that finishes up saying nothing.

This book is an attempt to meet that need.

Keeping it Simple

We have tried to keep the explanations simple. However, the subject matter does take a lot of concentration if you hope to fully appreciate the significance of what it is saying.

Here are some tips to help you understand this book better:

1. Look up Bible references as you go. For your convenience, most references are listed in an appendix at the end of each chapter. Make the effort to turn to it each time a Bible reference is mentioned in the text of the chapter. If you do, you will be able to understand more clearly what is being said.

The more you understand the passages, the more you will appreciate that we are not taking some isolated text out of context and trying to make it say something that it does not say. What we are looking at in this book is the big picture, based on a broad understanding of the whole message. This takes more effort than simplistic “proof-texting”.

2. Read slowly. It takes time to digest the full meaning, not only of the Bible references, but also of the comments we are making. We have tried to pack a lot of teaching into just a few pages. Time is needed to reflect on the full meaning of each statement.

3. Pay special attention to key terms. We have specifically commented on some, but there are many more. A list of some key terms to watch for as you read this book appears at the end of this introduction. They are part of a very complex inter-related web, which when all put together give a totally consistent picture of what life and the future are all about.

It takes some time, as we move from tree to tree, to give a complete picture of the “forest”, but the end result will be worth the effort, and it will save you from myopic extremes that come from just focusing on one issue.

Having said that, we will now give updated comments on a few of the individual “trees”. These comments did not appear in the first editions of this book, and have been written as afterthoughts.

The Pope

From the days of Martin Luther, there has been a large body of teaching about the Pope being the Antichrist. The strongest support for this theory comes from the fact that the Latin title for his role as “Vicar of Christ” is one that adds up to 666 according to the formula described on pages 147-148. This is a significant fact which should not be overlooked, although it has not been dealt with specifically in the main body of this book.

One reason we have not dwelt on this theory is because the title (“Vicar of Christ”) belongs to an office rather than to an individual. It may be that the office will at least be used to support the individual who will eventually be the final Antichrist. (See our book, *Survivors*.) Of course, there is also the possibility that

the Antichrist could actually be some future Pope. It does not, however, necessitate condemning all Popes as antichrists.

The Pope, like Solomon, symbolises what the world perceives to be the epitome of religious excellence. Yet the best that the religious world can offer becomes unspeakably evil if it is used to fight against the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The Bible says, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." (Romans 3:4) In other words, unless we are willing (in loyalty to Christ and to all that he taught) to turn loose of our loyalty to whomever we perceive to be the next most noble religious authority, we are going to err seriously in our attempts to find the truth about anything, including the future.

However, we still maintain that our emphasis should not be on targeting and attacking any individual. The real battle is more one of right and wrong attitudes. Characterisations of people as either demons or as angels often miss the point of God's grace.

Adventists and Jehovah's Witnesses

Groups like Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists have been the world's chief exponents of endtime prophecy. As such, they deserve some recognition.

Although we do not agree with all of their conclusions, we recognise that the tendency for the religious establishment to condemn them for even attempting to understand prophecy (and coincidentally the tendency to condemn the whole idea of trying to understand prophecy because such groups are associated with it!) has developed moral character in many of those who have been persecuted for their stand.

The Jehovah's Witnesses in particular are one of the most universally hated groups in the world today, even though most of their opponents could not agree on what it is, exactly, that is so supposedly evil about them.

The Seventh Day Adventists are going through a significant period in their history. In an effort to gain acceptance and to avoid the persecution that the Jehovah's Witnesses have suffered for their more militant opposition to mainstream Christianity, many Adventists are starting to downplay their traditionally strong stand against religions that continue to worship God on Sundays.

Because we believe their traditional stand was misguided, it is easy to see this shift in their emphasis as being a shift which is taking them a step closer to the truth. However, indications are that it is not a step forward to greater truth, so much as a backward step, based primarily on political expediencies.

It has been our misfortune to be accosted aggressively by some Adventists and JW's (and by individuals from smaller groups, as well as some totally loose cannons) whenever we have been out distributing this book. Such people rarely show any interest in reading what we have to say, because (they tell us) they "know it all already".

It is this arrogance that has turned so many away from the overall subject of endtime prophecy; and it is also this error which can just about guarantee failure

in terms of finding the real secrets of God that are hidden within the pages of the Bible.

We would call on students of Bible prophecy everywhere to exercise greater humility, and greater honesty with regard to the limitations of their own studies, so that we may be able to profit from the truths that God has allowed others besides ourselves to find.

For myself, I must confess that there is very little in this book which is totally original.

But I have been able to learn from many sources which were unwilling to listen to me or to anyone else for that matter. Until we stop behaving so narrow-mindedly and break free from our individual delusions of grandeur, endtime prophecy will continue to be equated with crackpots and ratbags.

Armageddon the Movie

Coincidentally, the movie Armageddon was released on video in Australia at about the same time that the first edition of this book became available to the general public. It is worth making some comment on the similarities and differences between the movie and the message of this book.

Sadly, the movie (like another one referred to later) gives almost no recognition to God (except in the selfish context of using him to achieve even greater glorification for the supposedly wonderful achievements of mankind).

In addition, what little reference the movie makes to the real Armageddon is misleading. (You will be able to appreciate the error more after you have read this book.)

Armageddon, in the Bible, is a term given to a battle in which all the armies of the earth are gathered together to challenge the heavenly armies of God.

Although the real Armageddon is closely linked with the “end of the world” as we know it, it really has nothing to do with an asteroid striking the earth.

It would have been more accurate to have called the Armageddon movie The Tribulation if the producers had wanted to relate it to an asteroid threat mentioned in Bible prophecy. But such technicalities aside, the asteroid threat is certainly a part of the overall picture leading up to the real Armageddon.

In the biblical account, the world is not saved (by Bruce Willis or anyone else), but neither is it totally destroyed by the asteroid.

It is interesting that the movie version featured a fiery shower of smaller asteroids raining down on the earth just a few days before the big one was to hit. It does appear that the Bible account describes a shower of asteroids as well as a single hit by a huge “mountain”, which causes the whole earth to “reel to and fro like a drunk” as a result.

The one feature of the real Armageddon that the movie of the same name most accurately depicts is the total lack of genuine repentance that will characterise the inhabitants of the earth at that time. Characters in Armageddon, the movie, thought of loved ones, and some (most notably Muslims and Hindus) flocked to places of worship as the end approached. But nowhere did there

appear to be any serious attempt to read into the impending disaster a warning from God Almighty that the inhabitants of the earth should seriously take stock of their goals and values, and make fundamental changes in the way that they were living their lives. Instead, the focus was all on a pack of roughnecks who were going off to “kick ass” in the name of mankind.

Independence Day

There is another slightly older movie, which does an amazingly accurate job of depicting what is actually prophesied in the Bible as going to happen some time after the asteroid hits, during the real battle of Armageddon (although the movie itself makes no claim to being based on any prophecy). That movie is Independence Day. With only a slight change in the script, Independence Day could very well have been called Armageddon.

The events leading up to the Battle of Armageddon as described in the Bible, include a scene where thousands of people are suddenly “beamed up” to a huge spaceship that is actually referred to as a “city” floating in the air over Israel.

The Bible talks of all the armies on earth gathering together below it, in an attempt to wage war on this huge “starship”.

In the past, whenever I have read this account, I have found it difficult to believe that the armies of the earth would really be so stupid as to think that they could make war against such a supernatural force as that is described in the Bible. And yet, when you watch Independence Day, you see exactly that happening. And it all sounds so plausible when you realise that the earth’s inhabitants will have been convinced that the invaders are aliens from another world, who have come to destroy the earth. And that is pretty much what they are and what they’ll do... except that they will be aliens from the kingdom of heaven, coming to carry out the will of God!

Personally I recommend that readers see both movies, primarily because they give a certain Twenty-First Century credibility to what has been written in the Bible for thousands of years. They will certainly make you a little less inclined to laugh at what is described in this book.

-Dave Mckay

Key Terms

Below are some key terms that you should be looking for as you read this book. Some could be listed in several groupings. The groupings below are very loose and not representative of the complete picture.

This list will not make much sense now; but remember as you read through this book that we are trying to give you a picture of how they all inter-relate. This will help you to appreciate how complex the subject is.

The baddies: Prince, king, kingdom, head, beast, dragon, bear, lion, eagle, panther, scarlet/red, prostitute, Babylon, sand/clay.

The goodies: Prince, king, kingdom, Son of Man, Lamb, a white horse, birds, giving birth, woman, virgin, remnant, wilderness, stone/rock, servants, witnesses, God's people, the Lord's day.

Numbers: Three and a half years, ten (toes and horns), three (ribs and horns), seven (heads, mountains, years).

The Mark: Images/idolatry, 666, Temple, Solomon, wisdom, greed, gold, Babylon.

Other: desolation, abomination, 'great trouble' [tribulation], trumpets, falling stars, wrath, poured, determined, covenant, sword, signs and wonders (miracles), mystery, floods.

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1. The Overall Scenario

The scope of this book does not allow us to cover all of the details that fit together to make up the big picture of what is about to come to pass in the world in the next few years. There certainly is room for disagreement on some of the details, since they are all based on interpretations of Bible prophecies. However, in this chapter we will give you a rough outline of some of the things that we expect (Many of them have already begun.) and then proceed to explain specifically how some of the conclusions have been reached.

The first edition of this book came out in 1999, prior to the end of the Millennium. At that time, we said, "We can say with relative certainty that nothing will happen at that time that is any more significant than the sort of things that are happening now and that will continue to happen after January 1, 2000. There is nothing in Bible prophecy to support the theory that the year 2000 marks the end of the world. "

But we went on to say, "Don't be surprised if the end comes just a few years after the start of the new millennium. It has nothing to do with the calendar, but plenty to do with developments in world politics, and especially with developments in world banking." We are now living in those first few years after January 1, 2000.

So here is the picture as we saw it then, and as we see it now.

There will be more earthquakes, more epidemics, and more famines. An increase in wars, and more problems with the world economy, will lead to drastic changes in both government and banking.

Russia will more or less rise from the dead and turn on America, virtually destroying it in a surprise military strike over the North Pole. An extremely popular man will gain control of the U.N. and use it to set up a world empire which will bring in world peace and prosperity.

The world's banking system will be totally transformed, with computer scans eventually controlling all business transactions. People will do all of their buying and selling through a microchip implant in the back of their hands. (Amputees will be able to get an implant put on their forehead.) This implant will virtually eliminate the need for paper money.

The changes, both in government and in economics, will bring great benefits to most of the earth's population. This will further increase the power and popularity of the world leader.

The Jews will rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem, and resume animal sacrifices. There will be, for a while, greater religious tolerance than ever before. Only the most rabid fanatics will oppose the changes. Amongst opponents will be a small group of Christians who will argue that it is all a mask for something unbelievably evil.

This group of Christians will try to tell the world that the popular leader is actually the Son of Satan in much the same way that Jesus is the Son of God. They will also warn that a global disaster is about to strike the earth. (The exact details are not clear at this stage.) They will warn of an asteroid (or possibly nuclear satellites) crashing into the earth and poisoning much of the earth's water supplies, killing life in the oceans, and destroying much of the world's vegetation. Millions will be killed as a result of this disaster.

About the time that the disaster takes place, the world leader will begin a campaign against the fanatics, possibly accusing them of playing some part in causing the disaster that has struck the earth. The leader will order that all forms of worship be abolished and that he alone be worshipped as god. Anyone who refuses to worship him will be arrested and executed. This program of systematic persecution against all who believe in God will result in the deaths of more people than have ever been slain by any world leader in history, including Hitler and Stalin.

Two spokespersons for the fanatics will repeatedly elude capture at the same time that they succeed in getting the world to hear their message of warning. A worldwide manhunt will eventually track them down, and their execution will be televised around the world. Their bodies will be displayed in public for three days.

And then Jesus Christ will return to earth.

The two people who were executed will suddenly come to life, as will thousands of others who were killed for their faith in Jesus Christ. They will all be given new bodies that are not subject to gravity as people are now. All of these people, plus those who are alive and who have refused to worship the world leader or to allow a microchip implant in their bodies, will be able to float up to meet Jesus in the sky. This amazing escape will be documented with television coverage around the world. All those who are drawn together in this way will disappear into another dimension, possibly into some kind of a huge starship, where they will celebrate their deliverance. At the same time, new problems will confront those left on earth.

More disasters will strike the earth over the next few weeks, causing suffering for billions of people. Those left on the earth will continue to put the blame on the departed fanatics, and will become convinced that they are dangerous aliens from another world. All the armies of the earth will be drawn together to challenge the aliens, as a show-down looms over Israel.

When those who disappeared have finished their celebrations in their refuge in the skies, they will swoop down on earth behind their leader, Jesus. The weapons amassed in the valley of Megiddo, in Israel, will be no match for them. This is the famous Battle of Armageddon, and it will be totally one sided. Those mortals who mistakenly thought they could fight God, will be wiped out. The victorious army will be fully occupied for months just burying all of the bodies and disposing of the ruined weapons.

Then Jesus and his supernatural army will set about rebuilding the earth with the few survivors that remain. The Devil will be bound by God, so that evil will no longer triumph on earth. Whereas all past governments had been corrupt and cruel, and had appealed to people's greed, the forces for good will triumph in this new world.

Jesus will begin a reign of a thousand years on earth, in which he and his supernatural followers will seek to educate the inhabitants of this planet in the ways of God. The earth's mortal population will increase during that period of time.

At the end of the thousand years, the devil will be loosed once again, to see if the people of the repopulated earth have learned how to resist his lies and deceptions. But enough for now. That's another story.

Obviously all of this must sound a bit far-fetched for most readers. There are probably details which we do not have exactly right. But anyone who has studied Bible prophecy at all would have to agree that the overall picture is pretty accurate. In the chapters that follow we will attempt to lead you through some of the steps in how we arrived at these conclusions, including a timetable that you can use to actually count down the final seven years before Armageddon.

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2. First the Bad News

Prophecy, by its very nature, tells us something about the future. It may also proclaim practical everyday spiritual truths. But what makes it unique is that it comes from a divine, super-human intelligence which we call God. God is not restricted by time and space. Past, present, and future are all like different chapters in the same book to him. In God's eternal present, he can look ahead and see what is going to happen; and he can move back to our present and tell us what he knows. Doing this does not mean that God has forced anything to happen. He just happens to know ahead of time; and telling us some of what he knows becomes one of many parts that make up the overall formula that will finally result in what was predicted.

Think of it like a video of a football game. No matter how many times you watch it, the same team will always win. It isn't that the game was fixed, or that the winning team had no choice in the matter. It's just that what you see on the video is what actually happened as a result of everyone's free will.

The same is true when God tells us what is going to happen in the future. We should probably be thankful that he doesn't go into more detail than he does,

or it could really get us tangled up in knots, either worrying that we might mess things up, or struggling to change the predicted results.

So if you're looking for a way to cheat fate through understanding prophecy, forget it. The prophecy itself is inescapable. After a period of struggling against it, each person must eventually come to the realisation that what has been prophesied will, indeed, happen, no matter what choices they as individuals make. God's reason for telling us something about the future is not so that we will try to change it, but rather so that we can learn lessons from it that will result in changes within ourselves.

In one of the Back to the Future movies, a character finds a book listing the winners of various horse races, and he pockets it, with the hope of being able to take it back to the present, where he will then use the information in it to make big bets on those same races. Unfortunately, in one way or another, this is how most so-called believers approach Bible prophecy. But it simply won't work.

It isn't as though we've stumbled on God's personal diary without him knowing about it, so that now we can outsmart him by being there when wealth is to be distributed, and by not being there when punishments are to be handed out.

In the John Cleese movie Time Bandits, some fallen angels steal a map of the universe which shows some glitches in the time-space continuum, and they decide to capitalise on these little holes from one age into another by becoming robbers. They use the time warps as foolproof getaways. But what they don't know is that The Creator himself has set them up, so that they will lead him to the glitches and enable him to make the necessary corrections.

This is an important lesson, and one that needs to be made clear right from the start of this book: You are only kidding yourself if you think that you can use what you learn here for selfish gain. No matter what you do, you will still end up playing into God's hand.

God does occasionally use his knowledge of the future to prepare people in advance for disasters, etc. He did that when he prepared Noah for the flood. He told Noah it was coming, and then he gave him instructions on how to avoid it. But remember that he did it because He chose to do it, and because He believed that Noah was the right person to trust with the information. Noah didn't "study" God to nut out a way to escape the flood. It took supernatural assistance from God for Noah to learn that the flood was coming in the first place, and it took supernatural assistance from God for Noah to find a way to escape it. Noah had to stay in touch with God from start to finish to be saved. He couldn't just grab the disaster plan and run off with it to some secret hideout where he would devise his own scheme for salvation.

If you're not willing to do it God's way, then you are just going to end up running around in circles, and you may as well put this book down now. He set it up that way, and there is no way around it.

Of course Noah wasn't the only one who was warned. You don't build a full scale replica of the Titanic in your back yard without people asking a few questions about how you plan to launch it. So the general public more or less knew what was coming; and yet there was something missing in their spiritual

make-up that blinded them to what was really needed to keep from being drowned. Some may have started swimming lessons. Others may have bought row boats and kept them in the garage. But whatever they did, it didn't save them in the end. And this is how it works with any knowledge about the future. The only way to change your fate is to change your attitudes.

Forget about prophecy for a moment and think about the future in general. If you do, you will see just how useless knowledge of the future can be if people don't have the right attitude toward it. I will illustrate this:

Nurses are one of the most informed groups of workers on the dangers of smoking; and yet the nursing profession in Australia has one of the highest incidences of cigarette smoking of all vocational groups. Simply knowing ahead of time that cigarette smoking will cause lung cancer does not appear to be enough to make these people stop smoking. A little knowledge can be dangerous. Sometimes those who know the most about the future assume they are so smart that they will be able to escape the consequences at the last minute; and so they end up taking even greater risks than those who are less informed.

Can you see the lesson here with regard to Bible prophecy? If you learn some things about the future from this book, it could end up making you more reckless than ever, and prove to be more harmful than if you had stayed blissfully ignorant... unless you change your attitudes.

Now for another illustration. The one thing we all know with absolute certainty about the future is that we are going to die. But what have we done about it? Most of us prefer not to think about dying. We try to blot it out of our minds. When someone is seriously ill, we shunt them off to a hospital, out of sight and away from the real world. All references to death are pretty much hushed up or avoided in our everyday conversations. Apparently what we know most certainly about the future we would rather not know.

Yet if it was possible to discover exactly what day and place, and under exactly what circumstances we would eventually die, most of us would not be able to resist trying to locate it. We would want to know, but then we wouldn't know how to handle the information once we had it.

If we did know the exact details of our death, we would almost certainly ruin the rest of our lives by trying to manipulate things so that we would not be in that place on that day, or at least not under those circumstances. This is definitely not the way that we are supposed to act on knowledge of the future; and such an approach will not change the future.

How much better it would be if people would just accept that they are going to die, and then do all they can to make each day count for good between now and when they go. Instead, we waste our time trying to put off or trying to escape facing something that we all know is inevitable.

Now let's return to Bible prophecy. There is a growing number of people who have discovered what the Bible says about the world today. They know that a world government is coming which will eventually turn evil. Sadly, one of the most widely identifiable traits of these Bible prophecy enthusiasts (at least in Australia and America) is their strong advocacy for freedom to own guns. They

do this because they want to protect themselves from this coming world government. Their fear about what is coming has led them to think that they can stop it if they just stockpile enough firearms. People in this group also believe in a wide range of conspiracy theories. Many of the theories they espouse show strong signs of paranoia, religious bigotry and racism. Some of the individuals in the prophecy-believing group started with valid revelations about the future, but the fear that it generated within them led them to be sucked in by some of the most bizarre and ridiculous claims that the human mind could imagine. Some of these people have even become a serious threat to minority groups such as Aborigines and Jews.

Sadly, nothing seems to be more effective in turning people off the whole subject of Bible prophecy than taking a close look at the people who profess most strongly to believe in it. Their knowledge of the future has led them to mount various campaigns to save the world from the coming one-world government. But these same campaigns may have unwittingly sped up the very process that they wanted to stop.

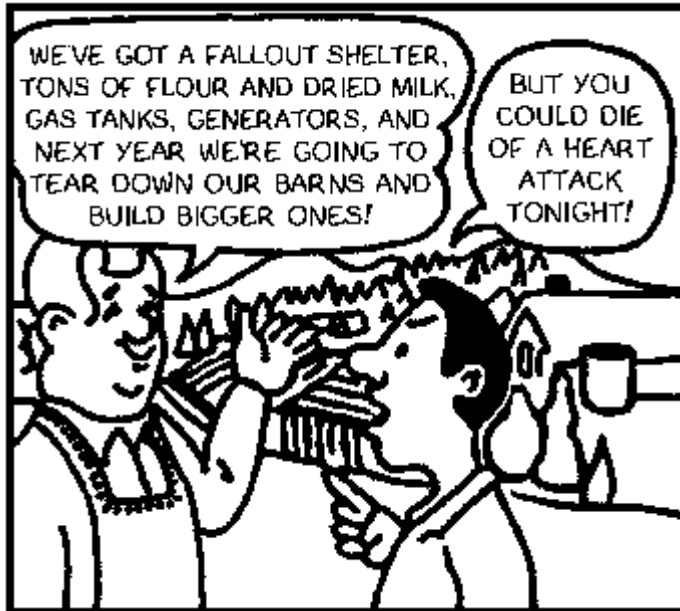
Consider a recent political movement in Australia for example. A woman named Pauline Hanson found strong support from gun-toting fundamentalist Christians who feared a one-world government they saw predicted in the Bible. But the end result was that they brought the other political parties (and the media) closer together in opposition to her. In other words, big government gets bigger and more united, and gains approval for more power for itself, when the public can be shown that a little group of fanatic racists might be plotting to take over the country. The general public did not want to return to the kind of reactionary right-wing philosophies that people fell for in Germany prior to World War II; so they united against such a movement.

Sociologists call this phenomena a "self-fulfilling prophecy". When someone believes strongly enough that an evil government is coming, they will be tempted to react so strongly against the existing government that they will force it to become even stronger as it seeks to defend itself. In other words, their belief alone is enough to make the prophecy come to pass.

But now consider the other possibility. Suppose Pauline Hanson's people had been successful in achieving all the political power that they wanted. Suppose that the sky was the limit. How much power would it take before they would feel that the world was safe from the evil government that they feared? Because they had not thought through such issues to the ultimate conclusion, they had no concept of a point where they could say, "This is enough power." Their paranoia would justify every new measure to increase power for themselves, until they themselves would eventually become the evil world government that they originally feared. As someone has said, "We all believe in total control, as long as we are the ones who wield it."

So either way, whether it comes from the Right or from the Left, the world is going to eventually have a single world government; and it is going to eventually abuse the power that it receives. What is going to happen is going to happen, and just knowing that it is going to happen does not equip anyone to stop it.

This is how it works with most Bible prophecies. Even if you knew the exact time and date when the world would end, it wouldn't do you one bit of good if you were not ready to make the same drastic changes in your life that you should have made just by knowing that you are going to die one day. What it takes to prepare for the end of the world is exactly the same as what it takes to prepare to die.



Having said that (and you will hear much the same again later in this book), there is no doubt in this author's mind that most of you are going to ignore it (if, in fact, you bothered to read this chapter at all). All you really want to know is when it is all going to happen, and what proof there is for such claims. And you want to know it so that you can set about devising a way to alter (or to disprove) it. But that's your problem.

We will move on now to more of the specifics.

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3. The Jig-Saw Puzzle

What makes prophecy so complicated is that it rarely comes right out and says precisely what is going to happen and when. Remember, God is working in a kind of loop between our free will and his knowledge of what will be the result of what we know.

Obviously, as he tells us more about what will happen, it results in responses on our part, which, in turn, will affect the end result. He can only tell us so much, and then he must take into account what our reaction to that will be. If our reaction would be such that it would actually change the outcome that he has predicted, then of course he must alter the prediction or restrict what he says until he tells us just enough to prepare us for the coming event, without us missing the point of the change needing to be internal rather than external.

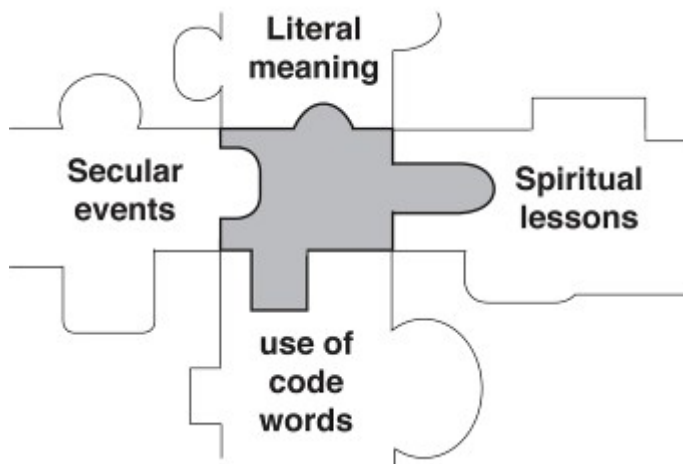
Occasionally there are exceptions to this. When Jonah went through Nineveh shouting, "Forty days and Nineveh will be destroyed!" it was really just a threat more than a prediction. Because the people repented, God did not destroy them at that time. Jonah himself was deeply angered that God had made a fool out of him by not carrying through on the threat. (Jonah 3:4-4:1) (Note: God did, however, destroy Nineveh eventually.)

There are little tricks that God uses to hide certain parts of what he is trying to say. Some parts are hidden to everyone; and others are just hidden to certain people. Jesus said to his closest followers, "Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand." (Luke 8:10)

Another trick is to include hidden meanings and double entendres that only become clear as one moves closer to the events that they predict. In Chapter Six we will discuss a prophecy which actually predicted the date when something would happen. However, it included a word which had two different meanings. It could have meant seven days or it could have meant seven years. Because the prophecy was not fulfilled in time for the seven "day" interpretation, and because it was fulfilled perfectly for the seven "year" interpretation, we now know which meaning was the right one.

But the people who first heard it would not have known for certain which interpretation was correct. Virtually every prophecy includes some vague terms like that.

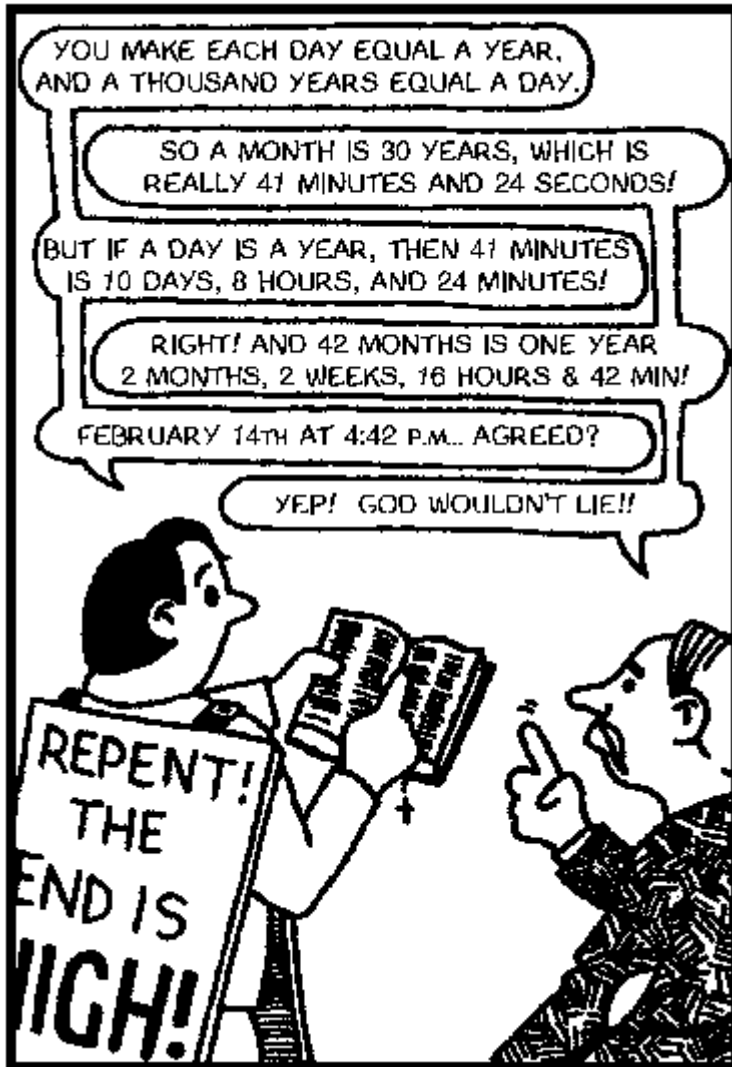
Most prophecies are like single pieces in a jig-saw puzzle. They must line up with all of the pieces around them if they are to be considered correct. You might be able to force two pieces together that don't really belong together, but it is very unlikely that the same piece can be forced to agree with all the other pieces around it.



We have suggested four areas where the prophecy must line up with the pieces around it. They are (1) literal meaning; (2) secular events; (3) spiritual lessons; and (4) consistent use of code words. There may be others, but these will do for now.

(1) Literal meaning. If you get the feeling that someone is trying to get a prophecy to say something that it is not actually saying, don't be afraid to challenge the interpretation. Spurious interpretations often focus on key words

and ignore the grammatical context of the sentence in which they appear. One of the areas where this most often happens is with numbers. People see a passage which refers, for example, to 1260 days, but because the period of time does not fit their personal theory, they will tell you that it really means 1260 years!



The Year 2000 theory was an example of this. The Bible says that time is nothing to God: "A day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as a day." (Psalm 90:4) We know God made the world about 6,000 years ago, in just six days, and then he rested on the seventh day. Neither of these two isolated truths is prophetic. They just say the obvious: that God can do more in one day (e.g. create human life) than we could do in a thousand years.

But Bible prophecy does say that Jesus will rule the world for 1,000 years after he returns. So people took the two non-prophetic statements and put them together to form a theory that God spent 6,000 years running the world, and in the year 2000, Jesus would return, so that God could have a 1,000-year rest. But of course the Bible never said that.

(2) Secular events. Ultimately, the proof of the pudding is in eating it. If Jesus had returned on January 1, 2000, then I would have had to back down on what I said before that date. Hindsight is much sharper than foresight, and it is easier to see where a prophecy clearly said something after the "something" actually happens. This reality robs the prophecy of some of its punch, but it can still show just how clever God is: He's able to tell us something at the same time that he hides it from us until he really wants us to see it. As we said earlier, it keeps us from using our knowledge to upset the flow of events.

Secular events are especially helpful as we get closer to the fulfilment of a prophecy. Certainly things that are happening in the world today are exciting when you compare them with what the Bible says about them. But beware when people start with the newspaper and then try to find some prophetic significance in every headline they read. There is always someone trying to tell you that the Bible predicted Monica Lewinsky, or that it said Diana was going to die in a car accident. Make sure the particular prophecy lines up with the other three parts of the puzzle before you put much faith in it relating to the particular secular event.

(3) Spiritual lessons. As we said earlier, God doesn't just do miracles to entertain us, and this includes Bible prophecies. Even his warnings of judgment are pretty few and far between. Most prophecies are actually trying to teach us something about the world in general; and the lessons from one prophecy to another are fairly consistent. Most of the prophecies of the Old Testament were about the coming of Jesus Christ. Most of the prophecies of the New Testament are about his return. But along with the return itself are important revelations about the futility of trusting any other system or organisation except God himself and his invisible kingdom of love and faith.

(4) Consistent use of code words. This rule may sound a bit strange. But because prophecies are so cleverly hidden from the understanding of most people, it takes a little work to find key words that help to line one prophecy up with another. They not only establish a connection between various passages, but they also give a hint as to what the spiritual lesson is behind them.

For example, most of the Old Testament prophecies about the Jewish Messiah did not use the term "Messiah". There were a number of other code words or phrases. In Daniel 7:13 it was the term "Son of Man". Although Jesus rarely referred to himself as the Messiah (or "Christ"), he repeatedly used the term Son of Man when referring to himself. To the unlearned mind he was saying nothing proud or boastful. After all, we are all sons or daughters of other human beings. He was not claiming divinity or kingship or even that he was the Messiah. This was consistent with what he taught about not over-rating ourselves, and about leaving it to others to praise us. (Luke 14:8-11) Hindsight has revealed the full significance of what Jesus was saying. "Son of man" was a code phrase that led back to Daniel's messianic reference to Christ returning in "the clouds of heaven."

Because of all these factors, we can't teach prophecy by just pointing to a verse that says, "The U.S. is going to be destroyed in the year 2023." We have to link up a lot of jig-saw pieces first, before we can say much with confidence; and even then the prophecy will be part of a bigger lesson that is being taught.

When all the pieces start going together, then it can be quite exciting. But it takes a while before this begins to happen.

Appendix, Chapter 3

Jonah 3:4-4:1. Jonah began to enter the city a day's journey, and he cried and said, "Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" So the people of Nineveh believed God and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them... And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said he would do to them. And he did it not.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

Luke 14:8-11. [Jesus said:] When you are bidden of anyone to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honourable man than you be bidden of him, and he that bade you and him come and say to you, "Give this man place", and you begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when you are bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room, that when he that bade you comes, he may say to you, "Friend, go up higher." Then you will have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with you. For whoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbles himself shall be exalted.

Daniel 7:13-14. [Daniel said:] "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days. They brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

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4. The Revelation

Most of the prophecies in the Bible that are about the End of the World come from the writings of the Hebrew prophet Daniel (More about him in Chapters 5-8.) and from The Revelation, a book written by a man named John. John was one of the first Twelve Apostles. Because of his beliefs, he was sent to live as an exile on an island, where he eventually died. But before he died, his "Revelation" was smuggled out and circulated amongst Christians all around that part of the world.

The Revelation has intrigued and baffled people for centuries. It is so full of symbols and allegories that most people just give up trying to figure it out, after making one or two attempts.

Two hints which could make your job easier: First, break it down into smaller pieces; and second, concentrate on the bigger picture. Smaller and bigger... Sounds contradictory, doesn't it? But if you'll read on, you'll see that it isn't.

There are some major themes and some major divisions in The Revelation. If you study them one by one, it won't matter if you don't understand every single word of the book. At least you'll have a broad overview in which to fit the details.

It helps to think of The Revelation as poetry or music, or even as a painting. Too much analysis can easily destroy the overall feeling that an artist is trying to communicate. Sometimes a work of art just needs to be "experienced" rather than analysed.

It may be reasonable to discuss the composition, choice of colours, and subject matter of a landscape painting, for example; but it may be pointless to question what the artist was trying to say by painting one blade of grass green and another one nearby yellow. An incredibly gifted artist (such as God himself) might actually have a message hidden in the yellow blade of grass as well; but with or without an understanding of such a fine detail, one should still be able to appreciate the masterpiece as a whole. The same is true when it comes to appreciating the overall message of The Revelation.

The Revelation is divided into 22 chapters. The first three contain short letters that God told John to write to seven different churches scattered around Asia Minor. The last three chapters describe things as they will be after Jesus Christ returns to earth. Both of these sections are inspiring and informative, and well worth reading. However, you could make your target study smaller by setting these six chapters aside after you have read them once.

Some people argue that the first three chapters have secret prophetic messages hidden in them; but if they do, they would be on a par with the secret meanings in blades of grass in a painting. It would be far better to start by focusing on material that is clearly prophetic, and get to the more esoteric stuff later if you have the time and the inclination.

1	2	3		Letters to churches in Asia		
4	5	6	7	Introduction		
8	9	10	11	12	13	The Time of Great Trouble
14	15	16	17	18	19	God Punishes the World
20	21	22		Heaven on Earth		

The last three chapters of The Revelation have to do with things that are still a long way off. They include descriptions of life in the new world that Christ will build for us, which are quite inspiring. But they contain other details which take more effort to understand. Because Christ himself is supposed to be here by the time they start to be fulfilled, we can probably expect him to help us understand anything we need to know about them when the time comes. That leaves us with chapters 4-19 of The Revelation. Now let us break them down into three major divisions.

Chapters 4-7 are a dramatic introduction to the overall theme of The Revelation. Chapters 8-13 are about the time of "Great Trouble" just before Jesus returns. And chapters 14-19 deal with God's punishment of the whole earth after he has taken his people out of the way. This time of punishment

climaxes with the famous Battle of Armageddon which so many people think of when they talk of the end of the world.

Before we start to look at these various chapter divisions, however, we must remind people once again of something that most of you don't want to hear.

The opening sentence of The Revelation says that it is a revelation to God's "servants". Think about it. Servants are people who are working for God... right now. It's not a revelation to those drawn to read the book out of idle curiosity, and it's not a revelation to people who want to use it to prove their church is best. Admittedly, it's all there in black and white for anyone to read; and anyone can be amazed by much of what it says; but in the end, you're not going to like what it says unless you're willing to become a "servant of God", and even then there are going to be aspects of it which are not going to be easy to swallow.

If there is anything that today's world is not interested in, it is being "servants" of God. Even the major "Christian" denominations have largely given up on teaching people to serve God; it's just too unpopular. People are taught, instead, to serve their families, to serve their country, to serve their employers, or to serve their church; but not to serve God. They work on positive thinking, getting along with others, arts and crafts, dance classes and other forms of self-improvement, but no serious attempts are made to even find out what God wants us to do, much less try to obey it. Until that happens, the message of The Revelation is only going to make you angry, or go over your head.

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5. The Lamb and the Beast

We have just noted that the Revelation is not a revelation to anyone apart from God's servants. The reason for this is because it's not a revelation of anything except Jesus Christ. People often call the book "Revelations" (plural), as though it's a box of goodies that one can pick and choose from. Even the people who put together the various books of the Bible into the one volume had trouble with naming this one. They called it "The Revelation of St. John the Divine". But that's not the title of the book either. The real title appears in the opening words: "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

The key to understanding The Revelation, and all that it had to say about the future, is to believe the teachings of Jesus. People have tried to make The Revelation say all sorts of things that it never says; and they have almost always concluded that it is a revelation that their church or their denomination is the right one and all others are wrong. But it's not a revelation of any such thing.

The Revelation is a poetic picture of how the teachings and example of Jesus Christ work to overcome all the evil forces in the world. The amazing accuracy of its predictions is there to give hope to those of us who will be called on to die for our faith, particularly in the years just before Christ returns to rule the earth. They are not there to startle and amaze the general public.

(Bible passages referred to in each chapter appear in an appendix at the end of each chapter.)

In the tenth chapter of The Revelation (verses 9-10) an angel comes to John with a "little book" that he tells him to eat. He says the book will start out tasting as sweet as honey when he puts it in his mouth, but by the time it reaches his stomach, it'll be "bitter". This is a good description of The Revelation. It's great fun to crack the code and work out some of the mysteries. But when you've finally seen what it is revealing, far from feeling entertained, you'll feel more responsible for the evils of the world, and for taking (or not taking) a stand against them. So once again, we must warn those who come to read this book just out of curiosity: You are not going to like what you find.

Christ had a problem with all the hoop-la about anything supernatural. People with bad spirits in them were always trying to spout off about him being the Son of God, and he was always telling them to shut up. (Mark 3:11-12) He told his disciples to do the same thing. (Mark 8:29-30) Whenever he healed someone, he would tell them to keep it quiet. (Mark 1:44; 5:42-43; 7:35-36) He said, "An evil generation seeks miracles, but they will not be given what they want. All they will get is the sign that Jonah gave to Nineveh." (Luke 11:29-30) (Note: All that Jonah gave Nineveh was the truth... from both barrels; and they repented as a result of it.)

The record shows that Jesus gave the general public quite a few miracles. But he did not indulge them by doing so. He called the shots. He decided whether he was going to do a miracle or not; and "an evil generation" did not like it. They wanted to be able to harness his powers and use them for their own selfish ends. (John 6:26)

We human beings just naturally feel that if someone could do a really convincing job of healing the sick or raising the dead or predicting the future, then people would recognise that person's spiritual authority, and start following God. But Jesus knew better. And that is one of the themes of The Revelation: God's ways are not our ways.

In The Revelation, Jesus Christ is referred to as "The Lamb". And the various kings and empires throughout world history are referred to as "Beasts". What the book reveals is how a harmless sheep... make that a harmless baby sheep... no, less than that: a harmless slain baby sheep... conquers all the raging and roaring empires of the world. How unbelievable!

The "Lamb" does so in direct contradiction to all our natural expectations. And he does so in order that God's power and God's wisdom might be more dramatically demonstrated. This is consistent with all that Jesus Christ taught. He was always emphasising the paradox of winning through losing, of turning the other cheek, of the meek inheriting the earth.

The "Beast" of Revelation is a carry-over from the writings of Daniel, in the Old Testament, where he used animals to depict world empires. Daniel lived at the time of the Babylonian Empire. A lion with wings was its symbol. Daniel had a dream one night (recorded in Daniel 7:2-7), in which he saw a lion with eagle's wings. But the wings were eventually plucked, and the lion became a man. Then he saw a bear, followed by a panther with four wings and four heads.

The last creature that Daniel saw really bothered him. It was a cross between an animal and a machine, with iron teeth, brass claws, and ten horns,

each of which represented a different leader. It was "dreadful and terrible" as it "devoured and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with the feet of it." Finally, Daniel saw "The Ancient of Days" overthrow the thrones of all these beasts. He saw "The Son of Man" come with the clouds of heaven (Daniel 7:13-14) and receive a kingdom which will never be destroyed.

Understand that Daniel was writing many years before Jesus Christ was even born. "The Ancient of Days" is a term for God, whereas "The Son of Man", as we have said, is a term for the promised Messiah. Christ had not yet come at that time.

Daniel prayed for an interpretation of his dream, and God told him: "These great beasts are four kings that will arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High will take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever and ever." (Daniel 7:17)

The "saints" who take over the kingdom are followers of Christ (or the Messiah), who conquers all of these kingdoms, including the most horrible last one. The Jews just naturally assumed from this that the Christ must be a powerful warrior. So when Jesus came, born in a manger, living almost as a beggar, and teaching humility and love, even his closest followers found it hard to think of him as the Christ. How could his meek approach conquer the Roman Empire (or any empire for that matter)? As expected, rather than conquering anything, he himself was finally captured and killed: The Lamb was slain.

But history has shown that this one man, who never wrote a book, never owned a home, never led an army, never held any political office... this Lamb of a man has changed and influenced more lives than anyone else who has ever lived. The whole world measures time from his birth. And he promises to come yet again in the near future to establish a visible kingdom here on earth.

Until he comes, all we have are "beasts". Daniel saw a lion with the wings of an eagle, a bear, and a panther. Do these animals represent any countries in the world today? Is there a country that is symbolised by a lion? Does it have any connection with a country symbolised by an eagle? Is there a country symbolised by a bear? And what about the panther (or leopard)? It had four different heads. Could the panther represent several different countries?

The world in the last half of the Twentieth Century was divided between two super-powers - America

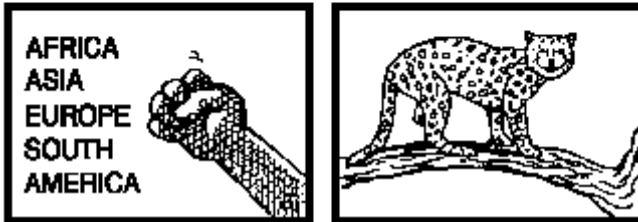


and Russia – with a rising influence from The Third World on one hand and China on the other. The eagle is the symbol for America (and the lion is the symbol for England, from which the eagle has grown); the bear is the symbol for Russia; and the panther is the symbol for Black Power, or the militant Third World. More on China (the Dragon) later in this book.

BABYLON



THE THIRD WORLD



Here we have the symbols for the three major political forces of the Twentieth Century, plus one final "Beast" which eventually puts the other three to shame with its power and brutality.

Of course this could just be coincidence. Mention of eagles, bears and panthers doesn't prove anything in itself. But please be patient until you have seen more of the evidence to suggest that the prophecies are talking about the times in which we now live.

To start us in that direction, we will look at a prophecy which is not open to so many interpretations. In the next chapter, we will look at a prophecy which is probably the most astounding and verifiable prophecy in the whole Bible. Hundreds of years before the crucifixion of the one whom Christians call the Messiah, the prophet Daniel predicted the exact date of the Messiah's death. Read on and see for yourself.

Appendix, Chapter 5

Revelation 10:9-10. I went to the angel and said to him, "Give me the little book." And he said to me, "Take it and eat it up; and it will make your belly bitter, but it will be in your mouth sweet as honey." And I took the little book out of the angel's hand and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

Mark 3:11-12. Unclean spirits... fell down before him and cried, saying, "You are the Son of God!" And he straitly charged them that they should not make him known.

Mark 8:29-30. ... Peter ... said to him, "You are the Christ." And he charged them that they should tell no man of him.

Mark 1:44. He said unto him, "See that you say nothing to anyone; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing those things which Moses commanded..."

Mark 5:42-43. Straightway the damsel arose and walked... and they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no one should know it.

Mark 7:35-36. Straightway his ears were opened and the string of his tongue was loosed and he spoke plainly. And [Jesus] charged them that they should tell no one.

John 6:26. Jesus answered, "You seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled."

Daniel 7:2-7. Daniel said, "I saw in my vision by night... and four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings... Behold another beast, a second, like a bear... After this I beheld and lo, another like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl. The beast also had four heads, and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth Beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it. It was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns."

Daniel 7:9-11. "I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit... A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him... I beheld even till the Beast was slain and his body destroyed and given to the burning flame."

Daniel 7:13-14. "Behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven and came to the Ancient of days ... And there was given him dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

Daniel 7:16-18. "I came near to one of them that stood by and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things. These great beasts, which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever."

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6. The Seventy Weeks

Prophecy is a cross between art and mathematics. It is both subjective and objective. The arty (or subjective) side is the most important, in terms of what it is teaching; but the mathematical (or objective) side appeals to skeptics who want measurable proof. Of course the real genius of genuine prophecy is in how the two can combine. Prophecy can be objectively measurable at the same time that it illustrates and combines several powerful universal truths.

God won't waste his time with magic tricks just to entertain us. He's not likely to tell you that there'll be an accident in George St., Sydney tomorrow at noon, or that the stock market is going to go up by 32 points, because in the vastness of eternity these are only trivial incidents. The particular glimpses of the future that

God chooses to give us are only those which have the most profound spiritual implications.

And what could have had more profound implications than the life and death of Jesus Christ? This is the dominant theme of all the prophecies in the part of the Bible which was written before Jesus was born. Some of these prophecies you might already be familiar with.

Most of us, for example, would have seen Christmas cards with something like this printed on them: "A virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel." (Immanuel is a Hebrew word for 'God is with us'.) That prophecy comes from Isaiah 7:14.

At Easter we might see cards with these words from Isaiah 53: "He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities, and the chastisement of our peace was upon him... He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth."

Such prophecies paint a beautiful picture of the humble, loving Messiah that so many people failed to comprehend at the time when Jesus first appeared on the earth. But exactly who the prophecies are talking about is open to debate. You could technically argue that they are referring to someone besides Jesus. They may even be referring to a Messiah who has not yet come. Most of them don't even specifically say that they are talking about the Messiah.

To be certain that they are talking about Jesus of Nazareth, we need something more specific. Why couldn't the Bible just say something like, "The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem of Judea in the year 4 B.C.. and his name will be Jesus."

Well, there is a prophecy, written centuries before Christ, which must stand as the ultimate proof that Jesus is the Messiah. In fact, it is the only passage in the entire Old Testament which actually uses the word "Messiah", and it specifically says that Christ (which is the Greek word for Messiah) will be "cut off" in 30 A.D. That is, in fact, the exact year when Jesus was crucified.

But we must warn people that to fully appreciate this prophecy, you'll need to pull out your calculators and do some arithmetic. Nothing fancy, mind you, but it will take a bit of concentration.

For starters, there was no such thing as 30 A.D. at the time that the prophecy was written. There was no numbering system at all for one year as compared to another. Instead, you calculated things according to significant historical events. A bit like saying, "I started uni in the year that Menzies was elected Prime Minister."

If you're the arty type and find mathematics boring, then this chapter may be a bit of a drag. But if you want to see the most mathematically verifiable prophecy in the entire Bible, then the effort will definitely be worth it. So here goes...

It's in Daniel 9:24-26. Judea had been destroyed in the 6th Century B.C. Many Jews had been carried away as exiles into Babylon. Then, in 447 B.C., permission was given to the Jews to rebuild Jerusalem, and to be ruled by their own law. In Daniel 9:24-26, God tells Daniel that his "people" (i.e. the Jews) will,

from the time that rebuilding started, have 490 years of history left. But seven years before the 490 years are up, God says that their "Messiah will be cut off".

(These remaining seven years will be particularly important when we come to our study of The Revelation later in this book, but for now, we will just focus on the period of 483 years that were left until the Messiah was to be "cut off".)

Artaxerxes, King of the Medes and the Persians, commanded Nehemiah in 447 B.C. to rebuild Jerusalem. A hundred years earlier, King Cyrus had allowed the Jews to rebuild their Temple. You can find this information in most history books. It is recorded in the Bible too (Nehemiah 2:5-9), but the Bible account, of course, does not have a date next to it. Nevertheless, 476 years later, in 30 A.D., Jesus Christ was crucified, as God had promised to Daniel.

(For those who are sharp enough to note that 447 and 30 do not add up to 476, don't forget that there is no such thing as a year marked "zero". Calendars go straight from the year 1 B.C. to the year 1 A.D., thus more or less skipping a year.)

There is another discrepancy, however, in that the 476 years shown in modern history books contradicts our figure of 483 years (490-7). But first, another little explanation.

If you're reading a King James Version of the passage, you will find that God says to Daniel, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people." The word translated "week" is literally "seven", but it is also the Hebrew word for "week". In other words, "seventy sevens are determined for your people." The Jews had a strong attraction to the number seven, which is used repeatedly in The Revelation as well. They broke time up into seven day periods (or weeks) and seven year periods (which were also called weeks).

In Genesis 29 there is the famous story of Jacob being tricked into working an extra seven years before he could marry Rachel, because his future father-in-law had slipped Rachel's older sister, Leah, into his bed after he had completed his first seven years of labour for a bride. In the 27th verse, the father-in-law says (King James Version), "Fulfil her week and we will give you this also for the service which you shall serve with me yet seven other years." It goes on to say (in verse 28), "And Jacob did so, and fulfilled his week, and he gave him Rachel his daughter to wife also."

The modern translations don't use the word "week". (e.g. Instead of seventy weeks, they just say things like "seven times seventy years".)

So God was telling Daniel that 490 years (or seven times seventy years) was "determined" for Daniel's people (the Jews).

Daniel 9:25 goes on: "From the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto Messiah the Prince (Christ the Lord) shall be seven 7-year periods (49 years), plus sixty-two 7-year periods (434 years)."

Add these together and you will see that this gives you a total of 483 years.

The next verse (Daniel 9:26) says, "After the sixty-two 7-year periods, shall Messiah be cut off; but not for himself." The Today's English Version of the Bible translates this, "At the end of that time, God's chosen leader will be killed unjustly."

Because this is the only place in the entire Old Testament where the word "Messiah" is used, this prophecy, more than any other, is talking specifically about the long awaited Hebrew Messiah. You cannot say otherwise. And it gives a date when the Messiah will be "cut off" (or killed), "but not for himself". Christ was executed as a criminal, but it was not for anything that he had done wrong; he died as the innocent sacrificial Lamb for the sins of the whole world, in 30 A.D.

Now let's look at the discrepancy. The prophecy says that Christ would be cut off 483 years after the decree to rebuild Jerusalem; whereas the history books say that it was 476 years later that it actually happened. There is a difference of six years. How do we explain that?

The explanation comes from a comparison of calendars. We use a solar calendar with a year of 365 and a quarter days, or the exact period of time it takes the earth to orbit the sun. The Babylonian year was 354 days long. But the Bible uses a "prophetic year" of twelve equal 30-day months, totalling 360 days.

Solar Calendar	Bible Calendar	"Weeks"
447 B.C.	48 yrs	454 B.C.
399 B.C.	49 yrs	405 B.C.
30 A.D.	428 yrs	30 A.D.
Total:	476 yrs	69 X 7 yrs

The Revelation uses the prophetic year of 360 days. It refers repeatedly to a period of three and a half years, but sometimes it uses months (42 months), and sometimes it uses days (1260 days). If we had used a solar calendar to calculate 42 months (or three and a half years), we would have arrived at a figure of 1278 days, and our calculations would have been out by 18 days.

So if we were to change the 483 years of Daniel's prophecy, computed at 360 days per year (for a total of 173,880 days), to solar years of 365 and a quarter days each, we would come up with exactly 476 years and 21 days...consistent with what the history books state! Go ahead and work it out for yourself.

There is no way that this prophecy can be pushed aside as contrived, or based on subjective interpretation. It is clearly talking about the promised Messiah, and it clearly gives the date when he died. If Jesus Christ was not the Messiah, then we must look for someone else who died in the same year. How could such a prediction have been made hundreds of years ahead of time without help from God. Where is there any prediction in all history which can be more objectively proven to be supernatural than this one?

If you get nothing else from this book, let it be very clear to you right now that there is a God in heaven who has spoken to us through the Bible and, more importantly, he has spoken to us through his Messiah, Jesus Christ. Your very existence on this planet is for the purpose of gauging whether you are going to respond to God in faith, or whether you are going to go on doing your own selfish thing. You cannot be neutral. You cannot argue that there is no evidence one

way or the other. You cannot remain complacent. You will be judged eternally on the basis of how you respond to the voice of God coming through his Son, Jesus Christ.

Appendix, Chapter 6

Daniel 9:24-26. "Seventy weeks are determined upon your people and upon your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem, unto the Messiah the Prince, shall be seven weeks and threescore and two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. And the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."

Revelation 12:6, 14. The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days... To the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent.

Revelation 11:2-3. ...the holy city shall they tread under foot forty-two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth.

Revelation 13:5. There was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty-two months.

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7. The Missing 'Week'

Theoretically the end of the world could still be another 1,000 years or more away. Despite claims to the contrary, there appears to be nothing in scripture that says when it will happen. However, because some things leading up to the end are already starting to take shape, it is quite likely that the end is very near.

And just because we cannot at this point say when the end will come, does not mean that we won't know until the last minute. In fact, there is a very precise countdown over the last seven years before Jesus returns; and there are certain things to look for as an indication that the countdown has begun.

These last seven years are referred to in Daniel's prophecies, but they are referred to more extensively in the prophecies of The Revelation. We will concentrate more on the details of what actually happens at that time in later chapters. But for now we will just discuss the significance of this missing "week".

Recall that the angel Gabriel spoke to Daniel concerning "seventy weeks" or 490 years. (Daniel 9:24) He said, "Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting

righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." But so far we have only considered sixty-nine of these seventy weeks, i.e. from 454 B.C. to 30 A.D.

The angel Gabriel had promised that by the end of the seventieth week everything would be apples for Daniel's people. Evil would be wiped out and "everlasting righteousness" would take its place. So if 483 years ended in 30 A.D., when Jesus was crucified, then all the problems of the world should have been pretty well fixed up seven years later, in 37 A.D. Was that what happened?

Far from it. The followers of Jesus Christ were persecuted and killed following his death and resurrection, and it was Daniel's own people who were doing it!

Just as a threat from God might be reversed if people repented, it seems that a promise might be reversed if people turned away from him. However, with a prophecy of this magnitude, you would think that God could have exercised his ability to look ahead and see what was going to happen, and said something to avoid confusion.

Closer examination shows that God did exactly that. He not only knew that Daniel's people would reject Christ, but he also knew that it would set in motion events that would significantly change the world thereafter. And we will show that the Seventy Weeks prophecy took all that into account when it was first written.

Long before he was crucified, Jesus Christ taught people that God wanted to do a new thing... something very big... something that would not be restricted by the limited political ambitions of the Jewish people.

Jesus was famous for commending such non-Jews as a Roman soldier and a Canaanite woman, for having greater faith than he had seen evidenced in any of the Chosen People (Israel). (Luke 7:9; Matthew 15:28) He told a Samaritan woman that a time was coming when it wouldn't matter whether a person worshipped in the holy city of Jerusalem or not, as long as their heart was right. (John 4:21) And then there is the famous story of the Good Samaritan, in which Jesus uses a member of the despised, heretical cult of the Samaritans as an example of the kind of person that God is looking for.

Jesus also made disparaging comments about the Temple in Jerusalem, which seemed to be saying that he was more important than the Temple. (John 2:19-21) And it was for this that he was crucified. (Matthew 26:61) No wonder that his own people rejected him! Was this the Messiah who was supposed to unite all of Israel and lead them in establishing the rule of God over all the earth? Hardly!

What Jesus was doing was challenging Israel to lay down their petty limited vision of God in political terms, and to see him in universal spiritual terms. It is still difficult to get people to see that today, because the organisation which has followed Christ has become every bit as political as the Jews were. The institutional church today is more concerned with power and wealth than with the lifestyle and values of the poor carpenter's son who wandered around Israel 2000 years ago.

Daniel's "people" were a nation, a race, a religion all rolled up into one. But the Messiah was coming to reveal to the world that the Creator of the Universe was not limited to one nation, one race, or even one religion. He was able to look at the heart of each individual, and to judge that individual alone on the basis of his or her sincere, humble, believing, loving spirit. This new spiritual "kingdom" that Jesus called the "Kingdom of God" would find itself generally acting in opposition to (or "cut off" from) the kingdom of Israel, and, indeed, the various kingdoms of Christianity as well.

When Jesus died on the cross, he said, "It is finished!" and the Bible tells us that God himself tore the huge, thick curtain that hung in the temple as the last barrier between the people and the place where they presumed that God lived... the "holy of holies". (Matthew 27:50-51) Israel had cut off its Messiah, and God had miraculously cut off Israel. They were finished. In doing that, God effectively put an end to all organised religion as the criteria for determining whether a person is a child of God or not.

Let us read the rest of the prophecy about Christ's death: "After sixty-two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself. And the people of the prince that will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end of it will be with a flood; and unto the end of the war desolations are determined." (Daniel 9:26)

In 70 A.D. Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem and destroyed the city and the Temple. To this day, Jews have not been able to offer animal sacrifices, because it can only be done in the one Temple, and in the one place (now occupied by a sacred Muslim mosque). Daniel 9:26 could be describing what happened in 70 A.D. The people (Roman armies) of the prince that will come (a future evil leader) destroyed the city (Jerusalem) and the sanctuary (Temple). This is the military interpretation of the passage. But that did not take place until forty years after Jesus was executed.



We said earlier that prophecies are often written so as to say more than one thing at the same time. In Daniel 9:24-26 Christ is called "the Prince". So Christ is the "prince that will come". It is his people (early Christians) who destroyed the power of the Temple and the Holy City. There was no flood of water, neither in 30 A.D. nor in 70 A.D., but there was a flood of people who joined the Christian Church on the Day of Pentecost, "seven weeks" (ironically) after Christ was crucified. Thousands were swept into this new movement, which then proceeded to change the world.

So Daniel 9:26 may be saying that the people (followers) of the Prince (or Messiah), had, by their faith, put an end to the so-called Chosen People, their Temple, and their Holy City. Daniel's people had cut themselves off by cutting off

their Messiah; and the last week (or seven years) was thus, taken away from them.

But Daniel's prophecy continues in Daniel 9:27. "He will confirm the covenant with many for one week; and in the midst of the week, he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease."

Here is a reference to the missing "week". Because the chosen people were "cut off" at the same time that their Messiah was "cut off" (by their own choice), the last week was put on hold. It has been on hold ever since 30 A.D. when Jesus Christ was crucified. But the visible people of God still have seven years of reign left.

What makes Christianity different from Judaism is that it is not a political organisation. It is an invisible, spiritual organisation, whose membership only God knows. This concept of "God's people" is more correct than that of political Israel (which is now only two of the twelve original tribes of Israel anyway, the others having been lost.)

But we are talking about two princes here – a good one and a bad one. We are talking about something that will put an end to sin and establish "eternal righteousness". Could both of these princes be planning to confirm a covenant with someone for one "week", or seven years, just before Jesus returns?

For the Jews, who want only to have their Temple back, and to be able to sacrifice animals for their sins, the "covenant" has to do with them as a nation, a race, and a religion. Their religion will not be complete until they have their Temple. This is the "old covenant" or what Christians call the "Old Testament".

For Christians there is a different covenant, paid for with the sacrificial blood of their perfect Lamb. It is not a covenant for a military kingdom, but a covenant for a spiritual kingdom. For 2,000 years we sincere believers have been isolated from each other. No visible organisation can ever claim to have been the kingdom of God on earth. Always there has been a mixture of weeds and wheat, sheep and goats, good and bad.

But for these last seven years, the "good guys" (i.e. the ones that God has personally examined and determined to be genuine, sincere servants, willing to do anything that he says), will be visibly united in one body consisting of twelve tribes.

In Revelation 7, God "seals" (or "confirms") 144,000 of his "servants". He organises them into tribes of 12,000 each. St. Paul taught that those who claim to be Jews (or more correctly, "children of Israel") through their physical relationship with Abraham are now no more children of Israel than are the Arabs. (Galatians 4:22-28) "We," says Paul, referring to people who have accepted Jesus as God's Messiah, "are the true children of promise."

When the religious Jews make an agreement with the evil "prince" to get their Temple back, the true children of God will be organised by their prince into tribes. And he will do it by supernaturally communicating to each of us through his Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God has made the bodies of all true believers his Temple now. And when all these believers become visibly united, they will be the ultimate fulfilment of Daniel's "people", living out their final seven years on earth.

But will there be some outward sign that the last seven years have begun? Since the last seven years will be marked by an agreement to rebuild the Temple (or in some other way to allow animal sacrifices to resume) in Jerusalem, this is what people should be watching for. When animal sacrifices resume in Jerusalem, you will know that there are less than seven years left until the end.

Later we will look more closely at exactly what happens during those final seven years.

Appendix, Chapter 7

Luke 7:9. [about a Roman soldier] When Jesus heard these things, he ... said to the people that followed him, "I say to you, that I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Matthew 15:28. [to a Canaanite woman] Jesus ...said to her, "Oh woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you even as you will." And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

John 4:21, 23. (to a Samaritan woman) Jesus said, "Woman, believe me, the hour comes when you will neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem worship the Father... The hour comes and now is, when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship him."

John 2:19-21. Jesus said to them, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." Then said the Jews, "Forty-six years was this Temple in building, and will you rear it up in three days?" But he spoke of the temple of his body.

Matthew 26:61. [Jewish leaders] said, "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days'."

John 19:30. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up the ghost."

Matthew 27:50-51. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost; and behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom.

Acts 2:41. Then they that gladly received his word were baptised, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

Acts 4:4. Many of them which heard the word believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand.

Revelation 7:2-4. I heard the number of them which were sealed: There were sealed a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Galatians 4:22-26, 28. It is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he of the freewoman was by promise. These things are an allegory; for these are the two covenants, the one from Mount Sinai, which genders to bondage, which... answers to Jerusalem which is now and which is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all... Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.

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8. Do the Pieces Fit?

In Chapter Three we gave some rules to observe in studying a prophecy. We will now consider them with regard to the prophecies about the Seventy Weeks, to see if the pieces fit.

The first thing we said you should look at was the Literal Meaning of the prophecy. Did we try to make the Seventy Weeks prophecy say something that it was not saying? Or was our interpretation consistent with the literal meaning of the prophecy? Bear in mind that the literal meaning of a prophecy is almost always hidden, or made more obscure, through the use of terms which can have several different meanings. But hidden meanings aside, any theory must be consistent with at least one of the meanings.

As it happens, although the dates (with regard to the decree by Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem, and the Messiah being cut off) are both objectively measurable, several other key words in the prophecy may have more than one possible meaning. In our interpretation, we discussed the two different possibilities with regard to the "prince that will come" (one being Christ, and the other being an evil leader whom we will eventually identify as the Antichrist), and we discussed the two different "covenants" (one for a Temple in Jerusalem, and the other for visible unity amongst all true believers). We suggested that there was truth in both of these interpretations, and both are at least partially consistent with the literal meaning.

We also commented on the term "cut off" and how it could have several meanings. It could mean that the Messiah would die, but it could also mean that the Messiah would be cut off from his people. Again we felt that both of these meanings could have been fulfilled at the same time.

The second test of a prophecy is whether or not it is consistent with Secular Events. Secular events can be helpful in determining which of several possible meanings is the correct one. As we now look back at history, Jesus of Nazareth was both killed and cut off from fellowship with his people, the Jews, in the year 30 A.D. If he was, in fact, the Messiah, these events bore out the authenticity of both of those interpretations.

The prophecy was also about Daniel's "people". The destruction of the sacred curtain in the Temple, at the time of Jesus' death, strongly supports the theory that his death signified the end of the Jews as "God's Chosen People".

Of course other people died in the same year Jesus was killed. So technically the prophecy could have been about someone besides Jesus of Nazareth. But whoever it was should have been killed, or in some way "cut off" in 30 A.D. Today, 2,000 years later, there can be no doubt that secular history has proven that this same Jesus has had the great influence that the Jews had hoped their Messiah would have. There was no one else alive around 30 A.D. who could possibly rival him as the person referred to in the prophecy.

With regard to the last seven years, which have not yet taken place (and which we have not yet studied in detail), it is a little harder to find evidence from secular events. However, anyone with intimate knowledge of Jewish ideology would know that events are taking place which could well lead to animal sacrifices resuming in Israel.

Israel as a nation longs desperately to rebuild its Temple. The fact that one of the most holy of all Muslim mosques (The Dome of the Rock) has been built on the sacred Jewish site where the Temple should be, poses a serious political dilemma. A number of years ago, a mentally disturbed Australian thought he could help God by blowing up the mosque; but he was apprehended and charged. In 1998, a conservative Jewish group made a public request for parents to donate their first-born male sons to them, to be trained and ritually prepared to act as priests if/when a new Temple is built. Over the years there have been a number of moves to re-establish animal sacrifices. One proposal for an ecumenical Temple involved three different temples in one: one for Muslims, one for Christians, and one for Jews, with all of them on the same sacred site. More bizarre plans call for tunnelling under the mosque and making a subterranean Temple directly beneath the Muslim mosque. One way or another, it appears to be only a matter of time before a Temple will be built and the old Temple covenant will be "confirmed".

The third thing to look for in understanding a prophecy is Spiritual Lessons. We have shown that everything about the Seventy Weeks prophecy seemed to be emphasising a contrast between political force and spiritual force, between national identity and individual faith, between worshipping buildings and worshipping the God in whose name the building was made, between serving earthly kings and kingdoms and serving a heavenly king and kingdom. It was because of their blindness to these lessons that people did not understand so many of the prophecies about Christ to begin with. And it is because people continue to miss the significance of these lessons that they continue to reject Christ today. The world is obsessed with political structures, whereas the Christian message is that there is no political structure in the world that can guarantee you spiritual peace or eternal salvation.

All of the lessons above are more or less parts of the same lesson, which is that God is looking for personal faith, and not organisational or national affiliation. As we study further prophecies, both in the book of Daniel and in The Revelation, we will see that this same general lesson comes up repeatedly.

Finally, a prophecy must be examined with regard to the Use of Code Words. We have already mentioned two terms (Prince, and Covenant) which were shown to have double meanings within this prophecy; but there are others.

Sometimes code words are used to hide the meaning of the prophecy. The Seventy Weeks prophecy started with a reference to the rebuilding of Jerusalem, and it concluded with a reference to sacrifices in the Temple. For those who put their faith in the city and the building, these references may have given them some feeling of safety over the years, i.e. a belief that what really matters to God are things like the rebuilding of the holy city of Jerusalem and the resumption of ritual sacrifices in the Temple. Had they thought that the prophecy was actually threatening their Temple or their city, they might have removed it from their holy books long before it was fulfilled.

Code words often link one prophecy with other prophecies, so that they each reinforce the same truth. The words, "Jerusalem" and "Temple" are important concepts in prophecies that are found both in the Gospels and in The Revelation.

One of the saddest passages in the Bible comes from Matthew 23:37-38, where Jesus says: "Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets and stone them which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under wings, but you would not [let me]! Behold, your house is left to you desolate." He then said to his disciples, in reference to the Temple, "Do you see all these things? Truly I say to you, there shall not be left here one stone on another that shall not be thrown down!"

This statement, in Matthew 24:2, comes at the start of the longest continuous prophecy about the end of the world in all of the Gospels. Christ is saying that what lies ahead for the world as a whole, starts with desolation for Jerusalem and destruction for their beloved Temple.

The concept of a more spiritual Temple and a more spiritual Jerusalem was made more complete after the resurrection of Christ from the dead, when he sent his Holy Spirit to live inside of his followers. This experience enables believers to communicate directly with God, and to develop a direct link that does not depend on human institutions or mediators.

St. Paul says, "Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit now?" (I Corinthians 6:19) Then in another place, he says, "Jerusalem which now is, is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:25-26)

In the Revelation, the concepts of a Temple in heaven (Revelation 11:1) and a city come down from heaven, called the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2), are also taught.

So the Seventy Weeks prophecy is saying much more than just that Jesus Christ was going to die in 30 A.D. It is one piece in a much bigger puzzle, and so far, in addition to being measurably accurate, it fits in neatly with the overall picture that God is trying to give us through Bible prophecy in general.

Appendix, Chapter 8

Matthew 23:37-24:3. Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem! You that kill the prophets and stone them which are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, "Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord."

And Jesus went out and departed from the Temple. His disciples came to him to show him the buildings of the Temple, and Jesus said to them, "Don't you see all these things? Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone on another that will not be thrown down."

And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of your coming and of the end of the world?"

Revelation 11:1. There was given me a reed like a rod, and the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the Temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein."

Revelation 11:18. The temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament. There were lightnings and voices and thunders and an earthquake and great hail.

Revelation 21:2-3. I John saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people. God himself shall be with them and be their God."

Revelation 21:10. He carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.

Revelation 21:14. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

Revelation 21:22. I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.

WARNING!

Faith in miracles and faith in prophecies won't save anyone. The only thing that will save you is faith in GOD.

So even though we have just shown you (in chapters 6-8) proof that the Bible accurately predicts the future, faith in God and a willingness to do what is right, should not depend on whether or not this prophecy is accurate, or even whether it exists.

Hopefully the prophecy will provide inspiration and encouragement to people who are finding it hard to have faith in today's world. But there is another prophecy that says the coming world leader will "think to change times", (Daniel 7:25) apparently as part of his "war on the saints".

The more that calendars change, the harder it will become to recognise the accuracy of the Seventy Weeks prophecy. And you can be pretty sure that the Antichrist will want to obliterate references to Christ's birth from the calendar when he comes to power. Watch for it!

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9. World Empires

We have noted that one of the recurring themes of Bible prophecy is that God has a spiritual kingdom which is more powerful than any earthly kingdom. But people invariably lean in favour of political power rather than spiritual power. When his own people, the Children of Israel, asked to have a king, God gave in to their wishes; but he stated that they only wanted a king because they had already turned away from him. (I Samuel 8:4-8) Their spiritual leader, Samuel, told them it was "great wickedness" to be wanting a king. (I Samuel 12:17-19)

One of the world's greatest sociologists, Max Weber, did a monumental study of the various religions of the world, and came to the conclusion that every major religion exists for one purpose, and that is to teach the people to worship

their country and their king. Despite all the talk about God, and about other religious matters, there is precious little evidence that any religion has a commitment to truth, love, faith, or God that is stronger than their loyalty to their country. Their talk of God is all a sham.

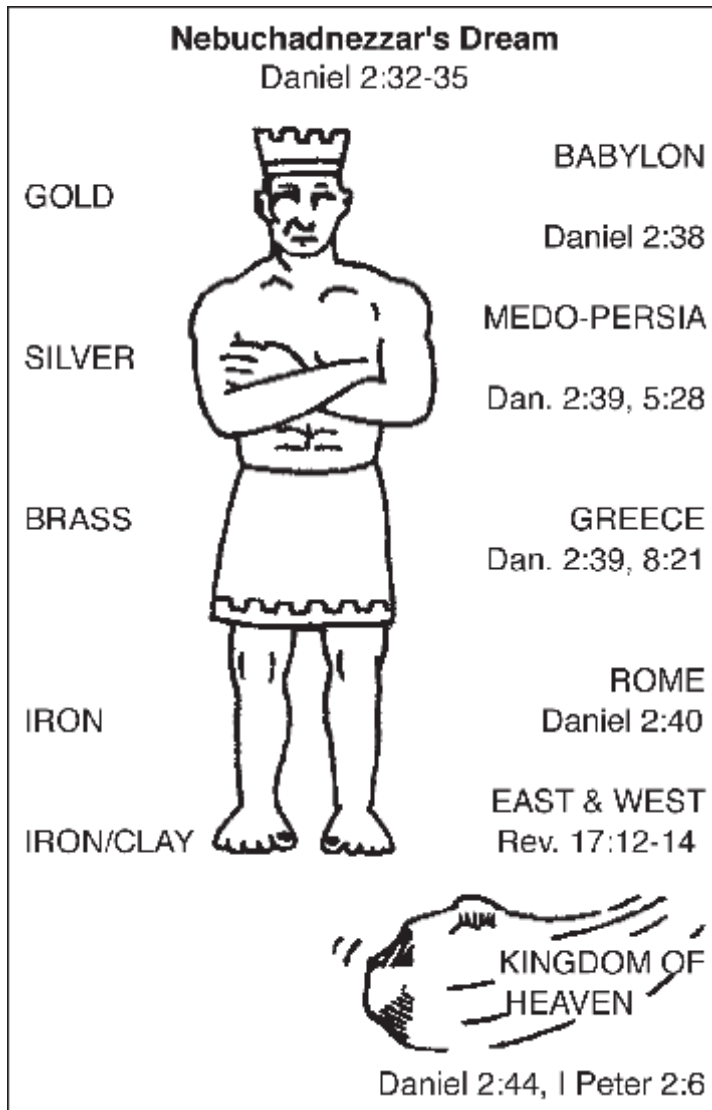
So it is little wonder that the King of kings... the God of heaven... the Creator of the Universe would be more than a little upset with our stubborn faith in "the arm of flesh" to save and defend us, rather than his transcendent power. And he makes that point abundantly clear in prophecy after prophecy.

A prophecy which illustrates that point, and which gives us some clues toward understanding the final world government that will be set up on earth, is found in Daniel 2:31-45.

The background to the prophecy is that many of the children of Israel had been carried away as captives by the Babylonian Empire. Daniel was one of them; but he managed to get himself a pretty good position working for Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. One night, the king had a dream in which he saw a statue with a head of gold, arms and chest of silver, stomach and thighs of brass, legs of iron, and feet of both iron and clay mixed together. In the dream, a stone came out of nowhere and struck the image on its feet, totally destroying it. Then the little stone grew into a mountain which eventually filled the whole earth. The king felt that the dream was very significant. He wanted Daniel to interpret it.

Daniel said that the statue was of the king himself; but that it also represented four empires that would come after the Babylonian Empire.

We know from history that the Babylonian Empire was followed by the Medo-Persian Empire (an alliance, symbolised by two arms of silver). This was followed by an empire that Daniel said would "bear rule over all the earth", symbolised by the statue's brass stomach and thighs. (Daniel 2:39) History shows that this empire which bore rule over all the earth was the Greek Empire.



Then there was to be a fourth empire, represented by the legs of the statue, which would be as "strong as iron". (Daniel 2:40) The Roman Empire succeeded the Greek Empire. Like the two legs, the Roman Empire eventually divided into Eastern Europe and Western Europe.

Since the fall of the Roman Empire, there has been no single world government. Like the feet of the statue in the king's dream, the world has been divided between dictatorships (i.e. iron countries) and democracies (i.e. clay countries). In the Twentieth Century the division was between the two super-powers, America (representing the West) and Russia (representing the East).

Daniel made particular mention of the ten toes, and he referred to them as a kingdom in themselves... a kingdom that is "partly strong and partly broken". So far, this empire has not appeared.

When the stone came out of nowhere, it struck the feet of the statue, and in so doing, it destroyed the entire image. Here is an important point that is illustrated by the statue and by a similar prophecy in The Revelation. Although the statue started out as being a statue of King Nebuchadnezzar, it is also a

statue of all the succeeding world empires. In the Revelation prophecy, there is a Beast with several different heads. The heads come and go, but the Beast stays the same. Or as one cynical voter put it, "No matter who you vote for, you still end up with a politician!"

So when a humble little stone comes out of nowhere and destroys the last manifestation of the Beast, it effectively destroys all the empires that have preceded it as well.

And what is the little stone? Daniel says that it is a kingdom which has been set up by God himself, a kingdom "which shall never be destroyed. The kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever." (Daniel 2:44-45)

This kingdom which is not in any way associated with all the other kingdoms, is nothing less than the "kingdom of heaven" that Jesus Christ spoke of. The kingdom of heaven was the theme of Christ's message from start to finish. He started out by saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 4:17) And he finished up by saying that "This gospel [or good news] of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14)

The gospel that most of the world has heard from the churches is about a kingdom in heaven (that you only go to when you die). This conveniently leaves the door open for them to continue to promote their various political kingdoms here on earth between now and when we die (including a near worship of the kingdom of Israel). But the gospel that Jesus wants preached is one that dares to challenge the right of any kingdom to stop us from serving and obeying God right now.

The kingdom of heaven does not evolve from the other kingdoms (as each successive empire and government has done throughout history). Instead of evolution, it is represented by revolution. Not military revolution, for that, too, would be like trying to destroy the devil by using weapons that we purchase from the devil himself. A true revolution works on truly revolutionary principles. Instead of hitting back, we turn the other cheek. Instead of fighting our enemies, we love them. Instead of trying to be great, we try to serve. Instead of trying to save our lives, we choose to lay them down. Instead of being a Beast, we become meek Lambs.

That is the good news of the kingdom of heaven. And it is a message that has not yet been preached throughout all the world. The King of Babylon missed it. (He went out and had a huge statue made of himself, and ordered the people to bow down to it!) The people missed it in Christ's day. They killed their Messiah. And they are missing it today. This happens because they are looking for an earthly king who will conform to their earthly ideas about power and wealth.

Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, "Did you never read in the scriptures, 'The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes.' Therefore I say to you, The kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth

the fruits of it. And whoever will fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Matthew 21:42-44)

The stone is the Kingdom and the stone is the King. The stone is Jesus and all that he taught. The empires of man rest on clay by comparison.

Jesus said in another place, "Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock... and everyone that hears these sayings of mine and does not obey them, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand. The rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell. Great was the fall of it." (Matthew 7:24-27) The kingdom of heaven is the kingdom that will destroy all the others and last forever.

But is anyone really listening?

Instead, the world moves relentlessly toward the final world government, as people from all parties and all religions are drawn together by their common lack of faith in a real God who is bigger than politics.

You will recall that we earlier mentioned four "beasts" that Daniel saw in a dream. Three were described as recognisable animals (the panther, the bear, and the lion with eagle's wings), but the fourth was quite different from the others. It had iron teeth and brass claws and ten horns on its head. Daniel said of it (7:7), that "it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it."

What Daniel was describing seems to be a unique world government which is based, not on a single king, but on an international alliance between many nations – a world government that does not come through military conquest, but rather through peaceful negotiation and co-operation... a kind of united group of nations!

This final world government worried Daniel. In particular, he was concerned about the ten horns on its head. He says, "I considered the horns and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. And behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things." (Daniel 7:8)

So the ten horns (and the ten toes) appear to represent ten countries or leaders. But this "other little horn" is the real nasty, the ultimate Beast or Antichrist, the world dictator, who comes to power by destroying (or at least silencing) three other countries, leaving a ten-member council to become the new world empire.

Daniel seeks further information about this unusual Beast, and this is what he gets:

"Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron and his nails of brass; which devoured, broke in pieces and stamped the residue with his feet; and of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints. He prevailed against them until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the

most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." (Daniel 7:19-22)

Note that this final world leader makes war against the saints. Other references to him indicate that he is actually quite popular with the rest of the world. Far from being a monster, he comes across as a saviour... at least at first. True, he has terrible power; but the power is primarily used against one group of individuals... the "saints". Everyone else seems to benefit.

God's angel explained the vision further to Daniel, more or less restating what we have already guessed: "The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms and shall devour the whole earth and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise. Another shall rise after them and he shall be diverse from the first; and he shall subdue three kings. He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws. And they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time." (Daniel 7:23-25)

This phrase ("a time and times and the dividing of time") is translated as three and a half years in most modern translations. It is the same phrase that is used for three and a half years (or 42 months, or 1260 days) in The Revelation. This is the period of "great trouble" that is covered in chapters 8-13 of The Revelation.

The dream about the ten toes and the dream about the ten horns both end in much the same way, with God setting up his kingdom and doing away with the systems of man. In the king's dream, he saw a stone strike the statue on its feet and destroy it. In Daniel's dream he says that he saw the Beast "slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame." (Daniel 7:11)

He says, "The judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his [i.e. the evil king's] dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end... And the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom..." (Daniel 7:26-27)

We have here pretty much the basic message of The Revelation and of all prophecy, which is that God's kingdom is eternal, while man's kingdoms are temporary. A very simple message, and yet one that is missed almost universally. People pay lip service to their various concepts of God in weekly religious rituals; but in practice, they look to the systems of man for all that matters in their lives.

Appendix, Chapter 9

I Samuel 8:4-7. All the elders of Israel ...came to Samuel, unto Ramah, and said to him, "Behold, you are old, and your sons walk not in your ways. Now, make us a king to judge us like all the nations." But the thing displeased Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to the Lord. The Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them."

I Samuel 12:17-19. [Samuel said:] "I will call to the Lord and he will send thunder and rain, that you may perceive and see that your wickedness is great which you have done in the sight of the Lord, in asking for a king." So Samuel called to the Lord, and the Lord sent thunder and rain that day, and all the people greatly feared the Lord and Samuel. And all the people said to Samuel, "Pray for your servants to the Lord your God, that we die not; for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king."

Daniel 2:31-45. [Daniel said:] "You, Oh King, saw, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before you; and the form of it was terrible. This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. You saw till a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors. The wind carried them away, that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. You, Oh King, are a king of kings, for the God of heaven has given you a kingdom, power, and strength and glory. ... You are this head of gold.

After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and another third kingdom of brass which shall bear rule over all the earth. The fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron, forasmuch as iron breaks in pieces and subdues all things. As iron that breaks all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. And whereas you saw the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided. But there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as you saw the iron mixed with miry clay. As the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken. And whereas you saw iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men. But they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.

Daniel 5:28. [Daniel said to King Belshazzar:] "Your kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians."

Daniel 8:20-21. [Gabriel said to Daniel:] "The ram which you saw having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia. The great horn that is between his eyes is the first king."

Revelation 17:7, 12-14. The angel said, "I will tell you the mystery... of the Beast... which has seven heads and ten horns ... The ten horns that you saw are ten kings that have received no kingdom as yet, but receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. They have one mind, and will give their power and strength to the Beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome

them; for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings. They that are with him are called... and faithful."

I Peter 2:6. "Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect and precious. He that believes on him will not be confounded." (Note: The word "Babylon" means confounded or confusion.)

Matthew 4:17. From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 24:14. This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness... and then will the end come."

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10. Revelation the Movie

We will now shift our attention to The Revelation, starting with the introduction that appears in chapters 4-7. Most of the introduction is taken up with a "book" that has seven "seals" on it. In this chapter we will try to understand Revelation 4-7 and that "book" in terms of technology differences between the First Century A.D. and the Twenty-First Century.

There was a time when ink and parchment were sophisticated technology. Then there came the invention of paper and the printing press. At each stage the new technology was used to communicate the will of God to the human race. And over time the instruments through which that revelation has come have assumed a sacredness which has been akin to idolatry.

Whether it was the stone tablets on which Moses received the Ten Commandments or Gutenberg's first edition of the Bible on his new press, the artefacts have become priceless.

But God moves on and so does technology. Today we have the powerful influence of motion pictures, recorded music, and special effects. It seems only natural that, at some stage, God would choose to use these media as well to communicate his will to the people of this planet.

When I started reading The Revelation as literature and not as a source of religious argument, my first impression was that it should be a movie. Its imagery, poetry, costumes, music, special effects, and casts of thousands were straight out of Hollywood.

A few films – suspense thrillers in particular – have tried to capitalise on isolated references from the book; but the results have fallen far short of the overall power of The Revelation. The closest thing to catching the true spirit of the book is the "Hallelujah Chorus" from Handel's Messiah, and that is based on only half of two verses – Revelation 11:15b & 19:16b.

It was only gradually that I formed a theory that The Revelation might have actually begun as a movie... that John had actually travelled forward in time to "the Lord's day" or to the time when Christ himself was about to return to earth (Revelation 1:10), and he had been allowed to watch a movie which depicted the epic events that would climax human history as we now know it. (Please note: This is just a personal theory, and hopefully will not take away from the rest of what this book is saying.)

John then had the overwhelming task of returning to his own age and communicating to the rest of history what he saw. As a result, the book has remained something of a mystery for 2000 years. It has not been without meaning; but the grand message which so many have sensed it contained has been trapped by the limited dimensions of words and paper, waiting for the age in which we now live, when it could be portrayed on the big screen. Parts of The Revelation have been timeless, and as such the book has not been wasted all these years. But its full significance relates to the people of the 21st Century.

Just as the movie, according to this theory, became the inspiration for John's book, so John's book may one day become the inspiration for the movie. Cecil B. DeMille was once asked why he did so many epics based on the Bible, and he replied, "Why waste 2000 years of advance publicity?" However, in DeMille's case, he was only dramatising stories which were more or less complete in themselves. Revelation: The Movie, or the movie of the book of the movie, would be (or was, depending on your perspective!) what the Bible was actually pointing forward to and trying to describe in the first place.

It is quite possible that any third-rate movie producer could claim to be producing Revelation: The Movie and then proceed to give whatever interpretation to the book that he or she chooses. To a limited extent that is what some of the cheap thrillers mentioned earlier have done already. But I would like to think that there is a specific movie by a specific producer – an absolutely phenomenal production – which actually inspired The Revelation itself, and which is yet to be released. Time will tell.

Certainly there is a powerful message with far-reaching implications, that needs to be communicated to the masses of the Twenty-First Century. If the end is coming, people need to be made aware of all that this implies. And the audio-visual medium seems to be the ideal way to proclaim that message to today's world.

But first, some clues that led to my original theory that John the Revelator watched a movie and it was the movie itself that inspired his book.

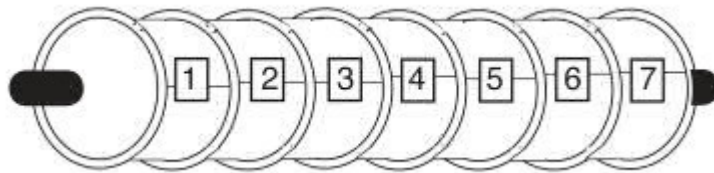
To start with, he didn't say he had a dream or vision, as happens with most revelations. He says he travelled through time to "the Lord's day". Tradition says the Lord's day is the day of the week when this all happened. But the Lord's day in the Bible always refers to a time in the future, when Christ will return to judge the world. (I Thessalonians 5:2; II Peter 3:10)

While there, in the Lord's day, John was introduced to a "book". Bear in mind that books in the First Century were not flat rectangular stacks of paper like we have today. A "book" was a scroll. Some very long religious scrolls were so big that two people would carry them, one person holding each end of the pole around which the parchment was wrapped.

If one movie took up several reels, as is the case with some non-digital commercial films today, the entire film (especially if it was an epic of considerable length) might resemble a giant scroll with a single pole inserted through the middle of all the reels. (See illustration, next page.)

John said the scroll was written on both sides. (Revelation 5:1) But he also said that it was sealed shut. It's not easy to say for certain that a scroll has

writing on both sides, if you can only see the outside surface. But if the material that the scroll was made of was transparent, then it would be possible to see both sides at once.



Also, while it is possible to write on both sides of a scroll, it is not very practical. It would be awkward to turn a "page" that was many metres long.

But whether this scroll was written on both sides or not, hardly seems worth mentioning... unless John felt it had significance. Remember that transparent materials were almost unheard of in John's day, and they certainly were not used in scrolls. But if he had seen a transparent film it would probably have impressed him sufficiently to cause him to mention it later.

Certainly he was very intrigued by this book even before it was opened. He says that he "wept much" (Revelation 5:4) when it looked like he was not going to be allowed to see what was in it.

Of course, apart from credits and the occasional subtitles, most films have very little writing on them. And interestingly enough, when the scroll was finally opened, John made no mention of reading words. Instead, he saw pictures, and they were moving pictures at that! (Revelation 6:2) Note that he does not call this a dream or a vision. The action was actually produced by the "scroll" itself.

John also described the scroll as having seven "seals". (Revelation 5:1) Each time one of the seals was broken, he was able to see a bit more of the action that he was describing. But think about it. Any attempt to put seven seals in a place where they would all be visible at the same time on a normal scroll, would also require that all seven seals be broken before you could even begin to open the scroll... unless you sliced the scroll into seven very thin scrolls side by side, in which case you would have seven seals on seven reels. (See the drawing on the previous page.) If the seven reels were side by side on the same axle, they would look exactly like a scroll, or "book"! And considering that sticky tape, the material used to seal the loose ends of films today, did not exist in John's day, it is reasonable to think that he would have described the tape as "seals".

John was very keen to see what was in this strange "book", but he did not know how to go about reading it, until someone with special authority ("The Lamb") came forward to open it for him and to reveal its contents.

Then, along with the pictures that John saw when the book was opened, were sounds. He compared the opening commentary to "the noise of thunder" (Revelation 6:1), a very appropriate description of what the elaborate sound system in most modern cinemas would resemble to someone coming from the First Century.

From what I have said so far, it is clear that this theory is not based on obscure documents or elaborate rewrites of what actually appears in the Bible. Instead, it is based on an honest attempt to picture exactly what it was that John

was describing. Readers should study chapters five and six of The Revelation for themselves to see if this is coming from an overactive imagination or if it may be the most reasonable explanation that could be given for what John said about the "book".

It is tempting to label the theory about John's journey through time as science fiction; yet it may be no more fiction than the miracles in DeMille's Ten Commandments or John Huston's The Bible. God and the supernatural are inseparable, whether the miracles involve parting the Red Sea or a journey into the future. The Revelation was written almost 2000 years ago; yet it depicts things that could only have taken place centuries after it was written. The invention of moving pictures is but a small part of what John saw of the future. This is not fanciful imagination. It is, in fact, more verifiable than the parting of the Red Sea.

As we have stated earlier, The Revelation was written to the "servants" of Jesus Christ. Herein lies the so-called "mystery" of The Revelation. It remains a mystery because so few people are willing to act on what it has to say. However, the sensational aspects of the book have enabled it to survive all these years, while its real purpose has remained a secret because of the threat it would represent to those who are not prepared to respond to its message.

A similar situation existed with Christ. He spoke in parables for the express purpose of hiding what he had to say. (Luke 8:10) People found the stories entertaining, but they failed to grasp their full meaning; and when they did sense something of the meaning, it was not easy to prove. Such was the case when some religious leaders "sought to lay hands on" Jesus because "they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them." They were not able to act on their suspicions because "they feared the people", who apparently found the stories entertaining. (Luke 20:19)

Christ used this technique to good advantage. And the movie industry has done much the same. It has repeatedly challenged the establishment and exposed corruption under the guise of entertainment. Great films like Citizen Kane and The Dictator are just two examples. And the same would be true of Revelation: The Movie. Its appeal to the masses would lie in such concepts as time travel and predictions about the near future. But its real aim should be to seek out and to inspire individuals who are, like Christ was, trying to stay true to ideals which today's world has largely trampled under its feet.

Appendix, Chapter 10

Revelation 19:16. He had on his vesture and on his thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Revelation 1:10. I was, in the Spirit, [at] the Lord's day. And I heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. [Note: The word used for "on" here can also be translated "at" as we have done above. It often meant "at a time in the future", as in Matthew 13:49.]

Revelation 4:1-2a. I looked and, behold, a door was opened in heaven, and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me, which

said, "Come up here and I will show you things which must be hereafter." And immediately I was in the spirit.

I Thessalonians 5:2. You yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord comes as a thief in the night.

II Peter 3:10. The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. The earth also, and the works that are in it will be burned up.

Revelation 5:1, 4. I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals... And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

Revelation 6:1-2. I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard (as if it were the noise of thunder) one of the four beasts saying, "Come and see." I saw, and behold, a white horse. And he that sat on him had a bow. A crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

Luke 8:10. Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God; but to others in parables, that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 20:19. The chief priests and the scribes the same hour sought to lay hands on him; and they feared the people, for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.

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11. The Four Horsemen

The fourth chapter of the Revelation describes John's visit to another dimension, where he sees the glory of God. It is a beautifully poetic picture that he paints, and it is not necessary to go into a detailed explanation of it in this chapter. Likewise, we have already described the incidents of the fifth chapter, where John saw the movie (or book, if you like), and wanted to watch it. This brings us to the sixth chapter, where the seals were removed one by one and John was introduced to what would be the overall theme of the message that awaited him.

Over half of the "book" (four reels, or seals, out of seven) has to do with four horsemen. These are collectively known as "The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse". There is a white horse, a red horse, a black horse, and a grey horse. At the Battle of Armageddon, Christ is described as riding on a white horse. (Revelation 19:11) Here John sees this same horseman going forth to conquer. And what is he going to conquer? He is going to conquer the other three horsemen!

The second horse is red (like blood), and the man on him causes people to kill each other. The Bible says that this horseman takes peace away from the world. Obviously he represents War. War itself comes from a foolish attempt to conquer through the use of weapons. The rider on the red horse has "a great sword". Each succeeding generation of people has found more cruel and more

sophisticated ways of destroying other people through war. And they always tell themselves that "This will be the war to end all wars." But it never happens.

So how is the rider on the white horse going to end all wars? What weapon does he have with which to do this? The word used here for his weapon is unclear. It has been translated "bow". No arrows; just a bow! The word doesn't occur anywhere else in the Bible, and the Greek lexicon seems to imply that the bow may be nothing but a piece of ribbon, rather than the string stretched tightly between two ends of a stick like that used by American Indians. Some weapon, eh? So Jesus is going to conquer all the armies of the world with a limp piece of ribbon!

In the description of Jesus at the Battle of Armageddon, he has a sword, but the sword is not held in his hand; rather it comes out of his mouth. St. Paul wrote, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but [they are] mighty through God, to the pulling down of strongholds." (II Corinthians 10:4) To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against... spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day... Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." (Ephesians 6:12-17) So our weapon is not a material sword, but rather the words of Jesus!

Spiritual weapons or not, people really will die at the Battle of Armageddon. God is not afraid of violence. But he does insist that he be the one who does it, and not some over-zealous followers who want to fight a "holy war" in his name.

So the only weapons he gives to us are the teachings of Jesus. If we are loyal to what God has said through Christ, he will provide us with weapons that will do the job better than all the armouries of earth when the time comes. For now, we must, like the Lamb, be content to merely wave ribbon-like banners at the forces of hell if that is what God requires.

How unlike the philosophy of the institutional church, which has shown a proclivity for blessing the weapons on both sides of an armed conflict!

The third horse is black. This horseman has the First Century equivalent of a cash register or calculator in his hand. He is announcing the prices of various commodities. People are being charged the equivalent of a day's wages for a basket of wheat or three baskets of barley. These same working class people are forbidden to touch such luxuries as wine or oil. The picture we have here is of the business world, in their black suits, black limos, and talking on their black mobile phones. They have structured the world's economy in such a way that most of the world struggles just to get the bare necessities of life, while a tiny minority enjoy all the luxuries. Indeed, this horseman must represent Greed.

We have not said much about greed up to this point. It was not challenged much in the Old Testament writings, which we have been studying up until now. But Jesus Christ saw mankind's desire to accumulate wealth as the root cause of all the world's problems. He went so far as to teach that the spiritual choice we each face is not whether we will work for God or work for Satan, but whether we will work for God or work for money. (Luke 16:13) His followers said things like, "The love of money is the root of all evil." (I Timothy 6:10) "Where do wars and fighting come from? Isn't it because you... desire to have and cannot obtain?"

You fight and war, and yet you have not..." (James 4:1-4) And "...Greed is idolatry." (Colossians 3:5)

The black horseman symbolises all the suffering and injustices that have been poured out on the earth because of corporate greed. The Christian answer is not to demand that the government do something about it, but rather it is that we will give of ourselves, all that we have! Jesus said, "If anyone comes to me and does not give up all that he has, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:33) He said, "Seek not what you shall eat or what you shall drink... for all these things do the nations of the world seek after... Rather seek the kingdom of God... It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give to the poor. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Luke 12:29-34)

This is not a popular message, but it is the Lamb's answer to the problems that now face the world. If we turn and hide from this truth, then we will never be able to see the rest of the secrets of The Revelation. For, as we have already said, the teachings of Jesus are the key to unlocking the mysteries of The Revelation.

The fourth horse, the grey one, is clearly named. The man riding on his back has become widely known as the Grim Reaper. The Bible says, "His name that sat on him was Death; and Hell followed with him." (Revelation 6:8)

The Bible says, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." (I Corinthians 15:25) But it will not be conquered through war and greed. In fact, war and greed only hasten death for much of the world. And they both overlook the fact that we are all going to die eventually anyway. Money can buy food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. It can buy heart transplants and potency drugs. It can pay for accommodation at the best health resorts and provide an environment that is virtually germ free. But it will not stop the Grim Reaper from sooner or later appearing at your door. And when that day comes, it will only be the Creator of life who will decide your fate for the rest of eternity. He will not be impressed with either your money or your weapons.

Isn't it time to consider that maybe Jesus, or the "Word of God" (the rider of the white horse), really can conquer death with his "ribbon"?



We Christians have been saying for centuries that our Messiah rose from the dead, that he conquered death. Today's world doesn't give much credence to that. But who else is as qualified to give answers to the puzzles of life and death? What if Jesus actually did rise from the dead? What if he can conquer

death? And what if he actually can give you eternal life? Wouldn't it be stupid to ignore him?

It has been said that even the richest people would sacrifice all their wealth to live another five or ten years, if they knew that they were only hours away from certain death. They would, of course, be stupid not to. In the face of death, things suddenly get into proper perspective. But for the bulk of our lives most of us live as though we will never die.

This Christ, the date of whose death was predicted hundreds of years before he was even born, whose life has changed the course of history, who claims to be the Son of God, says that he can give eternal life to anyone who will put their faith in him. True, he asks you to give up everything you own to follow him. But is that really so much to trade for eternal life?

Leo Tolstoy, the world famous author of War and Peace, had this to say about life and death:

"We have learned to look ahead in every part of our lives; but we do not look ahead to where life itself is leading. You may do all you can to protect yourself from danger and sickness, but in the end a building will fall on you, or a king will have you killed, or you will simply die in your bed with few people taking any interest in it..."

If you know ahead of time that all your strength will not be enough to win the war against death, wouldn't it be better to change now, and use your life for something that will not be destroyed by death?... If there is a meaning to life, it will not come in a life that is lived without faith and without God. To live a life with meaning, you must live one that is not destroyed by death.

We have been tricked into doing very cruel things to make our lives better and safer... But only in working for God and others can we find true life, life that will not be destroyed by death." (What I Believe, chapter 8)

John saw that the "Lamb that was slain" was really able to conquer war, greed, and death. But he also saw that the Lamb did it without the usual weapons. He saw that the answer to life does not lie in more weapons or more money. It lies in taking up your "cross" and following the Lamb to death if need be... without hitting back, and without hating your persecutors.

Are you ready to do that?

Appendix, Chapter 11

Revelation 6:1-8. I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard (as if it were the noise of thunder) one of the four beasts saying, "Come and see." I saw, and behold, a white horse. And he that sat on him had a bow. A crown was given unto him, and he went forth conquering and to conquer.

When he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, "Come and see." And there went out another horse that was red. Power was given to him that sat on it, to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another. There was given unto him a great sword.

When he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, "Come and see." I beheld, and lo, a black horse, and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, "A

measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny. And see that you not hurt the oil and the wine."

When he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, "Come and see." I looked, and behold, a pale horse. His name that sat on him was Death; and Hell followed with him. Power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

Revelation 19:11-16. I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse. He that sat on him was called Faithful and True. In righteousness he judges and makes war... and on his head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew but he himself. He was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood. His name is called The Word of God. The armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. He has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Luke 16:13. No servant can serve two masters; either he will hate one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money].

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12. The Twelve Tribes

On page 40 we gave you a rough outline of The Revelation. The introduction, we said, features a book with seven seals. The time of great trouble is marked by seven trumpets. And God's punishment of the world is marked by seven "vials" or containers of judgment that are poured out on the earth. Each division overlaps slightly on the ones before or after it.

So when the fifth seal on the book was opened, it gave John a glimpse of the time of great trouble (also called the Great Tribulation). He saw martyrs crying out to God and asking how much longer they would have to wait for Christ to return and save them. They were told that they would have to wait a little longer until other believers had been tested in the same way.

The sixth seal gave John a further glimpse of what would happen during the Tribulation. There was a great earthquake; the stars of heaven fell to earth; the sun was blackened; and the moon turned red.

Then there was the seventh seal. It appears that the entire seventh chapter represents the seventh seal, although the seal itself is not mentioned until the first verse of the eighth chapter. John said that there was silence in heaven for about half an hour after the last seal had been opened. It is as though all of heaven was left speechless at the conclusion of this powerfully moving "book" or movie.

What happened in the seventh chapter (when the last seal was opened) was that 144,000 "servants of God" were "sealed in their foreheads" in preparation for the coming troubles. Apparently these 144,000 people will grow in numbers

during the Great Tribulation, because then John says he saw "a great multitude which no one could number" (Revelation 7:9), and he was told, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14)

In chapter seven ("The Missing Week") we talked about this visible restoration of God's people for the last seven years of earth's history. Although these 144,000 people represent God's chosen people, it is a mistake to confuse them with the Jews of today. There were originally twelve tribes of Israel, and the tribe of Judah was only one of them. The Jews get their name from one of two tribes that they represent (Judah and Benjamin). The other tribes no longer exist.

A more complete description of the 144,000 appears in Revelation 14:4-5, where we see that these people are not distinguished by their ancestry so much as by their faith: "These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God."

There are two key phrases here. One is that these people are guileless. In other words, they are deeply sincere. They want to know the truth at any cost to themselves, and they are prepared to change their lives to conform with the truth.

The other phrase is that they "follow the Lamb wherever he goes". So they are genuine followers of Jesus – not just "professing Christians" who think they are doing well if they go to church on Sunday. Instead, they are honest to goodness obedient Christians.

There is a third phrase describing these people, which we will not go into now. They are described as "virgins", or "unmarried daughters". This feminine term is combined with masculine terms in such a way as to imply that gender is not an important issue in determining membership in this army. There is room for debate over whether the virginity spoken of here is a literal sexual thing or just a form of spiritual commitment.

Reference to the tribes of Israel (just before the book focuses on the Great Tribulation) points us back to Daniel's prophecy and the last seven years for God's people. The Jews were only one of twelve tribes at the time of Christ, but they were still officially "God's people"... until they rejected his Messiah.

This final revelation of God's people will be those who have not rejected his Messiah (or Lamb). These people will be visibly united for seven last years.

Appendix, Chapter 12

Revelation 6:9-17. When he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held. They cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, Oh Lord, holy and true, do you not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" White robes were given unto every one of them, and it was said that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brothers that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

When he had opened the sixth seal, there was a great earthquake. The sun became black as sackcloth of hair. The moon became as blood, and the stars of heaven fell to the earth... and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

Revelation 7:2-4. I saw another angel ascending from the East, having the seal of the living God, and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, "Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." And I heard the number of them which were sealed. There were sealed a hundred and forty-four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.

Revelation 7:9. After this I beheld and, lo, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues, stood before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes and with palms in their hands.

Revelation 7:14. He said to me, "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

Revelation 8:1. When he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

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13. The Middle of the 'Week'

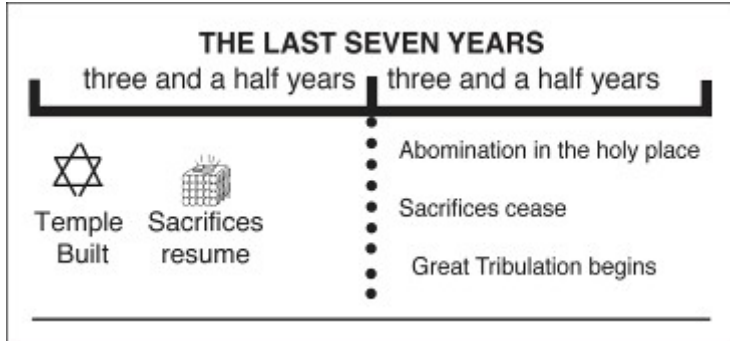
Recall how the Seventy Week prophecy finished. It said Messiah would be cut off after 69 weeks (i.e. in 30 A.D.), but then "he will confirm the covenant with many for one week. In the middle of the week, he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. And for the overspreading of abominations, he will make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured on the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)

There are some strange (but important) words in this prophecy (e.g. covenant, abomination, desolate). It is worth the effort to try to understand them.

We have said that there are two "he's" here. One is the Lamb of God, confirming the new covenant with those who have chosen to follow him; the other is the Antichrist confirming a covenant which enables Jews to resume sacrificing animals in their Temple in Jerusalem. Both of these things happen at the same time and are supposed to cover a period of seven years.

However, the counterfeit "prince" reneges on his agreement in the middle of the week. This is where we get the period of three and a half years that is repeatedly mentioned in The Revelation. For the first three and a half years everything goes along nicely. The Temple is built; sacrifices begin; religious tolerance abounds. But then the sacrifices suddenly cease. We know in

advance that the "prince" who made the agreement will be behind the change. He causes the sacrifices to cease.



Daniel says, "For the overspreading of abominations, he will make it desolate."

The words used here were repeated by Jesus in a sober warning about events just before his return. He said, "When you see the abomination of desolation (spoken of by Daniel the prophet) stand in the holy place, (Whoever reads this, let him understand.) then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him that is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house, neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe to those that are with child, and to those that give suck in those days! Pray that your flight will not be in the winter, nor on the sabbath day. For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there shall no flesh be saved. But for the elect's sake, those days shall be shortened." (Matthew 24:15-22)

When you see the abomination of desolation (spoken of by Daniel) in the "holy place" (the Temple), the "great tribulation" is about to start. This is the sign Jesus himself told us to look for.

There are several theories as to what the "abomination of desolation" is. One thing we do know: Temple sacrifices will stop when it starts. Other prophecies indicate that the Antichrist will either move himself or a statue of himself (or both) into the Temple, in preparation for a decree that the whole world must worship him.

Daniel concludes: "He will make it desolate even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured on the desolate." (Daniel 9:27)

Jesus used this word "desolate" in a prophecy over Jerusalem shortly before he was crucified. He said, "Behold, your house is left to you desolate. For I say to you, You shall not see me henceforth, till you shall say, 'Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord'." (Matthew 23:38-39)

The desolation began when the Jews rejected Christ. But the Antichrist will make the rebuilt Jewish Temple even more desolate, by profaning the Temple in some shocking way. And that will bring the Jewish ritual sacrifices to an abrupt end.

The prophecy above says that the Temple will stay desolate (i.e. without sacrifices) until "the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." This phrase, "consummation" is used in the Bible to mean

complete and inescapable destruction. (e.g. Isaiah 10:16-19, 23) The word determined was also used with regard to the seventy weeks that were "determined" for Daniel's people.

The final words say that this "consummation" that has already been "determined" will be "poured upon the desolate". In The Revelation, there is a short period after the Great Tribulation, when the "Wrath" of God is represented by bowls or "vials" being poured out on the earth. By the time this happens, all of God's people will have been taken away from the earth, and spiritually the planet will be left utterly "desolate".

So let us restate, in simpler words, what this prophecy is most likely saying. Follow along with the wording from Daniel 9:27 (see appendix below), and you get: "The Antichrist will make an agreement with the Jews to enable them to resume offering sacrifices during the last seven years of earth's history. However, three and a half years before Christ is to return, the Antichrist will cause the sacrifices to stop. And because of the shocking and blasphemous things that he does, the Temple will be devoid of any redeeming qualities, until God finally pours out his wrath on an evil world."

Appendix, Chapter 13

Daniel 9:27. He will confirm the covenant with many for one week. In the midst of the week, he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease. For the overspreading of abominations, he will make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined, shall be poured on the desolate.

Isaiah 10:16-29, 23. The Lord will send among his fat ones leanness. ... He will kindle a burning... It will burn and devour his thorns... in one day... [He] will make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of the land.

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14. Tribulation vs Wrath

People disagree on just about everything that is written in the Bible, and usually there are good arguments on both sides. The most heated argument amongst Christians with regard to Bible prophecy is over whether or not Christians will be forced to go through the Great Tribulation.

Some of the things described as happening during the Tribulation (marked by seven trumpets) are similar to things that happen during the Wrath (marked by seven vials or bowls). Elsewhere in the Bible there are references to God's people "escaping" or being "spared" from his wrath. (Romans 5:9; I Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9) These references are used to suggest that we might also be spared from the time of great trouble.

Those who teach that we do not go through the Tribulation believe that Christ could come and take us at any time. This teaching is helpful in that it should make people more serious about being ready to meet God at any time. However, there are strong indications that the teaching has arisen more from wishful thinking (and psychological denial) than from an interest in preparedness.

As we said earlier in this book, The Revelation starts out sounding "sweet" but it turns bitter when you get up close to it. Things like persecution and martyrdom are never popular, and this is more true today than ever. In a world (and a church) which has rejected the discipline of God, tribulation of any sort will be avoided by all means possible.

St. Paul promised the early Christians that "all who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (II Timothy 3:12) That is one promise that most people would rather not know about!

The Bible says (in Hebrews 12:6-11) "Whoever the Lord loves he chastens, and he scourges every son whom he receives. If you endure chastening, then God is dealing with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father does not chasten? But if you are without chastisement, of which all [children] are partakers, then you are bastards and not sons... Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but [rather] grievous. Nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised by it."

If you study the word "tribulation" wherever it appears in the Bible, it becomes clear that all of God's people go through such times. Paul said, "We glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation teaches patience." (Romans 5:3)

There is an important difference between "troubles" (which God allows us all to experience) and the "wrath" of God, which is specifically directed at his enemies. (Colossians 3:6; Romans 2:5) Obviously we do not want to be the objects of his wrath; and we would hope that, as his children, this would never happen, for it would most certainly destroy us. But to escape his wrath, we must be willing to endure his discipline. Wrath vs Tribulation is like Destruction vs Discipline.

The favourite proof text for the theory that says Christians will not have to stick around and face the Great Tribulation is in Luke 17:34-36: "There shall be two people in one bed. One shall be taken and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together. One will be taken and the other left. Two men shall be in the field. One will be taken and the other left." From this has grown the teaching (which is extremely popular, of course!) that all the good guys will just float up to heaven in their sleep one night, and the rest of the world will wake up to find us all gone.

But the text has been taken out of context. The verses just before this passage say, "In that day, he which is on the housetop and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away. He that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife." (Luke 17:31-32) Lot made a conscious choice to leave Sodom. He was not sucked up in a cosmic vacuum cleaner. His decision cost him everything he had worked for for years, and when his wife turned back, she was destroyed. One was taken, and the other left.

The disciples to whom Jesus was speaking at the time understood that these people Jesus was talking about were being led to some kind of a hideout, and not just being "raptured" into the air. When told that some would be taken, they asked, "Where, Lord?" And he said to them, somewhat cryptically, "Wherever the food is, there will the birds be gathered together." (Luke 17:37)

The other proof texts for the "secret rapture" teaching, as it is called, come from I Corinthians 15, and I Thessalonians 4. Remember, however, that the argument is not over whether Christians actually ascend into the sky to meet Christ (called the "rapture") when he comes (for both sides agree on this), but rather it is over whether this happens before the Great Tribulation or after it.

The Tribulation is represented in The Revelation by seven trumpets. Now look at the proof texts that are used to argue that Christians will be caught up to meet Christ in the air (i.e. "raptured") before any of these trumpets sound:

"We shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. For the [last?] trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised." (I Corinthians 15:51-52)

"The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. The dead in Christ will rise first. Then we which are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (I Thessalonians 4:16-17)

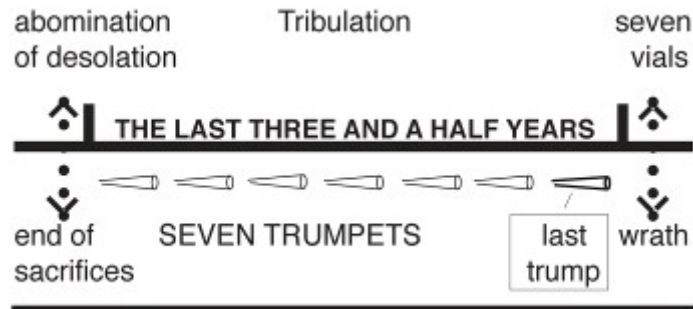
Put that together with what Christ himself said: "Immediately after the tribulation of those days ... they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)

All of these passages refer to trumpets, and in particular, to the last trumpet, "after the tribulation".

It would be nice to think that all of the unpleasant parts of The Revelation are for someone else, and that we can float to heaven on flowery beds of ease; but if we are only interested in making the book say what we want it to say, we will never learn anything from it, and we may as well not study it at all.

The picture that Jesus gives of the period just before his return (and after the start of the Tribulation) is one of great confusion, with many of his followers expressing dismay that he has not arrived. This is consistent with a situation where people have been conned into believing that he should have come before the troubles started.

Jesus describes the start of the tribulation (Matthew 24:16-22) and then says that false prophets will be making false promises about him arriving secretly: "Then if anyone shall say to you, 'Lo, here is Christ,' or 'There!' do not believe it. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. So if they shall say to you, 'Behold, he is in the desert,' go not forth. Or 'Behold, he is in the secret chambers,' believe it not. For as the lightning comes out of the east and shines even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matthew 24:23-27)



So much for secret raptures!

In conclusion, there are two prophetic periods of time which have often been confused. The first is the Great Tribulation, which lasts for three and a half years. The second is The Wrath, which lasts for only a short period of time, and concludes with the Battle of Armageddon. The Tribulation is marked by a series of seven trumpets, while the Wrath is marked by seven containers being poured out on the earth.

In the next chapter we will study the events associated with the Great Tribulation.

Appendix, Chapter 14

Romans 5:9. Being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.

I Thessalonians 1:10. Wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come.

I Thessalonians 5:9. For God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 3:6. Because of these things, the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience.

Romans 2:5. Because of your hardness and impenitent heart, you treasure up for yourself wrath, against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

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15. The Seven Trumpets

As you read through this chapter, it would be helpful to get a Bible and follow along with what is being said. We will cover most of three chapters (Revelation 8, 9, & 10), and we will be adding very little to what is actually written in the Bible.

Most of the text from the King James Version of The Revelation appears at the end of this chapter. However, we have changed a word or two here and there (e.g. from "striker" to "strikes") and have occasionally left out a few words to make the text fit the space available. There are serious warnings about tampering with the words of prophecy. (See Revelation 22:18-19.) This is because there is always a temptation to bend things to make them fit our imperfect interpretations. When we do that, we could upset an important part of the code, which will only become clear in time. This is the problem with modern

translations, and one reason why we prefer the King James Version. (It is more "literal" than other translations, with less effort made to smooth out the rough spots.)

But having said that, you may be just as qualified as anyone else in guessing what it is that John was describing, given his limited First Century understanding of modern day technology. Some of what he describes may, as yet, be foreign to us as well. Just don't get too cocky about your own interpretation of what he was saying. It should become clearer as we move closer to the actual fulfilment.

We earlier noted that the first four seals (i.e. the four horsemen) of the sixth chapter of The Revelation were inter-related. In the same way, the first four trumpets of the eighth chapter seem to herald four aspects of the same catastrophe.

The second and third trumpets sound like almost identical catastrophes. In one "as it were a great mountain burning with fire" is "cast into the sea". In the other "a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp" fell on "the fountains of waters" and on a third of the rivers. The waters became "bitter" as a result, killing many people.

Note: Watch for the phrase "as it were". It means John is not being literal. He is just trying to find some comparison from his limited knowledge to describe what he actually saw.

We are told in Revelation 8:11 that the star's name is "Wormwood". Apparently the word "Chernobyl" (the Russian city near where the world's worst nuclear accident occurred in 1986) is Russian for Wormwood! It may be just a coincidence. Or it could be a clue that the star's real threat to earth will be that it is radioactive.

The prophecy says that Wormwood will fall on "the fountains of waters". The Chernobyl disaster contaminated ground water over a huge area; but it spread even farther in the atmosphere. The source of most rivers is in the sky, where rain is formed. High levels of atmospheric radioactivity could affect water vapour in the clouds, bringing a deadly cocktail of "acid rain" down on the earth.

The movie Armageddon is based on the theory that these first four trumpets are predicting a collision between earth and a comet or meteor. This does appear to be what will happen.

We are told that one-third of the life in the oceans and one-third of the ships at sea will be destroyed by the "burning mountain" that crashes into the sea. Such devastation would be consistent with such a violent collision and the unprecedented tidal waves that would circle the globe.

In the twenty-fourth chapter of Isaiah, the Hebrew prophet tells of God punishing the earth before he establishes his rule over all the world. The description Isaiah gives uses several phrases which seem to suggest that the earth's orbit will be affected when this happens, causing the earth to wobble "like a drunkard". Isaiah says, "Behold, the Lord will make the earth empty, and make it waste, and turn it upside down, and scatter abroad the inhabitants of it... The windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down. The earth is clean dissolved. The earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard." (Isaiah 24:1, 18-20)

It may be that, along with the radiation will come actual fires from a massive meteorite storm. This may explain the destruction associated with the first and fourth trumpets: "The first angel sounded and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth. The third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up...

"The fourth angel sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars, so that the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise." (Revelation 8:7, 12)

The "fiery hail" of the first trumpet may be a storm of meteorites, but it could also be describing a great number of weapons launched (possibly by accident) from satellites circling the earth. Whatever it is, it apparently results in fires over much of the planet. The smoke of so much burning would certainly blot out much of the light from the sun, moon, and stars. Such widespread burning might also create weather conditions that would result in what we normally think of when we talk of hailstones. The hot air from so many fires would force rain far up into the atmosphere, where it would freeze. If this happened repeatedly, the hail might well become so big by the time it finally fell to earth that it could kill people.

The next two trumpets (numbers five and six) announce two quite different disasters. In one a different sort of "star" falls to earth after the fifth trumpet sounds. This "star" is a person, most likely the Devil himself, and he lets loose a great swarm of stinging insects which appear to originate from hell. The grass, which has grown back from the earlier fires, is protected from these "locusts like scorpions". The twelve tribes who have the "seal of God" on their foreheads are also protected; but these insects bring torment to the rest of the world for five months.

The insects are described in detail. They could be mutations, viruses, or some kind of military weapon. It is anyone's guess.

Then the sixth trumpet sounds, and four angels are let loose. They appear to control an army of two hundred million "horsemen". The description of the horses, however, suggests some modern-day military machine "for their power is in their mouth, and in their tails." In just over thirteen months, one-third of the earth's population is destroyed "by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone which issued out of their mouths." (Revelation 9:15, 18-19)

The death and destruction caused by this army appears to be even worse than that which occurs during the Battle of Armageddon at the end of the Wrath.

There are various theories about what these descriptions represent; but the bottom line is that some incredible disasters lie ahead, which will result in more than a billion deaths. And more significant is the prediction that, for all of the suffering that the world will go through at that time, people will still, on the whole, not repent and turn to God. (Revelation 9:20-21)

Finally, the seventh trumpet sounds. A special angel appears. John hears thundering voices, but he is not allowed to write what he hears. Then the angel, with a "little book" in his hand, lifts his hands up to heaven and swears "that there should be time no longer".

The Bible says that, at this point, "the mystery of God shall be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets". (Revelation 10:1-7)

There is always an element of mystery with regard to prophecy, up until the point at which it is finally fulfilled. So there will always be flaws in our theories about what it means. However, today we have more reason to believe these prophecies than people did hundreds of years ago. Things which sounded impossible at the time they were written are becoming far more believable now. We will shortly discuss a New Testament prophecy which rivals that of Daniel's Seventy Weeks for being irrefutable, as we see it taking shape before our eyes.

One final comment, regarding the phrase "time shall be no more". It is similar to another phrase which is often used in reference to prophecy, which is "the end of the world". There are different levels of "end". It would appear that the world itself does not cease to exist at the sound of the seventh trumpet, but rather Christ returns and takes his true followers away with him before the really violent stuff begins. At this point, God seems to be saying, "Time's up!" No further opportunity exists for people to repent (if, indeed, they would even consider it at this stage). God's wrath is about to be meted out on a rebellious planet, and it will culminate in the Battle of Armageddon. Time as we know it continues after this for yet another thousand years at least.

Appendix, Chapter 15

Revelation 8:7-12. The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth, and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. The second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea, and the third part of the sea became blood. The third part of the creatures which were in the sea and had life died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed. The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers and upon the fountains of waters. The name of the star is Wormwood. The third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. The fourth angel sounded and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars.

Revelation 9:1-10. The fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven to earth. To him was given the key of the bottomless pit. He opened the bottomless pit... and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth. To them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power. It was commanded that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree, but only those who do not have the seal of God in their foreheads. It was given to them that they should not kill people, but that they should be tormented five months. Their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when it strikes a man. In those days will people seek death and not find it... The shapes of the locusts were like horses prepared for battle. On their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. They had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. They had breastplates

as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of many horses running to battle. They had tails like scorpions, and there were stings in their tails ...

Revelation 9:13-21. The sixth angel sounded and I heard a voice... saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, "Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates." And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour and a day and a month and a year, to slay the third part of men. The number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand, and I heard the number of them. Thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire and of jacinth and brimstone. The heads of the horses were as the heads of lions, and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire and by the smoke and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths; for their power is in their mouth and in their tails, for their tails were like serpents and had heads, and with them they do hurt. And the rest of the people which were not killed by these plagues yet did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils and idols of gold and silver and brass and stone and of wood, which neither can see nor hear nor walk. Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Revelation 10:1-7. I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud. A rainbow was upon his head. His face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire. He had in his hand a little book open. He set his right foot upon the sea and his left foot on the earth, and cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roars. When he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. When the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write, and I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered and write them not." The angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven and swore by him that lives for ever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, and the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be time no longer. But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets.

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16. The Two Witnesses

One problem people have with reading The Revelation is that, because they are so intent on working out the exact order of events, they assume, falsely, that the book moves step by step through events, so that something mentioned in chapter ten must, of necessity, come after something mentioned in chapter nine, and something mentioned in verse five must, of necessity, come after something mentioned in verse four. The book does not jump around arbitrarily, but it does employ a technique used by many authors, and especially by movie producers. It focuses on one scene for a while, then changes to another scene to observe

what was happening there during the same period of time. Chapters 11, 12, and 13 of The Revelation appear to do this.

Reference is made in all three chapters to the period of three and a half years, indicating that each chapter is talking about the same period of time, i.e. the time of the Great Tribulation, which was described in Revelation 8, 9, and 10. But chapters 11, 12, and 13 each focus on a different aspect of what will be happening during that period of time. Chapter 11 deals with a spiritual stand-off between the masses of the world and two individuals with special powers from God. Chapter 12 deals with persecution of all Christians, as well as supernatural protection. And chapter 13 deals with the spiritual implications behind the world's political and economic forces.

There is a reference at the start of Chapter 11 to John "measuring the Temple of God". This concern with the Temple seems to accompany a number of prophecies about the end of the world. Ezekiel (another Old Testament prophet), gives a detailed description in chapters 38-39, of a battle which sounds like the Battle of Armageddon (although it may also be referring to another battle, which occurs at the end of Christ's rule over the world for a thousand years). At the end of the description, in chapter 40, Ezekiel, like John, was instructed to measure the Temple in great detail. A blueprint for the Temple seems to be a key feature of prophecy... one of the "code words" that line up with an important message that God wants to communicate.

We have already mentioned that the contrast between a spiritual Temple and city and the material Temple and city are fundamental differences between the Old Testament/Jewish idea of God's plan for the world and the New Testament/Christian idea of God's plan for the world. In Revelation 11:2 it says, "The holy city shall they tread under foot forty-two months." Once again, this appears to be a prophecy with a double meaning. Literally, the Temple in Jerusalem will be desecrated by the Abomination of Desolation during the final three and a half years. (See pages 94-96.) However, the real "holy city" is made up of followers of the Lamb, servants of God, or the twelve tribes who have been sealed. So these sincere Christians will be "trodden under foot" for three and a half years as well.

Nevertheless, there will be two Christians who will have supernatural power and protection for the same period of time. (Revelation 11:3) They will prophesy to the world, trying to get the public to see that what is happening on earth has spiritual significance. Like most true prophets, they will not be well received. But if anyone tries to hurt them, these prophets will be able to just open their mouths and declare judgment on such people and the people will be destroyed. They will also be able to execute judgment on various nations, by invoking droughts, plagues, and similar curses.

All of this will continue for three and a half years; but in the end these "Two Witnesses" will still be taken prisoner by the system, and executed.

The angel has another shot at the earthly Jerusalem in verse 8, by saying that spiritually it is Sodom (an ancient city that was destroyed for its sinfulness), because of its rejection of the Messiah.

The dead bodies of the two witnesses will be displayed in Jerusalem for three and a half days, while the world celebrates their death, assuming that the Antichrist has finally conquered the force that had been causing so much suffering on the earth over the previous three and a half years. (Revelation 11:9-10)

But at the end of three and a half days, just like their Messiah, the Two Witnesses will come back to life, and they will ascend into the air just as a great earthquake hits Jerusalem, killing seven thousand people there. (Revelation 11:11-13)

This coincides with the return of Christ, when the choirs of heaven start to sing Handel's Messiah (Well, perhaps something similar): "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15) Very inspiring stuff!

The chapter concludes with John seeing that the real covenant (or Testament) and the real Temple are in heaven. He is told that it is now time for God's Wrath to begin, in which God will "destroy them which destroy the earth." (Revelation 11:18-19)

At this point, I would like to make some general comments about the Two Witnesses: People like John the Baptist, Mary the mother of Jesus, and Christ himself were real people like you and me. In one way or another they each came to understand that they had very important roles to play in their day. They had each been specifically predicted in the Jewish scriptures.

The same is true of two people who are very likely alive in the world today. People can miss out on God's call for their lives by settling for something less than his best. It is easy to believe that the great saints of the past were bigger than life, that they did things that none of us could do today. But this is not true. God desperately needs more candidates for such positions as that of the Two Witnesses. As the cat in an Australian ad for the lottery would say, "Someone has to do it; it might just as well be you!"

But when we talk of doing something great for God, most people see only the glamour, the spectacle, and the fame. They delude themselves into believing that they need only claim this role for themselves and it will be theirs. Mental hospitals are full of people with such delusions of grandeur, each convinced that the world need only recognise them for the messiah or god that they are and then they will be unstoppable.

The truth is that genuine spiritual greatness does not seek glory; it is too busy serving God and others. The Bible says that the spirit of the great Old Testament prophet Elijah was in John the Baptist, making him the official herald of Jesus Christ (Matthew 17:11-13); yet John the Baptist himself was not even aware of this. (John 1:25) He did not need to think of himself as being great in order to be great. In fact, thinking about being great is one of the greatest hindrances to true spiritual greatness. The message of The Revelation, as we have said before, is that a spiritual Lamb that was killed by a ruthless system will finally end up ruling the entire world. He said, "If you want to be great, become a servant." (Mark 10:44)

What the Two Witnesses do is "witness". They call on others to get ready for Christ's coming. God needs thousands to do that today. If you find people burning up when they try to kill you, then chances are you're one of the elite "Two". But if not, you should not stop witnessing; and you should be prepared to die for your faith in the process. That is the job of every true follower of God.

Appendix, Chapter 16

Revelation 11:1-13, 15-19. There was given me a reed like a rod, and the angel stood, saying, "Rise and measure the Temple of God... But the court which is outside the Temple leave out, and measure it not, for it is given to the Gentiles. The holy city they will tread under foot for forty-two months.

"I will give power to my Two Witnesses, and they will prophesy a thousand two hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth... If anyone will hurt them, fire proceeds out of their mouth and devours their enemies... These have power to shut heaven, that it not rain..., and they have power over waters, to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues...

"When they have finished their testimony, the Beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them and will overcome them and kill them. Their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. Those of the people... and nations will see their dead bodies three days and a half, and will not allow their dead bodies to be put in graves. They that dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, and make merry, and will send gifts one to another, because these two prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

"After three days and a half... they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. They heard a great voice from heaven saying, 'Come up here.' And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies beheld them.

"The same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake were slain seven thousand. The remnant were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven..."

"The seventh angel sounded and there were great voices in heaven, saying 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; he shall reign for ever and ever!' The elders that sat before God [gave thanks to God]... saying, 'Your wrath is come, and the time that the dead should be judged, and that you should give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear your name... and should destroy them that destroy the earth.'

"The Temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his Temple the ark of his testament..."

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17. The Woman in the Wilderness

Chapter 12 of The Revelation is another one of those prophecies that has more than one interpretation, both of which complement the other.

It is a prophecy about a woman who has a baby. The most obvious interpretation would be that it is talking about the Virgin Mary giving birth to Jesus. Herod, the Roman ruler in Israel at the time when Jesus was born, tried to kill him, but Mary and Joseph fled with the baby to Egypt, where they hid for a few years, until Herod had died. (Matthew 2:13-15) Eventually Jesus ascended up to heaven. (Luke 24:51) All of this is consistent with what is described in the first half of the chapter. (See Revelation 12:2-6.)

Then the chapter describes a war in heaven. It ends with Satan being cast out of heaven and thrown down to earth. (Revelation 12:7-9) Satan knows he has only a short time left to do his dirty work, so he seeks revenge on God by "persecuting the woman". (Revelation 12:12-13)

This prophecy also mentions the period of three and a half years which has been the subject of the book up to this point. Obviously Mary, the mother of Jesus, is not on the earth today; yet we are told that this Woman will be miraculously protected from the Devil (described as a "dragon") at this time, first by being given "wings" to flee from the Tribulation, and then by the earth opening up and swallowing a "flood" that the dragon has sent to destroy her. (Revelation 12:14-16)

Finally, the dragon becomes angry at the woman, and goes off "to make war with the remnant of her seed". (verse 17)

What we have here (once again) are two parallel interpretations for the same prophecy. The Woman represents Mary, the mother of Jesus; but she also represents the Church, or the followers of Jesus today. Jesus said of Mary and of his natural family one day, "My mother and my brothers are these which hear the word of God and do it." (Luke 8:21)

So, while Mary brought forth the infant Jesus, his followers spiritually give birth to Jesus in the world today, as we point people to him and to his teachings. The Devil used the relatively meagre political powers available to him at the time of Mary and Joseph, to try and stop the infant Jesus; but he will use far more universal political powers in an even more elaborate plot to try and stop the followers of Jesus during the Great Tribulation.

But if the Woman is the Church, then who are the "remnant of her seed"? The prophecy promised that the Woman would be nourished and protected in the wilderness, at the same time that the dragon would make war with the remnant of her seed.

This sounds much like a promise that Jesus gave concerning this same period of time. He said, "You will be betrayed... and some of you will they cause to be put to death. And you will be hated of all people for my name's sake. But not one hair of your head will perish." (Luke 21:16-18)

Most of us would think, "Forget my hair! Save my life!" But what he was talking about is something like a boxer winning a fight, or a country winning a war. You don't do it without a little pain and a few casualties. Ultimately, protection will be ours; nothing will happen to any of us without our Commander-in-Chief knowing exactly what is happening. Everything will be completely under his control. But it does not mean that he won't make decisions during the battle that will cost some of us our lives.

Although individual soldiers invariably die on both sides in a war, this picture of victory despite casualties makes much more sense in an army where the soldiers are immortal. Although they may put us to death, we will not perish, for we have everlasting life.

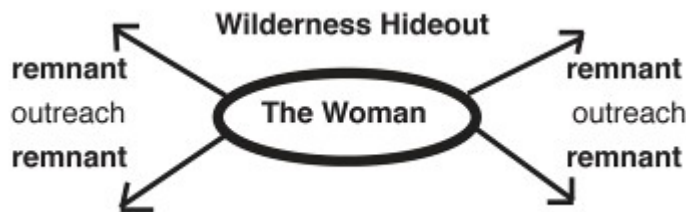
The Bible often compared suffering for a good cause to the labour pains that a woman experiences before a baby is born. Of his own death, Jesus said, "You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail has sorrow, because her hour is come. But as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world." (John 16:20-21)

Even if we are killed during the Great Tribulation, we know now that it will end with us being brought back to life and ruling the earth with Christ. When that happens, we will "remember no more the anguish, for joy that a child is born into the world."

The Church in the Wilderness represents God's miraculous protection and provision for three and a half years. This is similar to the servants of God being sealed on their foreheads so that they would be protected from the five month scorpion-locust plague that we mentioned in chapter 15 (see the bottom of page 121). Although God's servants are protected from such things, there will be other things that we will not be protected from at that time; and we need to be prepared to go through those troubles in order to ultimately win the prize.

God will protect us, but if our whole reason for existing on earth during the Great Tribulation is just to hide in a cave until it is over, then we may as well die and go to heaven now. Revelation 12:11 tells how the followers of the Lamb were able to overcome the Devil during those final three and a half years: "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives, even unto death." Our willingness to lay down our lives is what makes us the winners, just as it was what made the Lamb a winner. And a complete refuge from all the discomforts of the real world is not going to give us a chance to make that statement of faith to a world that has lost faith in God.

So our real purpose in being here during the final three and a half years will be the same as that of the Two Witnesses. We will be here to bear witness to the world that God is more powerful than all the forces of evil.



To be such a witness, at least some of us will need to come out of our safe little hideouts in the wilderness (wherever that may be), at least some of the time. We will need to experiment with ways of communicating our message quickly and effectively before seeking shelter once again. In the process, many of us will be captured and killed. We may as well recognise that now. But overall, the message is still going to go out, and with it will go the good news that, alive or dead, we will win in the end.

Appendix, Chapter 17

Matthew 2:13-15. The angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise and take the young child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I bring you word, for Herod will seek the young child, to destroy him." When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night and departed into Egypt. He was there until the death of Herod.

Luke 24:51. It came to pass that, while [Jesus] blessed them, he was parted from them and carried up into heaven.

Revelation 12:1-17. There appeared a great wonder in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. She, being with child, cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

There appeared another wonder in heaven, and behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads. His tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth.

The dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, to devour her child as soon as it was born. She brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne.

The woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.

There was a war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels. He prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil and Satan, which deceives the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ. For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony, and by loving not their lives unto the death. Therefore, rejoice you heavens, and you that dwell in them.

"[But] woe to the inhabitants of the earth and sea! For the Devil is come down to you, having great wrath because he knows that he has but a short time."

When the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the face of the serpent. The serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. And the earth helped the woman. The earth opened her mouth and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

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18. The Mark of the Beast

Now we come to what is probably the most remarkable and irrefutable prophecy of the New Testament. Unlike the Seventy Weeks prophecy there is no fixed date for this prophecy; but it is impressive because it is virtually free of double meanings or confusing symbols, and it accurately describes revolutionary developments in world banking that are being planned and implemented right now, even though they would have been unthinkable at the time that the prophecy was written.

The first half of Revelation 13 introduces the Beast (or Antichrist) and a False Prophet (more about them shortly). The second half of the chapter explains how they will be able to control the world through a new economic system. The prophecy says, "He (the Beast) causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads, [so] that no one might buy or sell save those that had the mark or the name of the Beast or the number of his name." (Revelation 13:16-17)

The world's banks are feverishly working toward a monetary system which is based on a tiny computer chip about the size of a grain of rice. The chip can be planted under the skin on the back of your hand and waved in front of a scanner the way items are waved at the supermarket now. It will be able to record every purchase you make, automatically transferring funds from one account to another, in such a way that it could virtually make money obsolete.

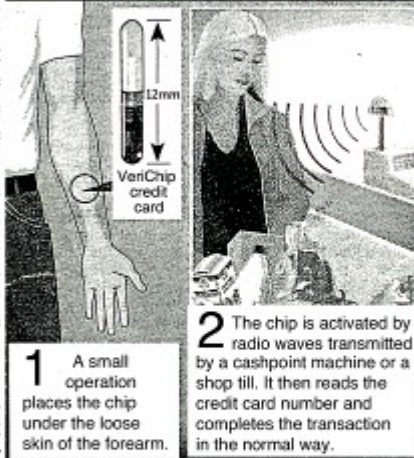
Implant Could Replace Credit Cards

(The London, Evening Standard, 29th November, 2003) by Mark Prigg

Scientists have invented a credit-card chip they claim can be implanted into your arm, allowing you to authorise payments by simply standing near a cash register. The tiny chip, the size of a grain of rice, uses radio waves to tell registers or cash machines who you are. Experts believe it could replace credit cards and other forms of ID card.

Scott Silverman, chief executive of American company Applied Digital, which plans the first commercial trials of the system, said: 'We believe the market will evolve to use our product.' The chip is implanted just under the loose skin in the forearm in a small operation, using a local anaesthetic. The procedure takes about three minutes and once inserted the chip is invisible to the naked eye. It is activated when it comes close to a till or

HOW THE DEVICE WORKS



1 A small operation places the chip under the loose skin of the forearm.

2 The chip is activated by radio waves transmitted by a cashpoint machine or a shop till. It then reads the credit card number and completes the transaction in the normal way.

cash machine sending out low-power radio waves. Once activated, the chip sends data to the till or ATM - this can be a credit card number, or an employee ID number. Simon Davies, director of human rights group Privacy International, said: 'This is an invasion of privacy. Once this chip is implanted, the only way to stop it would be to undergo a surgical procedure to have the chip removed.' Mastercard has already hinted it may adopt the same radio technology used in the implants. 'Ultimately, this could be embedded in anything,' a spokesman said. American oil company ExxonMobil is testing a system where users wave a key fob in front of a scanner to pay for petrol or for food at hundreds of McDonald's outlets.

(Note: Articles have been edited to it the space).

VeriChip (now re-branded PositiveID) is the only FDA-approved, human-implantable microchip. The rice grain-sized chips contain an RFID chip, which can be scanned like a barcode.

In 2004, the Baja Beach Club in Barcelona was the first outlet to offer the VeriChip for the purpose of buying and selling. It allowed patrons to buy drinks and food with just a "wave of the hand". The club's director, Conrad K. Chase, disclosed that, "The objective of this technology is to bring an ID system to a global level that will destroy the need to carry ID documents and credit cards."

VeriChip's resemblance to the prophecy of a globally-implemented mark used for "buying and selling" is clear, with promoters needing to counter claims of its similarity to what is described in Revelation 13:16-17. Some technical differences to the "mark of the beast" exist - most notably that, to date, it has traditionally been inserted in the left forearm rather than in the right hand or forehead.

Although marketing of VeriChip was reportedly discontinued in 2010, the technology (and the arguments used to encourage people to accept it) will almost certainly evolve in the years ahead.

One thing is certain: The cashless society is an increasingly viable reality. As one billboard, featuring an advert by Maestro for debit cards, confidently exclaimed: "Cash is so last millennium".

(It is important to realise how RFID chips fit into the overall context of the prophecy about the mark of the beast/cashless society. Microchips used for the sole purpose of tracking are NOT the mark of the beast and many people (often conspiracy-theorists) get side-tracked into paranoid hype about government control etc. which detracts from the real issue - our attachment to the monetary system. The mark of the beast is for buying and selling which is why we need to go to the source of the problem by confronting the root of all evil in our own lives.)

Technology to do all of this has been available for some time. In 1995. it was being tested on "smart cards". Now it is being implanted under the skin on people's arms. (See article on page 139)

First the public had to be weaned away from real-life tellers. They needed to get used to making purchases without money changing hands. They needed to learn to accept big impersonal computers knowing about their spending patterns. They needed to become familiar with scanners and universal product codes which could be used to label every person on earth. And they needed to be conditioned to using their bodies for identification purposes: retina scans, biometric passports, handprints, thumbprints, etc. All of this has been leading up to the microchip implant... the Mark of the Beast.

Microchip implants started out only as identification technology, and they were implanted on the arm... not the hand. America's biggest religious cable TV network officially endorsed the implants, stating that there was no connection between them and the infamous Mark of the Beast.

A mere two years later, the same company (Verichip) started marketing an implant that could be used for buying and selling. The Mark of the Beast is here, and the churches were tricked into endorsing it!

In recent years we have seen the Western world experiment with credit cards, identity cards, phonecards, Fly-Buy cards, eftpos cards, and smart cards. Universal product codes are now on virtually everything we buy. The scene is set for microchip implants.

Sweden could be first country to go cashless as even churches are taking cards for offerings

By Simon Tomlinson

Sweden was the first European country to introduce bank notes in 1661. Now it's come farther than most on the path toward getting rid of them.

In most Swedish cities, public buses don't accept cash - tickets are prepaid or purchased with a cell phone text message.

A small, but growing number of businesses only take cards and some bank offices which make money on electronic transactions have stopped handling cash altogether.

'There are towns where it isn't possible to enter a bank and use cash,' complains Curt Persson, chairman of

Sweden's National Pensioners' Organization. He says that's a problem for elderly people in rural areas who don't have credit cards or don't know how to use them to withdraw cash.

The decline of cash is noticeable even in houses of worship, like the Carl Gustaf Church in Karlshamn, southern Sweden, where Vicar Johan Tyrberg recently installed a card reader to make it easier for worshippers to make offerings.

'People came up to me several times and said they didn't have cash, but would still like to donate money,' Tyrberg says.

(Daily Mail, March 20, 2012)

For now, the emphasis is just on identification and tracking. Dogs and cats are already being given micro-chip implants that are used to track them if they should become lost. Politicians and industrialists in Italy are accepting them for the same purpose, in case they should ever be kidnapped. Parents in several countries are being encouraged to use implants on their children in case the children become lost or kidnapped.

But the ultimate use for these cards or implants will simply be for buying and selling... just like the prophecy says.

Microchip implants and a cashless society will improve life in many ways. We can have one universal currency. There will be greater control over drug trafficking (which operates on cash changing hands). Robberies of all sorts (except computer crimes) will drop dramatically when there is no longer any cash to steal. People will never have to worry about losing their card, because it will be right there on the back of their hand. All in all, implanting a microchip on every member of the public will make the world far more efficient than it is at the moment.

But the problem for any who take Bible prophecy seriously, is that, along with the prediction that this would happen has come a sombre warning: "If anyone worships the Beast and his image, and receives his mark in their forehead or in their hand, the same will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation. They will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. The smoke of their torment ascends up for ever and ever. They have no rest day nor night, who worship the Beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." (Revelation 14:9-11)

We know from reading The Revelation that a time is coming, a period of at least three and a half years, when everyone will need the mark in order to buy or sell anything. We understand that Christians will not be taken to heaven before this happens; and it is clear that they will be subject to the wrath of God if they do take the mark. What are you going to do about it, and how are you going to live?

The answer is that you will either give in and take the mark or you will be forced to live by faith.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus urged his followers to consider the birds and the flowers, noting that they didn't have jobs or bank accounts, and yet God took care of them. He said that his Father would take care of us too, if we would just work for his kingdom. (Matthew 6:19-34)

Jesus taught that we should stop working for food (John 6:27) and start working for God. He said that when we spend our time working for (i.e. being a servant of) money, we show our contempt for God. (Luke 16:13) He called on his followers to leave their fishing nets (Matthew 4:18-22), leave their jobs with the government (Luke 5:27-28), and give up everything they own to become his true disciples. (Luke 12:31-33; 14:33) To date, very few people have ever taken any of those teachings seriously. Do you know of any church that teaches people to live like that?

But now, as we move closer and closer to the actual implementation of the Mark of the Beast, Christians who have, in the past, made excuses for not living by faith are going to be forced out of their lukewarm indifference. They will either have to sell their soul to the Antichrist, by taking the mark, or they will finally have to start living by faith, the way Jesus intended for them to be living all along.

This is part of the "bitter" truth of The Revelation. And it's a bitter truth which you need to confront now, before it is too late.

Christians are rapidly being indoctrinated to take the Mark of the Beast, and the indoctrination is coming from some surprising places. The past ten years has seen worldwide interest in an overpriced series of novels supposedly based on Bible prophecy. Well over 100 million copies of books in the "Left Behind" series by Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins have been read by virtually everyone in Western society who has an interest in Bible prophecy, thus putting the books on the New York Times best-seller list.

Yet this same series has subtly undermined the seriousness of the biblical warning against taking the Mark of the Beast in a number of deceptive ways. We will list them below:

1. The secret rapture. The first book in the series says all Christians will supernaturally vanish sometime before the persecution of believers begins. This popular teaching, called 'the secret rapture', implies that present believers will never have to make a choice for or against the Mark.

2. A meaningless mark. When the Mark of the Beast finally gets a mention in the series, it has nothing to do with buying and selling. Consequently, the book's heroes get the best paid jobs, working personally for the Antichrist. Christians are even awarded contracts to do such things as setting up the Antichrist's security and computer systems! The 'mark' itself is a simple tattoo on

the forehead (no mention of hands) which Christians can get around by just wearing a baseball cap!

3. Faith in fate. Readers of the series are told that it does not take courage to refuse the Mark; anyone who has said a ritual prayer "asking Jesus into their hearts" will be guaranteed protection from the Mark, without any effort on their part. They can even turn totally against their faith and still they will be saved, because not even God can take back the salvation he has given to them.

4. Biloyalty. After the book has convinced many of its readers that it is impossible for them to take the Mark (because the ritual prayer has bought them eternal security), it goes on to say that even if they take the Mark, they will not be punished because "nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, and that has to include our own selves."

To prove this, the authors create a subplot where a teenager is physically forced by his parents to take the Mark. One of the book's heroes compliments the boy about the way in which he received the tattoo. He says, "I'm glad you didn't just scream out that you are a believer."

From this apparent tragedy, the book's heroes discover that they have just what they need to continue their life of luxury. They even give this horrible distortion of the truth a name. They call it bi-loyalty. The teenager responds, "I love that term bi-loyal," and he goes on to show what an advantage having the Mark can be!

And yet, hardly a word of protest has come from the religious masses of the West who are lapping up these damnable lies of the devil!

Appendix, Chapter 18

Matthew 6:26, 31-33. Behold the birds of the air, for they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they? ... Therefore, take no thought, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "With what will we be clothed?" (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you.

John 6:27. Do not labour for the food that perishes, but for that food which endures unto everlasting life, which the Son of man will give to you. For him has God the Father sealed.

Luke 16:13. No servant can work for two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot work for God and mammon [money].

Matthew 4:18-22. Jesus... saw two brothers... casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers. He said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fishers of men," and they straightway left their nets and followed him.

And going on from there he saw two other brothers... in a ship with their father, mending their nets, and he called them. They immediately left the ship and their father and followed him.

Luke 5:27-28. He saw a publican... sitting at the receipt of custom, and he said to him, "Follow me," and he left all, rose up, and followed him.

Luke 12:32-33. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell what you have and give to the poor. Provide yourselves with bags that do not wax old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches neither moth corrupts.

Luke 14:33. Whoever... does not forsake all that he has cannot be my disciple.

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19. "Here is Wisdom"

When Jesus Christ made his prophecy about the "abomination of desolation" preceding the Great Tribulation at the end of the world, he included a little note: "Whoever reads this, let him understand it." The phrase "abomination of desolation" took us back to Daniel's prophecy about a counterfeit "prince" who would make an agreement to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. It said that he would eventually profane the Temple and cause the sacrifices to cease. (see Chapter 13. The Middle of the Week) The 'abomination of desolation' prophecy is the only time the instruction, "Whoever reads this, let him understand," appears in the gospels.

The prophecy in The Revelation about the Mark of the Beast includes a similar instruction. It concludes: "Here is wisdom. Let him that has understanding count the number of the Beast; for it is the number of a man. His number is 666." (Revelation 13:18)

The "number" here is generally believed to be referring to the use of letters as numbers in some alphabets. Most of us know that I, V, X, L, C, D, and M all had numerical values in the Roman numeral system. Similar systems operated with the Hebrew and Greek alphabets, so that each person's name had a numerical value if you added up all such numbers in their name. For example; a person with the name VLADIMIR, would, according to the Roman number system, be 1557 (M = 1000, D = 500, L = 50, and I (x2) = 2).

The name of the Beast (if his name equals 666 in the Roman numeral system) would probably have the letters D, C, L, X, V, and I in it (each occurring only once, to give you 500+100+50+10 +5+1)*, and it could not have the letter M (1000). It could, of course, have any number of non-numerical letters as well. Some possible names might be: Vox Euclid, Victor Delux, or Exact Devil.** There don't appear to be any well known candidates for world ruler with such names at the moment. It is my guess that the Beast will have a name which adds up to 666 in Hebrew, but maybe also in Greek as well as Latin.

But "Wisdom" shouldn't depend on knowing the identity of the Antichrist. There must be a deeper truth hidden in the number. So I checked to see if the number 666 appeared anywhere else in the Bible. Sure enough, I found one other reference. It is the number of talents of gold that came to King Solomon in one year. (I Kings 10:14) It seemed ironic that a clue which started out by saying, "Here is wisdom" should lead me to the very man whose name has been equated with wisdom for thousands of years. King Solomon was said to have

been given one wish by God, and he wished for wisdom. He later became known as the wisest man on earth.

(*You could make other substitutions, such as two more V's for the X; or two more L's for the C).

(**Some longer examples: Clarence Vaughan Oxbridge, or Governor Charles Poindexter. One observation from this is that names adding up to 666 are relatively rare.)

Solomon wrote two books of the Bible. In addition to that, forty chapters of the Old Testament cover events in his life; but there are only two references to him in the Gospels. In one, Christ points to an event in the same chapter (I Kings 10) that has the number 666 in it, where the Queen of Sheba travelled hundreds of miles and brought nearly two tons of gold with her as a gift for King Solomon. (I Kings 10:1-2) Jesus said: "The queen of the south will rise up in the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the utmost part of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon. And behold, one greater than Solomon is here." (Luke 11:31)

In another place, Jesus said, "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not work, neither do they spin [cloth], and yet I say to you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these... Therefore, take no thought saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we be clothed?' (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.) For your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." (Matthew 6:28-33)

In both instances, Christ was saying that what he had to offer was greater than what Solomon had. So, in my own search for wisdom, I deduced that true wisdom would not come from following Solomon, but it would come from following Christ.

Solomon was rich; Christ was poor. Solomon was a king; Christ was a commoner. Solomon had hundreds of wives; Christ was a bachelor. Solomon built the famous Temple in Jerusalem; Christ was executed on the grounds that he was threatening to destroy the Temple in Jerusalem.



Isn't it strange how, in our study of the final three and a half years, we keep coming back to the Temple? Solomon (through I Kings 10:14) is linked with the number 666, and he is the one credited with having built the original Temple. The Beast (or Antichrist) is also linked with the number 666, and with making an

agreement to rebuild the Temple. Solomon was a king, and the Antichrist is a king. But the underlying message of The Revelation is that Christ is the true King of kings, and all others are but counterfeits by comparison.

And that must include Solomon as well.

Solomon was a good man; but he cannot hold a candle to Christ. Nor can anyone who was ever born. As Christ said in prophecies about the last days, people will find many replacements for the true Messiah. (Matthew 24:24) But when they do, their replacement (whoever it may be) becomes an antichrist. (I John 2:18; II John 6-7) The so-called Christian church would rather follow St. Paul, or the Pope, or Billy Graham, or, for that matter, Solomon, than to follow Christ. In fact, Solomon is used as one of the prime justifications for the "prosperity gospel", a heresy based on greed, which is spreading like wildfire through the entire church scene today. Even those who say they don't subscribe to it, still choose to tolerate books teaching the prosperity gospel in their religious bookshops.



It doesn't take a genius to see that the church, with its emphasis on prosperity, popularity, and political power, is closer to the lifestyle of Solomon than it is to the teachings of Christ. Counterfeit messiahs of all sorts have moved into the "holy place" and made it spiritually desolate.

But there is another aspect of the number 666.

In The Revelation the number 666 is linked with the "Mark" of the Beast, and in the passage from I Kings, it is linked with gold.

Both the Mark (i.e. a computerised implant) and gold, represent significant developments in the history of economics. Mankind has not advanced from the clumsy system of bartering to the concept of a cashless society in a single step.

The Babylonian Empire (of which we will have more to say later) invented money, in the form of gold coins. This was as significant a step in its day as the introduction of the Mark will be for us in our day.



The prophetic image in the book of Daniel that represented all of the empires from the Babylonian Empire down to the present day (see page 77) was explained by Daniel. He said that the head of gold represented Babylon itself. It was the Babylonian Empire, remember, that invented gold coins.

The rest of the statue represented succeeding world empires. As Daniel moved down the statue, each metal became more and more worthless, until it finally ended in feet made of clay mixed with iron. We have already discussed how the ten toes made from iron mixed with clay represent the coming world order, which will be an alliance of nations controlled by the Beast.

We are being trained to use the mark for all transactions (not just large purchases). -Author.

Is a Cashless society on the cards?

By Philip Aldrick (The Telegraph, 11th January, 2010)

Steve Perry, executive vice president of Visa Europe, says, "Cash is expensive. We need to be using it less. Processing a transaction on a card can be cheaper than handling cash." Perry is a leading cheerleader for the cashless society. Visa has recently published an extensive report on the cost of cash to society. Citing numerous independent papers, the payments company constructs a compelling case.

McKinsey, the consultants, have estimated that "society spends about €200 (£180) a year per person to cover the cost of cash" and the "real" cost of cash to a retailer is 1.3pc of the purchase price – no less than the transaction fee on a card. The Dutch central bank has published a similar study, estimating the annual cost of cash at €300 per family. Because cards are less risky,

they are more efficient and better value, Visa argues. Perry says the internet and "chip and pin" have helped the public grow familiar with card purchases, and reduced the incidence of fraud.

For Visa, the challenge now is largely small ticket items such as newspapers and snacks. Visa has been pioneering contactless payments, that allow swift purchases by waving the card over a reader and dispensing with a pin – making buying with a card even more effortless than with cash.

Visa's new vision is to insert chips into mobile phones and do away with cards altogether. In Africa, six million people are already paying for goods on their mobiles, proving that electronic payment systems can be more reliable and secure than cash.

Note how that, between gold coins and the Mark, money has progressed: first to coins made of lesser metals (as indicated by the statue), then paper currency, followed by cheques, and now just electronic impulses producing figures on a balance sheet. The money itself has become more and more worthless; but the system has become more and more efficient, enabling the very rich to make huge transactions in a matter of milliseconds.

Interestingly, the main ingredient in clay (symbol of the last empire) is silicon; and the breakthrough in computer technology that made the Mark possible has been the development of the silicon chip!

Another invention which has made implementation of the Mark possible is the international product code.



It is a series of lines of varying thicknesses, which can be used to identify millions of different products.

Checkout operators wave the "barcode" in front of a light to get an instant printout description of the item and its price. Look closely at the barcodes, and you'll see they all have three line patterns that are longer than the others. They are at each end, and in the middle of the other lines. If you study which lines are used for which numbers, you'll see that these three patterns that are repeated on all barcodes represent the number six, expressed three times: 666!

Banks test public reaction to "invasive technology" as mentioned below. But they also promote paranoia, to encourage people to use new forms of body I.D. -Author.

Mobile banking: Is it a phone, is it a bank?

(The Economist, March 30th 2013)

M-PESA, a money-transfer system run by Safaricom, a Kenyan mobile-phone operator is now trying to tempt Kenyans into a savings-and-loans service.

Safaricom has nearly as many subscribers as Kenya has adults—19m people from a population of 43m. Almost 15m of them use M-PESA for everything from paying electricity bills to school fees on even the most basic mobile phone.

Customers withdraw or transfer cash at a network of more than 40,000 M-PESA agents throughout the country.

An M-Shwari account can be set up instantly and accessed from any mobile handset. It requires no minimum balance and offers a small overdraft, with a one-off, 7.5% set-up

fee. Defaulters face losing their phone number, which Safaricom reckons means more than a duff credit rating in mobile-mad Kenya.

The service has had a fast start. In its first four months 2.3m subscribers opted in to M-Shwari; about 900,000 of them have active accounts. Deposits to date total 4 billion Kenyan shillings (\$47m). One-third of customers have applied for small loans, averaging around \$12.

Marketing for M-Shwari leans heavily on a rags-to-middle-class dream. A television advertisement shows one of Kenya's many penniless backstreet car mechanics toiling away under an old banger. He uses the service to save for a \$60 box of tools and ends up with a fully equipped garage.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus told a story about a wise man and a foolish man. He said the wise man was someone who had listened to the Sermon and then obeyed it. He said that the wise man would be building on a rock that would survive all storms. The foolish man was someone who had also listened to the Sermon, but then had not obeyed it. All of his efforts to build a house would only end in ruin.

A statue with feet of clay is like a foolish man building on sand. He gets more and more wealth, but does not think about where it is all leading. In the end, he dies with nothing to show for his life in eternity. The stone that comes out of nowhere is the kingdom of heaven, the teachings of Christ, the rock that grows and grows until it fills the whole earth. Those who build on the teachings of Christ will be eternally rewarded. We will have treasures in heaven. The storms of life (and death itself) will not be able to shake us.

As Jesus, or the angel in The Revelation, would put it, let the person with understanding think about that for a bit...

One of the problems with the Mark, is that everyone wants to know how close they can get to it without actually being covered by the curse that has been pronounced against those who take it. Most people hope that the Mark will not come in their lifetime. In one way or another, they put off dealing seriously with it, and they are continuing to do this even as it is starting to become reality.

It's difficult to imagine many of these people actually making a sudden and dramatic change in their lifestyle when the Mark comes in, especially if the change could cost them their lives.

Please check this link for a short video on how people are reacting to the Mark today: <http://www.dailymotion.com/docfilms>

Jesus identified the enemy, not as the Devil, but as money or mammon. He said our choice is between serving (i.e. working for) God, and serving (i.e. working for) money. (Matthew 6:24) He said we would end up despising one or the other... God or money. Which one do you despise? He said your actions will show which one takes first claim on your life and which one gets the leftovers. Do you fit in time to work for money after you have finished serving God, or do you fit in service to God after you've finished working for money?

St. Paul said that love for money is the root of all evil. (I Timothy 6:10) There is no mention of the Mark of the Beast here, nor in any of the above references. You don't need implants and computer scans to be disobedient to Christ.

Religious double-talk won't undo the evil that has come from ignoring the teachings of Christ. St. Peter said Jesus is the Stone that the builders rejected. (I Peter 2:7) And Jesus said if we don't fall on this Rock and let him change us, then the Rock is one day going to fall on us (as the Stone out of nowhere did in Daniel's vision of the statue) and it will grind us to powder. (Luke 20:17-18)

For those of us who have tried to take the teachings of Jesus seriously, learning to live by faith when the Mark comes in will not be so traumatic. We are developing a relationship with Jesus right now where we can hear him speaking, and where we experience God's provision whenever we go where he tells us to go.

Jesus said to his followers, when they asked where Christians will go when the Great Tribulation starts, "The birds will go where the food is." (Luke 17:36-37)

Here is wisdom: Consider the birds. They sow not, neither do they reap, but they do know how to follow God's voice, if he tells them to leave one place and go to another. By the time famine hits, the birds have all left. And a wise person, with true understanding, will learn to listen to God right now (before disaster strikes) and to obey him, even if it means giving up everything that we now cling to... before the Mark comes into effect.

Appendix, Chapter 19

Matthew 24:15-16. When you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet stand in the holy place (Whoever reads this, let him understand), then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains.

Daniel 9:27. He will confirm the covenant with many for one week, and in the middle of the week, he will cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he will make it desolate.

I Kings 10:1-2, 14. When the Queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the Lord, she came to prove him with hard questions. She came with a very great train... with very much gold and precious stones. The weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold.

Matthew 24:24. There will arise false Christs and false prophets. They will show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they would deceive the very elect.

I John 2:18. As you have heard that Antichrist will come, even now there are many antichrists...

II John 6-7. This is love, that we walk after his commandments... For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

Matthew 7:24-27. Whoever hears these sayings of mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it did not fall, for it was founded on a rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of mine and does not do them will be likened to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

I John 4:3. Every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God. This is that spirit of antichrist, which you have heard should come. Even now already is it in the world.

Matthew 6:24. No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate one and love the other, or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

I Timothy 6:10. The love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

I Peter 2:7. To those who are disobedient, the stone that the builders disallowed is made the head of the corner.

Luke 20:17-18. Whoever will fall on that stone will be broken; but on whomever it will fall, it will grind them to powder.

Luke 17:36-37. "Two people will be in the field. One will be taken and the other left." They said to him, "Where, Lord?" and he said, "Wherever the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together."

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20. The Beast

Now we will back up and discuss the first half of the thirteenth chapter of The Revelation.

It describes a Beast with seven heads and ten horns (Revelation 13:1), which is a conglomerate of the same animals that Daniel had seen in one of his visions:

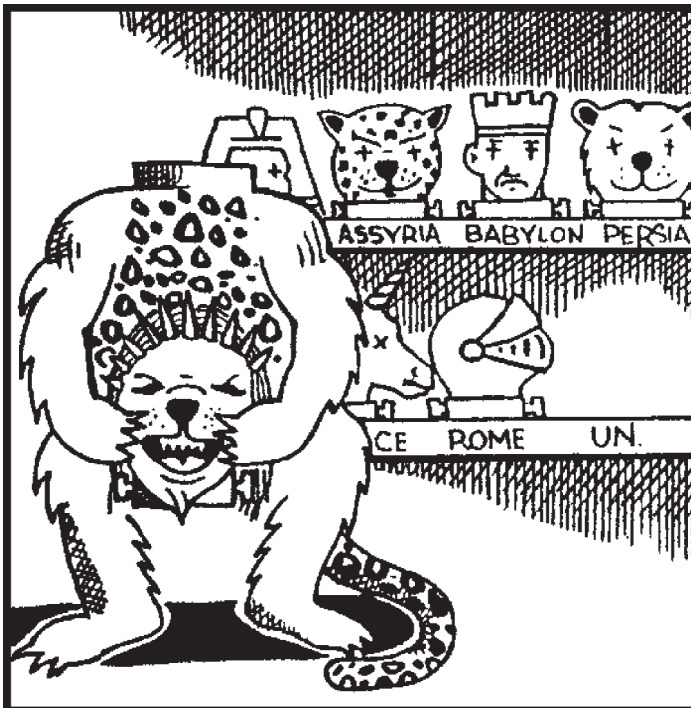
the panther, bear, lion, and then the final Beast. (Daniel 7:4-7; Revelation 13:2) Notice that there is no reference to the eagle's wings in John's description, although the lion had eagle's wings in Daniel's prophecy. (We will have more to say on that later.)

Some say the beasts Daniel saw were succeeding world empires. Daniel had clearly said this about the statue in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which represented Babylonia, followed by Persia, Greece, Rome, and then one final world empire. Although he said the four beasts were also kingdoms, he was not so definite about them each existing in different ages. (Daniel 7:17-18)

There may be some truth in the traditional interpretation, i.e. that the four beasts represented Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and Rome; but why would this have been significant in John's day, when the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek Empires were already history?

We would like to suggest that the bear, lion, and panther might also be references to three world powers (i.e. a First, Second, and Third World) that would exist at the same time, and each become part of the final world empire.

John's "Beast" had seven heads. Little is said about six of them. It is likely that these six heads (which hardly rate a mention) are the part of the vision that represented past world empires. The Revelation could have been saying that all those past empires will be spiritually present in the final empire as well. The drawing below suggests that the six past empires were the Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires; with one world empire still to come.



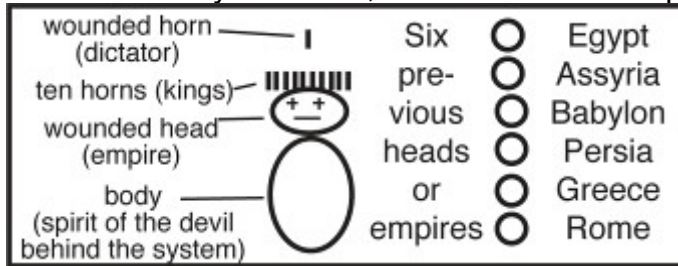
Along with seven heads, the Beast John saw in Revelation 13:1-2 had ten horns. Each horn had a crown. Daniel's "fourth beast" or final world empire, was "dreadful and terrible, exceedingly strong, and had great iron teeth. It devoured

and broke in pieces and stamped the residue with its feet. It was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns." (Daniel 7:7)

This seventh head (with ten horns) must be the coming world empire. Daniel said "the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that will arise. Another will rise after them, and he will be diverse from the first. He will subdue three kings." (Daniel 7:24) In John's description, the ten horns are wearing ten crowns, suggesting that these are the same horns that Daniel saw, representing ten "kings" or world leaders. So the coming world empire has ten leaders, and the Antichrist "subdues" three kings in order to take control of it.

In Revelation 13:3, John says that he "saw one of his [the Beast's] heads as it were wounded to death, and his deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the Beast." John described the Beast as having seven heads and ten horns. But each horn was, in essence, a head as well, because each horn was wearing a crown. Daniel described one horn in particular as having eyes and a mouth. (Daniel 7:8)

So is it a head or a horn that receives the "deadly wound"? Once again, the correct answer may be "both", since the horns are people/leaders too.

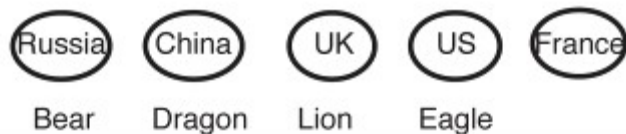


The Revelation says specifically that it is a "head" that receives the deadly wound (and is then revived); but then it goes on to describe the head doing things that Daniel said the horn would do. (cf. Revelation 13:3-10 and Daniel 7:8, 25) The head is wounded just before the Tribulation, when the Beast makes war against God's people. So we can say with relative certainty that it is the final world empire (head) and/or the final world dictator (horn) that receives the deadly wound.

Because this last world empire is unique from previous empires (i.e. because it is an alliance), the "head" must either be an organisation or an ideology which unites the ten kings. Let's say that the head is either the United Nations, world communism, or world capitalism. Then one of these must receive a "deadly wound" from which it will miraculously recover, and then take on its full role in the next world empire.

In 1990, I led a delegation of Australians on a tour of the United States, warning that country of impending doom. We distributed a quarter of a million pamphlets entitled, "The Fall of America".

U.N. Security Council--5 permanent members



The pamphlet said that the U.N. Security Council has ten Third World members and five superpower members. Three of the superpowers are pro-western (The U.S., United Kingdom, and France) and two are communist (Russia and China). I said that, if Russia could "subdue" the three Western powers, she could control the world.

The U.S. media gave our delegation excellent coverage, with over 200 reports of our visit. But we had barely left the country when, instead of America falling, communism collapsed. Our timing was perfect; but our declaration of who was going to fall could not have been more wrong! Or so it seemed.

Nevertheless the U.N. is definitely no longer a "paper tiger". It just happens that America is the one pulling the strings, and not Russia, as we had predicted (and as we still do predict).

We warned earlier against letting the media dictate your understanding of Bible prophecy. Communism in general, and Russia in particular, have suffered a deadly wound. That's all. The rest of the prophecy says the deadly wound will be healed, and all the world will "wonder after the Beast". (Revelation 13:3) So the collapse of communism does not necessarily rule it out as the unifying ideology for the final world empire.

The Bible specifically mentions that the Beast will be helped by a Dragon (Revelation 13:4), which is also described as having seven heads and ten horns. (Revelation 12:3) The Revelation itself states that the Dragon is the Devil (Revelation 12:9); but it is also interesting that the dragon is the symbol of the other great communist power in the world today (China).

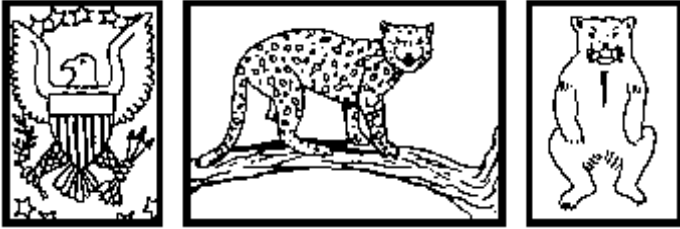
We learned from Daniel that a "horn" would "pluck up by the roots" three other horns before taking control of the final Beast. The horn that is going to do that is the same one that is going to "devour and break in pieces". (Daniel 7:7-8)

In the same prophecy, Daniel saw a Bear with three ribs between its teeth, saying "Arise, devour much flesh." (Daniel 7:5) Daniel also saw a beast that was like a Lion with Eagle's wings. But he saw the wings of the eagle "plucked", and the Lion made to stand on its feet as a man. (Daniel 7:4) In other words, the Lion ceased to exist as a "beast", or world power, when it lost its Eagle wings. "Dominion" was given, instead, to the Panther. (Daniel 7:6) Remember the ten Third World members of the U.N. Security Council?

The symbols for Russia, England/America, and the Third World are a Bear, Lion/Eagle, and Panther. Remember, too, that when John saw all of these animals merged into one final Beast, he made no mention of the Eagle. If these animals are referring to political powers that exist in the world today, what could they be implying?

Are they saying (as our newspapers seem to be telling us) that the Eagle (America) is the nation that will take (or perhaps already has taken) control of the ten united nations? or are the prophecies saying that the Bear (Russia) is going to eventually recover from its deadly wound, "pluck" the eagle's feathers, and, in doing so, subdue three nations that are presently stopping it from taking control of the U.N. and "devouring" the earth? (Daniel 7:24) Obviously the second explanation is the one that conforms with what the prophecies are actually saying. True, it is embarrassing to predict that America will fall, and then to see

Russia fall instead. But that too is predicted as part of the overall scenario: Russia/communism must suffer a deadly wound first.



If the final world power is to be a communist power, and if it is to be represented by a bear with three ribs (or horns?) in its teeth, and if the bear is to be assisted by a dragon, and if it is going to unite the Third World in ruling the world, it certainly is still going to have to "pluck" the Eagle's wings before it can hope to achieve such goals.

The Revelation (written nearly 2,000 years ago) names the same three animals that symbolise the two (former?) superpowers, plus the Third World. What these animals are described as doing (particularly with reference to gaining control of the U.N.) makes perfect sense in the light of what is happening in the world today.

More is said about the Beast in Revelation 17. We will deal with that after we have said a few things about the False Prophet.

Appendix, Chapter 20

Revelation 13:1-8. I stood on the sand of the sea and saw a Beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and on his horns ten crowns, and on his heads the name of blasphemy. The Beast I saw was like a leopard. His feet were as the feet of a bear. His mouth as the mouth of a lion. The dragon gave him his power and his seat, and great authority.

I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death. His deadly wound was healed, and all the world wondered after the Beast. They worshipped the dragon which gave power to the Beast, and they worshipped the Beast, saying, "Who is like unto the Beast? Who is able to make war with him?"

There was given him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies. Power was given him to continue forty-two months. He opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name and his tabernacle and them that dwell in heaven.

It was given to him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them. Power was given him over all kindreds and tongues and nations. All that dwell on earth will worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

Daniel 7:3-9. Four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings. I beheld till the wings of it were plucked. It was lifted up from the earth and made stand on its feet as a man. A man's heart was given to it.

Behold, another beast, a second, like to a bear. It raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it. They said thus unto it, "Arise, devour much flesh."

After this I beheld and lo, another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl. The beast had also four heads, and dominion was given to it.

After this I saw in the night visions and behold a fourth Beast, dreadful and terrible and strong exceedingly. It had great iron teeth. It devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it. It was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns. I considered the horns and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots. Behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

I beheld till the thrones were cast down and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow...

Daniel 7:17-18. These great beasts which are four, are four kings which shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

Daniel 7:23-25. The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom on earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth and shall tread it down and break it in pieces. The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise. Another shall rise after them, and he shall be diverse from the first. He shall subdue three kings. He shall speak great words against the most High and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws. They shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time [three and a half years].

Revelation 12:3. There appeared another wonder in heaven. Behold, a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns upon his heads.

Revelation 12:9. The great dragon was cast out, that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world. He was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

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21. The False Prophet

The False Prophet is only mentioned in a short passage from the thirteenth chapter of The Revelation. (verses 11-18) But what we learn here is that it is actually the False Prophet who succeeds in getting the world to worship the Beast and his "image".

The False Prophet is described as looking "like a lamb", but speaking "as a dragon". (Revelation 13:11) He has all the power that the Beast himself has, but his primary role is to teach the world to worship the Beast.

Remember Max Weber's research into religion? (p. 75) Weber discovered that the primary function of all religions has been to teach the masses that

society is God. Rather than teach people to worship and serve the Creator, institutional religion has always taught people to worship and serve the System... or the Beast.

This has been happening throughout history. Because of that, the message of The Revelation has always been relevant.

However, in this final age, there appears to be a fulfillment of what Weber observed, which is going to be far more devastating for the spiritual future of the human race. There have been many antichrists, and there have been many false prophets. But there is going to be one supremely evil Antichrist, and one supremely evil False Prophet during the last three and a half years of history as we now know it.

The Bible specifically warns us that the False Prophet will be able to control the masses through his ability to perform what appear to be miracles. (Revelation 13:13-14)

In a prophecy relating to the end of the world, the Apostle Paul talks about the "Man of Sin" and the "Wicked One" coming before Christ returns. He says, in particular, that the Wicked One will come "after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." (II Thessalonians 2:2-12) In other words, this Wicked One is going to have the ability to perform what appear to be miracles, but they will actually be "lying" wonders.

Church historians are pretty much in agreement when they say that the biggest thing that has happened in the church world in the Twentieth Century has been the Pentecostal movement, with its emphasis on miraculous "gifts". However, the movement has been characterised by widespread deception and dishonesty. From the mail fraud of Jimmy Bakker to tricks with chicken livers by Jim Jones, the movement has spawned some of the worst abuses of congregational trust that religion has ever experienced.

There is hardly a Pentecostal minister anywhere in the world today who doesn't at least consent to the teaching that people should "claim" miracles have happened even when all the available evidence indicates otherwise. The argument in defence of this practice is that "claiming" a miracle, when there is none, shows great faith. However, the result has been that faith healers receive endorsements without having to produce the goods. They usually move on to their next crusade, while leaving the disillusioned to sort out for themselves how they are going to live with the fact that they told a lie about a miracle that never happened.

They told the lie in the first place ("God has healed me! Thank you, Jesus!") in the hope of pressuring God into giving them what they "claimed" had already occurred. That's how the teaching works. When it does not eventuate, most people are too embarrassed to admit the falseness of the whole process. They assume that they are the only ones who didn't get what they had hoped for; and they fear that others will think that their faith was defective if they were not healed; so they say nothing, and the lie grows.

In this tragic illustration of the social phenomenon that Hans Christian Andersen was describing in his story about The Emperor's New Clothes, the entire Pentecostal movement has become one big lie, with each person secretly trying to imitate what they hear others saying.

The church world has largely refused to deal decisively with the lie. And it appears to be the same lie that the False Prophet will use to lead the "faithful" to worship the Antichrist.

We are told that the False Prophet will have two horns "like a lamb", but he will have the voice of a dragon. If the horns represent authority, then we can expect he will claim to have the authority of Christ (the Lamb), at the same time that what he says will really reflect the lies of the Devil.

You will not find one church leader in a hundred today who believes in and preaches obedience to the teachings of Jesus. What they teach instead, are cleverly worded doctrines which justify disobedience to the teachings of Jesus.

Such men of faith as Gandhi and Tolstoy were appalled to find that the official position of the bulk of "Christianity" is that God neither expects nor even wants us to try to be good (in the sense of obeying Christ). The churches do teach rules about church attendance, saying little prayers, performing rituals, and "obeying the laws of the land". But the vast majority of Protestants believe that strict discipline in matters such as Christ taught is an attempt to "work your way to heaven". Trying to work your way to heaven (i.e. trying to be good in an attempt to please God) is seen as the most fundamental of all sins.

It matters not that these teachings totally contradict what Christ said about the need for obedience if one wishes to be counted as one of his followers. In other words, those who claim to be speaking on behalf of Christ (i.e. wearing the horns of the Lamb) are actually spouting anti-Christ teachings of the Devil (or the Dragon).

Christ taught that miracles prove nothing about real faith. He said an "evil and adulterous generation" seeks miracles. (Matthew 16:4) Such is the generation that we now live in. Teachings about morality and discipline have been discarded in favour of teachings about how to get health and wealth.

Ironically, the Bible says the False Prophet, working with the Antichrist, will be able to call fire down from heaven (Revelation 13:13); and it says almost the same about the Two Witnesses! (Revelation 11:5) So we will have two teams of two, both calling fire down from heaven. Apparently they will both start out by saying they speak on behalf of Christ (the Lamb). Anyone hoping to tell the good guys from the bad guys on the basis of the miracles that they can perform, will almost certainly be conned into following the bad guys instead.

From experience we have found that true discernment is not based on superficial examination. It looks more deeply than just at whether or not one can do a miracle or talk piously. True discernment only comes from following and obeying the Lamb yourself. As you do this, you will learn personally what he requires of his followers. Based on the teachings of Jesus in the Bible, you will learn to recognise the difference between the Dragon's voice and the Lamb's voice.

The False Prophet "makes an image to the Beast", and "gives life to the image" so that it can speak. This part of the prophecy is a bit baffling if the False Prophet represents the institutional church.

There is another interpretation of the prophecy which says that the institutional church has lost relevance in today's world. It says that the "prophets" of the Twentieth Century are scientists. Science, through television (the image that can speak), now dictates the norms and values of today's society. There is some truth in this, and it is not completely inconsistent with the earlier theory. The mainline churches strongly support the government education system, and science as taught in government schools. The churches, as a whole, have taken the attitude that "if you can't beat them, you may as well join them." Science, with its quest for truth, and education with its free pass to well-paid employment have become the message of the church to today's youth. Never mind that science has made the totally unproven and irrational theory of evolution the centerpiece of its ideology, in an effort to minimise or totally rule out God's role in creation.

And so science, with ecclesiastical blessing, makes an image, according to Revelation 13:15, that keeps track of any who do not worship the Beast (i.e. who do not take or use the Mark). It sounds like a massive computer that keeps tabs on all the millions who show loyalty to the Beast by using his Mark to buy and sell. Those who do not, will be killed... by starvation if by nothing else.

The Revelation's description of Twenty-First Century technology in the form of the "image that can speak" is, indeed, sounding more and more scientific and less and less fictional.

Appendix, Chapter 21

Revelation 13:11-17. I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth. He had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. He exercises all the power of the first Beast before him, and causes the earth and them that dwell in it to worship the first Beast, whose deadly wound was healed. He does great wonders so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men. And he deceives them that dwell on the earth by those miracles that he had power to do in the sight of the Beast, saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the Beast which had the wound by a sword and did live. He had power to give life to the image of the Beast, that the image of the Beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the Beast should be killed. He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand or in their foreheads, that no one might buy or sell save those that had the mark or the name of the Beast or the number of his name.

II Thessalonians 2:2-4; 8-12. Be not soon shaken in mind ... that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sits in the Temple of God, showing himself

that he is God. Don't you remember that when I was yet with you, I told you these things?

Then will that Wicked One be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the spirit of his mouth, and will destroy with the brightness of his coming, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. For this cause God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

Matthew 16:4. A wicked and adulterous generation seeks a sign. No sign will be given it but the sign of the prophet Jonah.

Revelation 11:5. If anyone will hurt them [the two witnesses], fire proceeds out of their mouth, and devours their enemies.

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22. The Prostitute

There are a number of different baddies mentioned in The Revelation, as well as in the prophecies of Daniel. Many of them share the same characteristics, almost as though each one is just a different aspect of the same thing. On page 164, for example, we saw that the last head of the Beast did things that one of the horns on that head was also described as doing. We talk about both the horn and the head (as well as the body on which the head fits) almost interchangeably, referring to them all as the "Beast".

This happens, because the "Beast" is really a principle that repeats itself at three different levels.

The body of the Beast represents all that is evil about governments throughout the world and throughout history. (See the illustration on page 164.) It is similar to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, where God was saying that all the empires of man (Persian, Greek, Roman, you name it) were part of the same Babylonian system. (Note: The word Babylon means "confusion" and comes from the Hebrew word "Babel".)

It is a cynical statement, we know, but it is consistent with Jesus' attitude toward the system as a whole. In his temptation in the wilderness, he never argued with Satan's claim that he (the Devil) owned all the kingdoms of the world. (Luke 4:6) When referring to his crucifixion, Jesus described it as the time when the Devil, or "the prince of this world" was the one really being judged. (John 12:31-32; 14:30; 16:7-11) The Devil really is the Prince of this world at the moment.

The seventh head represents the Beast too, in the form of the final world government. It will offer us all that is best from all previous systems, but it'll end up being all that is worst. So far in this book, we have mostly talked about the Beast in terms of this final world government.

But finally, the horn on that head will be the Beast in the form of a single individual, who is the dictator at the head of that final world empire. He will be

the personification of the Devil himself. We call him the Antichrist (capital "A"), or the Beast in the form of a single person. We believe that he will be as much the Son of the Devil as Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

But there are other representations of evil in The Revelation as well, and they too seem to overlap, as though they also represent the Beast, but in slightly different ways.

We have already commented on the Dragon, which also had seven heads and ten horns like the Beast. (Revelation 12:3) The Dragon was clearly identified as being the Devil. (Revelation 12:9) But this may be just another way of stating that it is the Devil who is behind all that is bad about world governments. (In the update at the front of this book more is said about the Dragon being a symbol for China.)

Some people find it easier to fight temptation by picturing the Devil as a force outside of themselves, which they can choose to resist. Because governments are made up of people like ourselves, who have a capacity for both good and evil, it is often hard to think of them as being totally evil.

It may be easier to think of the Devil as being an outside force (i.e. a Dragon) that tries to manipulate and sabotage all human endeavours, including our efforts to govern ourselves. Either way (whether we see the evil as coming from outside or from within), the only solution is to submit to the teachings of Jesus and build the kingdom that he came to establish.

Another nasty character in The Revelation is the False Prophet. Little is said about him, apart from the fact that he causes the world to worship the Beast. The Dragon is the spiritual force behind the Beast, while the False Prophet is the religious (or perhaps the scientific?) front that this force takes, in order to make the Beast look outwardly respectable. It is through the efforts of the False Prophet that "good" people are led into becoming more loyal to the system than they are to God the Creator.

And now we come to a Prostitute, who characterises the economic side of the Beast.

She is described in Revelation 17 and 18. John says, "I saw a woman sit on a scarlet coloured Beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns. The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet... having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. On her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH." (Revelation 17:3-5)

John was given an interpretation of what he saw. The interpretation centers on the Beast and says very little about the Prostitute. So, before we go through a line by line explanation of what this passage says about the Beast, let us consider the overview. Who is this Prostitute? Obviously she is not very nice. She is the "Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." She sits on the Beast with seven heads and ten horns, yet she herself is called "Babylon", which was the name of the empire from which all of the others in Nebuchadnezzar's dream evolved. If Babylon the Prostitute and the political Beast are not one and

the same, then there must be a very close relationship between them. But what is it?

Consider this: A prostitute offers sex in return for money. In a world where people are starved for love, the Prostitute promises to meet their spiritual need if they will give her enough money. I would maintain that she represents Greed, and the lie that money can buy happiness and spiritual fulfillment. This lie is at the root of all evil. It is what keeps the masses too preoccupied to question what is going on.

Artists talk of "prostituting" their talents by letting profit influence their work. But we each prostitute ourselves when we sell our souls (i.e. our lives, or our time) to the System in exchange for money. The Prostitute grows fat while we starve spiritually. The False Prophet was the religious front for the Beast, but the Prostitute appears to represent the economic front.

There will be more to say about the Prostitute and her relationship with the Beast later. But first let us look at what was said about the Beast in the interpretation that John received:

"The Beast that you saw... shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition. They that dwell on earth shall wonder (whose names are not written in the book of life...) when they behold the Beast that was, and is not, and yet is." (Revelation 17:8)

This fits what we have been saying up to this point: The Beast has seven heads and ten horns, the same as the Dragon. The Beast comes from the bottomless pit and goes to perdition, the same as the Devil (the "son of perdition"). (II Thessalonians 2:3) And everyone, apart from those who follow the Lamb, will "wonder after" (or worship) the Beast, thanks to the False Prophet.

But then we come to a phrase which is new. It says the Beast "was, and is not, and yet is." Here are the various levels of meaning that we mentioned earlier. The Beast has prophetic significance in the past, the present, and the future. It "was" in all the governments of man throughout history. At the same time, it "is not" yet come, because the final world government and final world leader, (the ultimate subject of these prophecies) were not around at the time that John was writing The Revelation. But the sentence concludes by saying that the Beast "yet is". For the Beast was present in the world at that time in the form of the Roman Empire, which was the empire that crucified Christ.

Then John heard much the same phrase that was used in reference to the number 666 ("Here is wisdom." Revelation 13:18) and in reference to the "abomination of desolation". ("Whoso readeth, let him understand." Matthew 24:15) The phrase was: "Here is the mind that has wisdom." (Revelation 17:9) In other words, something important is about to be said. It is followed by a lengthy explanation of the seven heads, an explanation that is consistent with what we have said about them up to this point.

It begins: "The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits." (Revelation 17:9) Why seven mountains instead of seven heads? Many believe it refers to the city of Rome, which is built on seven hills, and which was the center of the empire that controlled the world at that time. St. Peter, in one of his letters, sent a greeting from "the church at Babylon" (I Peter 5:13), apparently

referring to Christians who were living in Rome at the time. So First Century Christians saw the Roman Empire and the city of Rome in particular as the Babylon of their day.

But the real subject of this passage is the "mountains", and not the city. So whether or not the mountains are a pointer to Rome, what is said about these seven mountains is being said about the seven heads or kingdoms of history.

"There are seven kings. Five are fallen, and one is. The other is not yet come." (Revelation 17:10) Whether they are mountains or heads, they are still "kings". Look again at the drawing on page 162. Five empires had fallen (Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Greece). One was in power at that time (Rome), and the other had not yet come. So that tells us that the Prostitute had been "sitting on" the Beast throughout all of these empires.

Then the angel starts to describe the seventh king and, for the first time, an eighth king. Here is the paradox that we explained previously, where there is an individual who is the final king or Beast, at the same time that there is a Beast which has existed throughout history. In this explanation the two are described as king number seven and king number eight:

"When he [the seventh king] comes, he must continue a short space. The Beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goes into perdition." (Revelation 17:10-11)

It's like Jesus being God and the Son of God both. It's a paradox; because he was fully human at the same time that he was fully divine. So the seventh king will be as human as any world leader has been; but there is also a demonic personality (the eighth Beast) which has been around since the beginning of time, and which has been the evil spiritual force behind each of the seven empires. That personality is Satan himself. Satan will enter this final king and rule the world through him.

Then the passage turns to the ten horns. The term "one hour" in this passage is not a literal hour. It is an idiomatic expression like when we say, "Wait a second." We don't really mean "one second". Like "one hour", it means "only a short time". Otherwise, what follows should be pretty much self-explanatory by now:

"The ten horns which you saw are ten kings which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the Beast. These have one mind and will give their power and strength to the Beast. These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for he is Lord of lords and King of kings." (Revelation 17:12-14)

(The final war referred to here is the Battle of Armageddon; for the 17th chapter, from which we are quoting now, is in that part of The Revelation which covers the pouring out of God's Wrath from seven "vials" or containers. We have jumped ahead in our reading of The Revelation in order to look at these comments about the Beast, and to consider the overall role of the Prostitute.)

Then we come to a most disturbing passage, one that doesn't seem to be consistent with all that we have been reading about the various baddies in The Revelation up until now. It is Revelation 17:16. "The ten horns which you saw

on the Beast, these shall hate the whore and shall make her desolate and naked and shall eat her flesh and burn her with fire."

Here we have the baddies turning against one another. In addition, there seems to be a change in time at this point, which takes us back to the period just before the Beast came to power (even though the context is during the period of God's wrath... after the Great Tribulation. Revelation 17:17 says: "For God has put in their hearts [i.e. the ten kings] to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the Beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

In other words, the Prostitute is destroyed with the help of the ten kings, so that the ten kings can give their kingdom to the Beast. This sounds like something that would have happened prior to the Great Tribulation. Yet here it is in the chapter just after the seven vials have been poured out (Revelation 16) and just before the famous Battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 19:11-21)

But what if the Prostitute (like the Beast) represents more than one thing? The destruction of the Prostitute is symbolically a description of the Battle of Armageddon, where God's wrath is poured out on her and all that she represents. But it may be literally describing an earlier battle, one between her and the Beast, who is assisted by the ten horns.

Whatever it is that the Prostitute represents, she herself is destroyed in the battle that is described in Revelation 18, apparently enabling the Beast to take control of the world. However, after the battle of Armageddon, the False Prophet, Dragon, and Beast are all taken alive, as prisoners. (Revelation 19:20)

We have already suggested that the Prostitute represents the economic side of the Beast. In Revelation 18, where merchants, shipping companies, and kings mourn her passing, this becomes even clearer. (Revelation 18:3, 9-11, 15-18) We believe that the Prostitute is America, and that the battle being described is one that took place before the Tribulation, between her and Russia, with Russia assisted by the Third World (the ten horns) and perhaps by the Dragon (China). We will deal with the time sequence later.



Revelation 17:3, and 9 both say that the Prostitute "sits on" the "Red" Beast. What this may mean is that their relationship is not perfectly amicable. They are both world powers, but their emphasis is different. And at some stage the Prostitute gets the upper hand.

What a prostitute wants is money. American capitalism, like prostitution, is built squarely on greed, or the love of capital. A prostitute may talk of love, but her real interest is money. America, too, talks of God when her real interest is just in getting more and more capital.

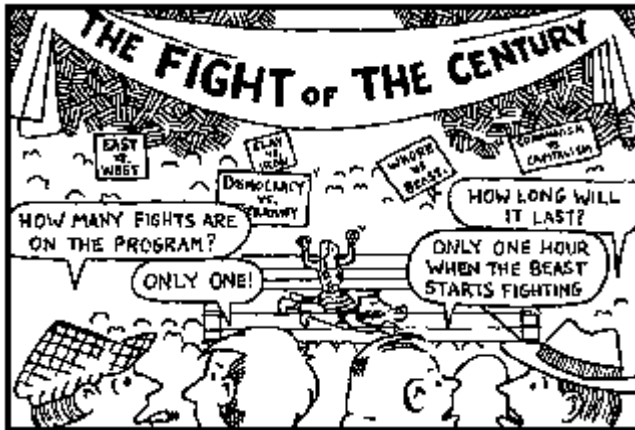
The Red Beast, on the other hand, is primarily interested in turning the human race totally against God. The Devil's only interest in money is to use it to get control of our souls. Religion, even if it is hypocritical religion, does not appeal to the Devil either. But he is forced to put up with these two lies until he can get people so totally depraved that they will worship him and blaspheme God without shame and without payment. Only then can he turn on the Prostitute and destroy her.

We said earlier that the Roman Empire eventually divided into East and West, and that this seemed to be symbolised in the two legs of Nebuchadnezzar's statue. (The legs are the parts of the statue which represented the Roman Empire). The legs led to two feet, which were described as clay mixed with iron. We said that these represented democratic governments and totalitarian governments.

In the Twentieth Century, Russia became the totalitarian superpower which represented the East, and America became the democratic superpower that represented the West. Atheism was an important part of the communist ideology, whereas religion (in particular, the Protestant work ethic) is an important part of the capitalistic ideology.

The kings of the earth, the merchants of the earth, and the shipping companies of the earth have all been assisted by the American ideology.

Now Russia and communism have suffered a deadly wound; and America is "sitting on" top of world communism. See the picture below.



But the prophecy says that the Beast (with the help of the ten horns) will turn on the Prostitute and destroy her in one hour! The Bear will pluck the Eagle with the help of the Panther.

Remember too that the ten rotating members of the U.N. Security Council are from the Third World. The five permanent members include Russia and China (both "red" communists, with a Bear and a Dragon as their symbols)*, and three anti-communist members: America, the U.K., and France. If America could be destroyed, then the U.K. and France would be powerless to stop a communist takeover. Three kings would be subdued, and the other ten would be free to give their support to a communist world government.

Now for the reason why this story comes during the time of God's Wrath: When Babylon (represented at the moment by America)** falls, the new world empire will become the new Babylon; for Communism too, like all governments, is ultimately based on greed. It will then become the responsibility of the communist version of Babylon to provide the merchants and kings and shipping companies of the world with business. It will also be the communist version of Babylon that will finally be destroyed at the Battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:19). The Lamb will destroy that Babylon, whereas the Beast will destroy the American version. (Revelation 17:16-17)

(*Note that both the Beast and the Dragon are described as being "red". (Revelation 17:3; 12:3)

**I checked the Encyclopedia Britannica to see if there is a city named Babylon today. There is only one city named Babylon that is significant enough to rate a mention in the Encyclopedia Britannica. It is a burrough of almost a quarter of a million people, and it is located on Long Island, in New York, U.S.A., just a few miles from Wall Street)

Appendix, Chapter 22

Luke 4:5-6. The Devil... showed him all the kingdoms of the world..., and said, "All this power... is delivered to me."

John 12:31. Now is the judgment of this world. Now shall the prince of this world be cast out.

John 14:30. Hereafter I will not talk much with you, for the prince of this world comes, and has nothing in me.

John 16:8, 11. When he is come, he will reprove the world of... judgment... because the prince of this world is judged.

Revelation 13:18. Here is wisdom. Let him that has understanding count the number of the Beast...

Matthew 24:15. When you see the abomination of desolation... (Whoever reads this, let him understand.)

Revelation 19:20. The Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet... These both were cast alive into a lake of fire.

Revelation 18:3, 9-11, 15-18. All nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. The kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies... The kings of the earth... will bewail her and lament for her when they see the smoke of her burning... saying, "Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that might city! For in one hour is your judgment come." And the merchants of the earth will weep and mourn over her, for no one buys their merchandise any more... The merchants... which were made rich by her will stand... weeping and wailing, and saying, "Alas, alas, that great city that was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, for in one hour so great riches is come to nothing." And every shipmaster and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea stood afar off and cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, "What city is like unto this great city!"

Revelation 17:3, 9. He carried me away in the spirit to the wilderness, and I saw a woman sit on a scarlet coloured Beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns... Here is the mind that has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits.

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23. Some Weak Spots

We have moved rather quickly through some difficult passages. Some readers may feel they are being asked to believe too much too quickly. In order to make the text read more smoothly, I have often stated as fact what is technically just "theory". Some of my theories have been built on the assumption that an earlier theory is correct.

Some of this confidence has come from a familiarity with other passages that strongly support the main points of the theory. But there is a tendency for any theorist to see things that support his or her theory, while overlooking things that might challenge it. So this chapter is a breather, in which we will consider some

of the weak spots in the theories which have been presented so far. We will, in some cases, however, produce counter-arguments to defend our position.

The most universal argument is that prophecies say nothing about the future that we don't already know. This is the approach taken by most "respected" theologians. They discuss all miracles, all talk of God, all interpretations of prophecy with a kind of intellectual aloofness which implies that even faith itself is just a sociological (or psychological) phenomenon for them to dissect and discuss. They bend over backward to convince themselves that there is no such thing as the supernatural, except in the weak minds of lesser individuals than themselves. I simply cannot accept this faithless approach.

There is a story about a labourer working at a seminary who was saying "Praise the Lord!" over and over to himself as he worked at digging a ditch on the campus. A theology student observed this, and asked him to explain why he was so excited. The uneducated worker said he had just been thinking about how God parted the Red Sea and allowed the children of Israel to walk through it on dry land.

The seminary student decided to enlighten the poor man. "It wasn't really the Red Sea," he explained. "We believe it was actually the Sea of Reeds, which is a marshy stretch of land that is only covered by about eighteen inches of water."

"Well, praise the Lord! That's even more amazing!" exclaimed the workman.

"And what's so amazing about that?" asked the would-be theologian.

"It's amazing how the Lord was able to drown all of Pharaoh's armies in only eighteen inches of water!" he replied, with a big grin on his face.

Theologians are faced with a similar problem when it comes to Bible prophecy. The Book of Daniel states that it was written during the time of the Babylonian Empire and the start of the Medo-Persian Empire. There is no evidence to suggest that this was not the case, except for the fact that it predicts the Greek Empire by name. On the basis of that alone, the (unbelieving) experts have had to say that it must have been written during the time of the Greek Empire.

The fact that it predicts the year in which Jesus Christ was crucified (see pages 51-56 of this book) should also force them to say that it must have been written during the time of the Roman Empire. However, they know that this is not true, so they largely ignore the prophecy about Christ's death. "Expert" theologians rarely express open belief in it, or in anything else that is supernatural. They know that, among their colleagues, such faith is looked down upon. The politically correct thing to do is to explain away all miracles.

A similar problem confronts the skeptics with regard to prophecies about the Mark of the Beast in the New Testament. It is becoming more and more difficult for people to dispute its accuracy as they see what it predicted actually happening in today's world. What it said would happen is going to happen, just as the Bible said it would. So now people are openly admitting that they don't care whether it is true or not, because they have no interest in obeying God, if doing so is likely to bring them any discomfort. The same evil generation that asks to be shown miracles, still refuses to change when they see them!

So we match their contempt for God with our own contempt for their approach to prophecy. Certainly there are non-miraculous aspects of prophecy which simply state universal truths; but there are also aspects which accurately predict the future; and they both need to be taken together to arrive at the whole truth.

There are others who would disagree with us because they interpret symbols in The Revelation as representing other events than what we have described. Many say that things described in The Revelation have already happened at various times throughout history. The eruption of the island of Krakatoa, for example, is seen as the mountain which fell into the sea, with ash and smoke blowing around the world and making the sun appear to be red in the middle of the day. Mass executions by men like Hitler and Stalin represent the Great Tribulation, they say. And so on, with other incidents throughout history.

But all of these theories lack the cohesiveness that the original prophecies possessed. They were not a list of isolated events which may or may not happen at any old time. They were part of a very specific description of a very specific period of time immediately prior to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth. Measurements are given for that period of time (in days, months, and years), and they all add up to three and a half years. While it is true that people have faced great troubles of one sort or another throughout history, and while it is true that The Revelation offers hope to all people in all ages, we still believe that anyone who takes seriously what it is actually saying, must agree that it ultimately refers to specific events which are related to each other over a specified period of time, and that these events have not as yet happened.

There is another group of people who agree with us about The Revelation predicting things which are yet to come; but they feel that the symbols relate to other groups and other individuals than what we have stated (e.g. the European Union rather than the United Nations, or the Pope instead of a political leader). We do not have serious problems with these contradictions, for we feel that there is some truth in most of them. What each of us is saying is that there is a steady movement toward a single world power, which will eventually be used by the Devil to persecute God's people.

Unless each of us keeps an open mind as things progress, however, we could still become blinded by our various theories, and miss out on the truth of what is actually happening. As we have already stated with regard to extreme right-wing supporters in Australia, people subscribing to conspiracy theories have often taken it upon themselves to mount political campaigns against those whom they consider to be antichrists, and in doing so, they have run the risk of becoming antichrists themselves. It is this tendency which has given the subject of endtime prophecy such a bad name to begin with.

The Seventh Day Adventist Church is probably the biggest organisation preaching Bible prophecy today. They see almost everything in the Bible as a warning against Catholicism, with one reference (i.e. the False Prophet) to Protestantism.

For years they have taught that Sunday worship is the Mark of the Beast, and that all people need do is to worship on Saturday (and presumably refrain

from any sort of worship on Sunday) to be right. This approach has blinded many of them to the same sins in their own organisation that have been the sources of spiritual error in the others.

But apart from the general differences between our approach and other approaches, there are also specific weak points in our theory which need to be addressed.

The first weak point is that we have been talking about "world" empires as though Africa, Australia, South America, and much of Asia did not exist at the time of the Persian, Greek, and Roman Empires. The reason for that is that the Bible is written from the perspective of the Middle East being the center of the world. (It certainly was the crossroads of world trade at the time of Christ.) The Bible more or less assumes that whoever controls the Middle East controls the world. Although world trade is no longer controlled by caravan routes through the Middle East, or even by the Suez Canal, it is interesting that the Middle East continues to play such an important role in world politics today.

We accept that no previous empire has ever controlled every country in the world. But we are suggesting that the final world empire will exercise control over the entire planet. And the final empire is the one that is most important in today's world. It may be that there are similar prophecies which originated from other continents; if so, that would make an interesting study in itself. But our emphasis has been on the tradition into which Jesus Christ was born. We believe that the prophecies are valid and consistent within that context.

We must confess that there is one prophecy which does not fit well with our theory about the various nations on the U.N. Security Council. It is one part of the prophecy which refer to the Antichrist "subduing" three kings (or horns). It sounds like the three kings that are subdued are part of a body which contains only ten members (Daniel 7:8). You get a picture of seven (or perhaps nine, if only America is destroyed) "horns" being left when the action has been completed.

In a confessed effort to make our theory fit the present make-up of the Security Council (which has 15 members) we have argued that the Antichrist government may use support from the ten rotating members to subdue three of the five permanent members (rather than three of the ten rotating members), after which the Antichrist will be able to control all ten rotating members.

This is totally consistent with Revelation 17:16, where all ten "horns" are described as helping the Beast to destroy some other power. Even passages like Daniel 7:24 are written in such a way as to indicate that the three kings (or kingdoms) which are subdued may be quite separate from the ten kings described earlier.

However, we have also taken licence in (a) referring to the animal described as a "leopard" in the Bible as a "panther"; (b) attributing the Panther to the Third World as a whole; and (c) referring to rotating members of the United Nations Security Council as all being Third World members.

A panther is a variety of leopard, i.e. a black leopard. But when most people think of a leopard, they think of the spotted leopard. (See Jeremiah 13:23.) The argument is not that I have substituted a different animal for the one described,

but rather that I have limited the description to a particular variety, i.e. the black leopard. And that brings us to the second criticism mentioned above:

I have taken the liberty of using the panther (or leopard) as a symbol for the Third World. There really is no official animal that represents the Third World. I have suggested the panther because it is the official symbol of the Black Power movement. Black Power has universal appeal to people with dark skin. Of course the Third World includes people with yellow and red skin too; but they share a common problem with low self-esteem, which the Black Power movement addresses. A leopard is a broader description of the same animal that has been adopted by Black militants, and might be more appropriate, because the species includes cats of other colours besides black. Nevertheless, the fact that the Leopard is not an official symbol of the Third World still remains a valid argument against my theory.

Finally, there is the argument that not all of the countries which are eligible for periodic seats on the United Nations Security Council could be officially described as "third world". Europe as a whole is traditionally divided between East and West, i.e. between the First World and the Second World superpowers.

But I only use the term "third world" in an effort to show that the world today recognises three major divisions. The definition for those divisions need not be the same as the prophetic definition. Actually, without Russia or America supporting them, the various countries of Europe become about as powerless as those nations which we now call "The Third World" anyway. Give India nuclear power, and take away the superpowers, and it becomes difficult to say that Luxemburg or Albania possess more power than India.

So what we have (if the United Nations Security Council is the body referred to in this prophecy) is a leopard representing all those countries of the United Nations besides those represented by the Eagle, the Lion, the Dragon, the Bear, and one other country which will eventually be subdued (i.e. France). The Leopard is not the official symbol for those countries today; but neither is there any other symbol which necessarily contradicts this theory. It could be that a leopard may eventually be adopted as such a symbol, if and when such a body of nations becomes a recognisable force in the world.

Then there is France, the fifth permanent member of the Security Council. The symbol for France is the Rooster. We find no mention of a rooster or cock in any prophecies. But then almost nothing is said about the third nation that is subdued anyway. Let's face it; the United Kingdom's power and the United Kingdom's presence on the Security Council are primarily because of its special relationship with America. France, too, is not there because it is in the same league with America or Russia. France represents a pro-West vote and little more. And France's significance will certainly be "subdued" if/when America falls, and Russia takes over.

Recall what Daniel said about the Lion in his vision: "I beheld till the [eagle's] wings were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth and made to stand upon its feet as a man." (Daniel 7:4) In other words, when America has been destroyed, the United Kingdom will cease to be a kingdom. The Brits (and we Aussies too) will just be loyal subjects of the new Emperor.

But hold on a minute! Look again at the Leopard in Daniel's vision. What is that on the Leopard's back? The "wings of a fowl"! (Daniel 7:6) So France gets a mention after all. But the mention is only that France, like Australia, and all the rest of the world, will just be an appendage on the back of the Leopard after "dominion" has been given to it. We will be lucky to get our turn in the rotating ten nations on the Security Council.

There are any number of other complaints that people can make about the theories presented in this book. But the bottom line is that what we have said here is an honest attempt to understand exactly what Bible prophecy is saying. Honesty will lead more reliably and more consistently to the truth in Bible prophecy than anything else.

We are open, and, indeed, keen to hear of information which corrects errors in our interpretation. And we believe that it is our openness which has led us to our present level of understanding. It is likely that our interpretation will alter somewhat in the next few years, as things become clearer. Our commitment is not to a theory, nor to gimmicks and sensations, but rather to an honest understanding of how God sees things in the world today. If others with a different perspective share the same commitment, then we should all move closer together as circumstances unfold in the years ahead.

After giving a brief outline (in the next few pages) of events we have described so far, we will move on, in chapter 25, to a study of the period known as The Wrath, when the Seven Vials will be poured out on the earth. Because this part of the prophecy takes place after the return of Christ, we feel less need to have perfect understanding of it, and so we will only touch on it briefly. Nevertheless, the spiritual significance of what happens at that time is still worth mentioning.

Appendix, Chapter 23

Daniel 7:8, 24. There came up among [the ten horns] another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots... The ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that will arise. Another will rise after them, and he will be diverse from the first, and he will subdue three kings.

Revelation 17:16-17. The ten horns that you saw on the Beast will hate the Whore, and will make her desolate and naked, and will eat her flesh and burn her with fire. For God has put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom to the Beast.

Jeremiah 13:23. Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?

Daniel 7:6. After this, I beheld, and lo another [beast] like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl. The beast had also four heads, and dominion was given to it.

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24. The Timetable

We will now summarise some of the things that will happen during the last seven years (and a bit) before Jesus Christ returns to earth. The timetable on page 206 has illustrations to help you associate some of the important points listed below with where they appear on that timetable. Note: Quite a few of the things happen at the same time, even though they are listed here one after the other.

First we will list events which are likely to occur before the last seven years begin.

A. America will be destroyed in a sudden military attack by Russia, which will result in communist control of the United Nations. (Revelation 17:16-17) We do not have room in this book to give details of that attack. Readers who are interested may write to us, asking for the booklets *Jeremiah's Lament and Fall of America*.

B. A universal identification system will be enacted, which will probably take several years to become fully functional. (Revelation 13:15-18)

C. An English-speaking leader (the voice of the Lion), supported by Russia (the feet of the Bear), and representing the Third World (the body of the Panther) will gain control of the U.N. through its Security Council. (Revelation 13:2)

D. This world leader will receive a "deadly wound" from which he miraculously recovers. (Revelation 13:3) (This may not happen until the "middle of the week". That could be when the Devil enters the leader's otherwise dead body.)

It is possible that the leader will actually be a sincere person to start with, and only become a zombie [or a "beast"] after the deadly wound occurs. This is a good argument against the tendency for people to think that identifying the leader and ridding the world of him would be justified. It is not the man, but the Devil behind him that is the real enemy; and we cannot destroy the Devil with natural weapons.)

Now for some things that will happen during the first half of the last seven years. There are time periods given in the book of Daniel which have helped us to compute how long it will be between some of these events. The references for those time periods are shown in parentheses. In particular, the length of the Wrath has been computed from Daniel 12:11-12. (See "H".)

E. An agreement will be made between the new world leader and the Jews, to rebuild their Temple in Jerusalem. From this point, there will be "seven years" or 2,520 days left (approximately six years and eleven months by our modern calendars) before Christ returns. (Daniel 9:27)

F. About seven months (220 days) after the agreement has been signed, the first animal sacrifices will be offered on the new altar in the new Temple in Jerusalem. There will be 2,300 days left (about six years plus three and a half months) until Christ returns. (Daniel 8:13)

G. There will be worldwide peace, prosperity, and religious tolerance. (Daniel 8:25)

H. Thirty days before the start of the Great Tribulation, sacrifices will be suddenly and forcibly stopped in the Temple in Jerusalem. (1290 days till Christ

returns, and 1335 days till the end of the Wrath. See Daniel 12:11-12) At some time over the next thirty days, the world leader will desecrate the Temple, and issue orders that all religious activity (apart from worship of himself) must cease.

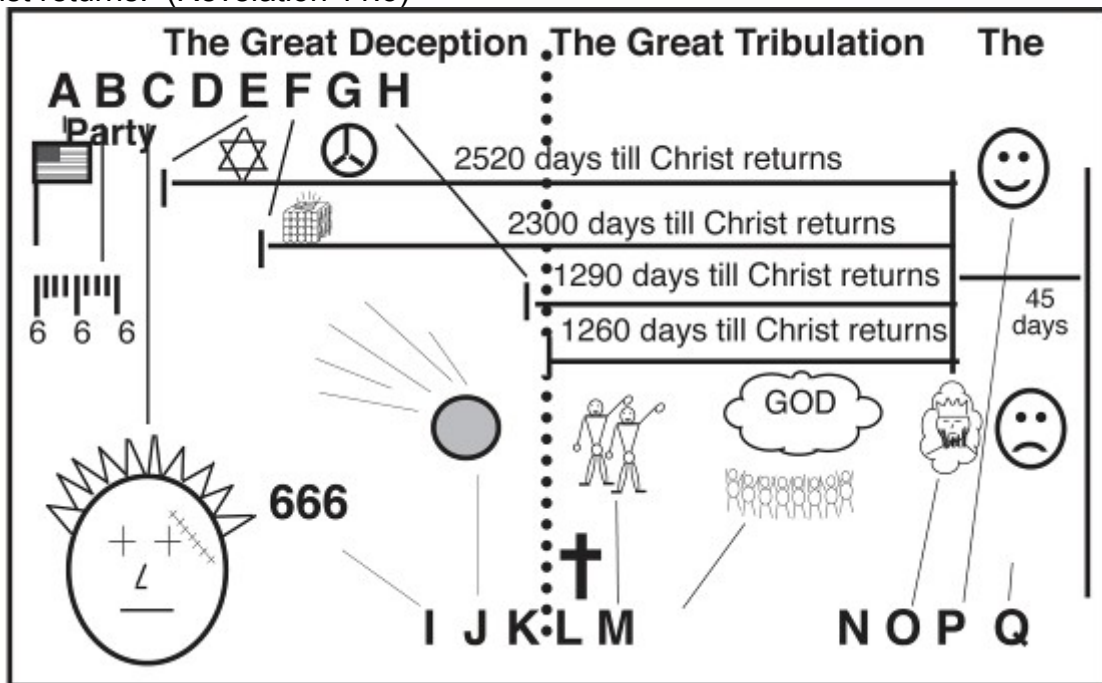
I. The worldwide identification system, involving micro-chip implants under the skin on the back of the hand, will be used to monitor the activities of people throughout the world. No further purchases, sales, or other business transactions will be allowed for people without an implant. (Revelation 13:15-18) Exactly when this will start is not clear; it could be much sooner.

Now we come to events which will take place in the period known as the Great Tribulation, or the last three and a half years before Christ returns.

J. Earth will be hit by a meteor. A billion people will die. (Revelation 8:7-12)

K. The Antichrist (world leader) will kill millions of Christians. (Daniel 7:21; Matthew 24:21-22)

L. Two Christian prophets will preach to the whole world, warning them to repent. They will be hated by all non-believers. From the time they start preaching, 1260 days are left (or three years, five months, and two weeks) until Christ returns. (Revelation 11:3)



M. Christians will be forced to live by faith during this period. Those who have learned to hear God's voice and to follow him, will be led to places of refuge, and they will be provided for by him. (Luke 17:36-37; Revelation 12:6, 14)

N. Christ returns! His arrival will be witnessed by people around the world (possibly via live satellite TV). All Christians (including those who had died over the ages) will suddenly receive new bodies, so that they can levitate up into the sky to meet Christ as he is coming down. (Matthew 24:29-31; I Corinthians 15:51-52)

O. All of these transformed Christians will be taken to someplace in the skies for incredible celebrations while God's wrath is being poured out on a disobedient world down below. (Revelation 19:9, 17-21)

P. It is possible that the world will be aware of the celebrations that are going on (maybe because something like a starship will be visible above Jerusalem). At any rate, the armies of the world will gather in Israel in an attempt to battle the heavenly army (possibly convinced that we are dangerous aliens). The heavenly celebrations will conclude with Christ leading us in an attack on those down below. This is the famous Battle of Armageddon. (Revelation 16:12-16; 19:11-21)

Q. The Devil is locked away, and Christ starts a 1,000-year reign over the earth, with his followers being placed in charge of cities and countries. (Revelation 19:20; 20:1-4; Luke 19:17)

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25. The Return and The Wrath

In the chapters dealing specifically with The Tribulation, The Revelation almost appeared to miss the return of Christ altogether, as though it assumed readers already knew about it. When describing the seven trumpets, it concluded, "In the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound [his trumpet], the mystery of God will be finished, as he has declared to his servants the prophets." (Revelation 10:7)

That's all. Just "the mystery of God... finished".

The Apostle Paul spoke of this "mystery" as a time when true believers will become immortal. He said, "Behold, I show you a mystery. We... will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. The trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible. We will be changed. This corruptible [body] must put on incorruption. And this mortal [body] must put on immortality." (I Corinthians 15:51-53)

In the Gospels, Jesus spoke of the mystery as a time when he would return to gather together his true followers. He said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days... will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven. Then will all the tribes of the earth... see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. He will send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." (Matthew 24:29-31)

When Jesus ascended up to heaven, forty days after he rose from the dead, two angels appeared and said to the disciples who witnessed this great event, "This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:9-11)

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul again described the return of Christ. He said, "We which are alive and remain to the coming of the Lord will not prevent those who are asleep [i.e. dead]. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God. The dead in Christ will rise first, then we which are alive and remain will be

caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." (I Thessalonians 4:15-17)

But The Revelation doesn't mention this when referring to the seventh trumpet. Instead, it goes into descriptions of various aspects of the Tribulation, i.e. the Two Witnesses (chapter 11), the Church in the Wilderness (chapter 12), the Beast, False Prophet, and Mark (chapter 13), and the Prostitute (chapters 17 and 18). Chapter 14 was a transition chapter before the seven vials of the Wrath were described in chapters 15 and 16.

It is not until chapter 19 that we see the triumph of Christ's return. There John describes the picture he gets of the Wrath from a heavenly perspective. There is no mention of the suffering taking place back on earth. Instead, there is only rejoicing and celebration at the "marriage supper of the Lamb". Those Christians who have remained true to the Lamb throughout the Tribulation, whether victims or survivors, are honoured as his "Bride" at this great wedding feast. They all turn up for the party with immortal bodies, and dressed in "fine linen, clean and white". (Revelation 19:8-9)

All of this is happening at the same time that the vials are being poured out on the earth down below. Such suffering does not touch those who faithfully endured tribulation for Christ.

Then Jesus appears on a white horse (Revelation 19:11), and the armies of heaven follow him as he rides off to "tread out the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (Revelation 19:14-15) Then follows a description of the Battle of Armageddon, and the capture of the Beast and False Prophet. (Revelation 19:17-21)

What happens during the Wrath, back on earth, is, in some ways, similar to what happened during the Tribulation. As each vial is poured out, a new judgment is revealed: (1) A "noisome and grievous sore" strikes everyone left on earth. (2) All life in the oceans is killed. (3) The rivers turn to "blood". (4) All our worst fears about the depletion of the ozone layer become reality, as the sun "scorches men with great heat". (5) Great darkness fills the "seat of the Beast" (Jerusalem?) And (6) the "kings of the east" join with the rest of "the kings of the earth... to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty." The seventh vial is the battle itself. (Revelation 16:1-21)

The Bible says of that battle: "Great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath." (Revelation 16:19) This is consistent with our theory that, even though the ten horns had earlier helped the Beast to destroy Babylon in the form of America, the role and title of Babylon would be passed on to the Beast, until the spirit of Babylon is finally and utterly destroyed at Armageddon.

The Bible goes on to tell of Christ ruling the earth for a thousand years after the Battle of Armageddon, assisted by his followers, who will have immortal bodies by this time. (Revelation 20:2-4)

What we have here is not the traditional picture of angels playing harps and floating on clouds for the rest of eternity. Instead, it is a real world populated by imperfect mortals who have survived the Battle of Armageddon. They will be ruled over by followers of the Lamb.

Christ had, on several occasions, talked of his followers ruling over or judging cities or tribes when he comes to establish his kingdom on earth. (Matthew 24:44-47; 25:21; Luke 22:29-30) It appears that we will be doing just that. We will be given a chance to show the world how it should have been done when the Beast was running things. That thought in itself should provide plenty of food for thought to those of us who are critical of governments that now run the world.

Ask yourselves, "How would I do it?" Think seriously about your answer, because, if you decide to give your life to the Lamb, you may one day have an opportunity to do it just as you have thought about doing it now.

Of course it will only be possible because the Devil will be locked up for a thousand years. When he is freed "for a little season" at the end of the thousand years, the troubles start all over again. But, as we said earlier, that's another story.

Appendix, Chapter 25

Revelation 19:7-9, 11, 14-15, 17-21. The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints... Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb... I saw heaven opened and behold, a white horse, and he that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war... The armies which were in heaven followed him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations. He will rule them with a rod of iron. He treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God... I saw an angel... saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather yourselves together to the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all, both free and bond, both small and great." I saw the Beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse and against his army. The Beast was taken, and with him the False Prophet... which deceived them that had received the Mark of the Beast... These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat on the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.

Revelation 20:2-4. He laid hold on the Dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years... that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years should be fulfilled, and after that he must be loosed a little season. I saw thrones and they sat on them and judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of them... which had not... received the mark on their foreheads or in their hands, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

Revelation 16:2-4, 8, 10. 12-17, 19. The first poured out his vial on the earth and there fell a noisome and grievous sore on those which had the Mark of the Beast... The second angel poured out his vial on the sea, and it became as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea. The third angel

poured out his vial on the rivers and fountains of waters, and they became blood... The fourth angel poured out his vial on the sun, and power was given to it to scorch people with fire. The fifth angel poured out his vial on the seat of the beast, and his kingdom was full of darkness... The sixth angel poured out his vial on the great River Euphrates, and the water dried up, that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared. I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the Dragon, the Beast, and the False Prophet... which go forth to the kings of the earth... to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon... And great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give to her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.

Matthew 24:44-47. Be ready, for in such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man comes. Who, then, is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord has made ruler over his household...? Blessed is that servant... He will make him ruler over all his goods.

Matthew 25:21. His Lord said to him, "Well done, faithful servant. I will make you ruler over many things."

Luke 22:29-30. I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father has appointed unto me, that you may... sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

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26. Summing Up

We said at the start of this book that most people would read it for the wrong reasons: idle curiosity; to find flaws in the theories; to work out a way to cheat fate. But I wrote the book anyway. And I did it on the off-chance that someone with real faith would read it, and be stirred into action by it. But that is a very long shot, against incredible odds.

Jesus said that the world that killed him was a spiritually green tree compared to the one that we are living in today. (Luke 23:29-31) He asked a sad rhetorical question about our generation: "When the Son of Man comes, will he find [any] faith [at all] on the earth?" (Luke 18:8) St. Paul promised that the return of Christ would not come without a great "falling away" amongst God's people first. (II Thessalonians 2:3) And each of the Bible writers has promised, along with Christ himself, that the so-called Christian world will be riddled with false teachings, lukewarm faith, and cold comfort in these final days of history. (Matthew 24:4-5, 9-12; II Timothy 3:1-5; II Peter 2:1-3; 3:3-4)

One of the cleverest of false teachings is the one that says the false teachers will only be those who operate outside the authority of the mainline Christian denominations. It overlooks the fact that Christ said it would be the officially recognised church leaders themselves who would be most prominent in persecuting his true followers. (Luke 6:26)

He said, "They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues [church buildings] and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake... You will be betrayed both by parents and brothers and sisters, and by other relatives and friends. Some of you they will

cause to be put to death. And you will be hated of all people for my name's sake." (Luke 21:12, 16-17)

The religious masses are controlled by a universal fear of something called "cults". Few dare to openly discuss what the word actually means; but they all fear it. The dictionary says the word "cult" has no objective meaning; it's an emotional term used to put down anyone who does not conform with mainstream society. A religious cult could be anything from a group of Satan worshippers to a Baptist Church that worships on Saturdays instead of Sundays. The masses can't tell the difference; but then they don't need to tell the difference. They just run from anyone whom their masters say is a "cult".

And where does Jesus Christ fit in with all of this cult paranoia? He did not conform with the religious mainstream of his day. He was hated and killed because he represented a threat to orthodox Judaism. And he was considered a "cult" leader. (Acts 24:5; 28:22) So, in order for anyone to follow him, they needed to have the courage to step out from under the safety net of status quo respectability.

Followers of the Lamb were rugged individuals, able to tell the difference between real truth and superficial religious double-talk. The Bible says that when Jesus finished his famous Sermon on the Mount, the crowds were amazed because he spoke "as one having authority" (Matthew 7:28-29) and not like the scribes and Pharisees.

But wait a minute! The scribes and Pharisees were the religious authorities in the eyes of the general public. So there must be more than one measure of religious "authority". The real message of this book is that if you want to follow Christ, you must recognise that real authority only comes from speaking the truth in obedience to the ultimate Authority, which is God. The underlying revelation of all Bible prophecy is that authority which comes only through acceptance by the political powers of a godless world is not authority at all in God's eyes.

Real character, the kind that does what is right even when it is not popular... even when it costs you everything, even when the laws of the land condemn it, is practically non-existent in today's world. But that is the quality which God is looking for, and that is what Jesus Christ taught. Real character doesn't do what is right just because your pastor or your parents or your friends support you in doing so. You do what is right because it is right. Do you have enough faith in God and enough understanding of right and wrong to take such a stand... on your own if necessary?

You need to ask yourself whether the message of this book is the truth. Is the world really as corrupt as the Bible says? Is the Devil really the "prince of this world"? Is friendship with the world really "enmity with God" as James said? (James 4:4) Doesn't it make perfect sense that God would ask us to take a stand for him which will put us at direct odds with the values of the rest of the world? And isn't it true that virtually all those whom we have traditionally thought of as "Christians" are more concerned with obeying the "laws of the land" than they are with obeying Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world? (John 1:29)

Jesus Christ has, in his teachings, zeroed in on all that matters in our lives, and asked us to forsake it all for him. (Luke 14:33) He shows us that God is jealous; he will not allow us to put anything before him. He wants our "all". But our "all" is really nothing by comparison to what we get in exchange... peace of mind, real meaning and purpose in life, immortality, and a place in the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 13:45-46)

After all the theories about this country versus that country and this symbol versus that symbol have faded from your memory, what really matters about this book is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has a plan for your life. He wants you to conform to that plan and to become part of his eternal kingdom. If you will not do that, then you will end up becoming part of the Devil's kingdom.

You only have one life. Don't waste it in indecision, torn between your desire for safety and security and your desire to do what your heart tells you is right. We would like to hear from you if you are interested in following Jesus Christ in total obedience to all that he taught. But more than that, God would like to hear from you. Talk to him about it. Ask him to show you what you should do. And when he shows you, do not hesitate to do it.

We will be praying for you; and if we do not see or hear from you sooner, we will be looking for you when the Tribulation begins.

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Appendix, Chapter 26

Luke 23:29-31. The days are coming in which they will say, "Blessed are the barren, the wombs that never bore, and the paps which never gave suck. Then will they begin to say to the mountains, "Fall on us," and to the hills, "Cover us." For if they do these things in a green tree, what will be done in the dry?

II Thessalonians 2:3. Let no one deceive you by any means; for that day will not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition.

Matthew 24:4-5, 9-12. Many will come in my name, saying, "I am Christ ["God's anointed one"], and they will deceive many.

Then will they deliver you up to be afflicted, and will kill you. You will be hated of all nations for my name's sake. Then will many be offended, and will betray one another, and will hate one another. Many false prophets will rise, and will deceive many. And because iniquity will abound, the love of many will turn cold.

II Timothy 3:1-5. Know this, that in the last days perilous times will come. People will be lovers of themselves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power of it. From such turn away.

II Peter 2:1-3. There were false prophets also among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who privately will bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and [they will] bring upon themselves swift destruction. Many will follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth will be evil spoken of. And through covetousness will they, with feigned words, make merchandise of you. Their judgment now, for a long time, lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not.

II Peter 3:3-4. Know this first, that there will come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from beginning of the creation."

Luke 6:26. Woe to you, when all people speak well of you! For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

Acts 24:5. [Accusation against St. Paul]: "We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, a ring leader of the sect of the Nazarenes." [Jesus was from Nazareth, and thus a Nazarene.]

Acts 28:22. [Jewish leaders, referring to the Christians]: "We desire to hear of you what you think. As concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against."

James 4:4. You adulterers and adulteresses, Don't you know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

John 1:29. John saw Jesus coming to him, and he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

Luke 14:33. Whoever you may be, if you do not forsake all that you have, you cannot be my disciple.

Matthew 13:45-46. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls. When he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had, and he bought it.



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