



The Seventh Sojourn

of God's Chosen People

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION3

1 — THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD .5

God And The Word7
The Family Name Of The Elohim8
A Family8
The Growth Of A Family9
More Than An Analogy10

2 — PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED11

The Seven Church Eras11
The Church In The Dark Ages11
Restoration Of God’s Truth To Church12
Malachi’s Prophecy13
Remaining Faithful14
Man Of Sin15
The Temples Of Solomon And Zerubbabel . . .15
The Temple Built By Herod16
The Spiritual Temple16
Vision Of The Flying Scroll17

Vision Of The Woman In The Basket17
Vision Of The High Priest18
Vision Of The Lampstand And Olive Trees . . .19

3 — BEFORE THE NEW AGE . .21

Persecution From Within22
Events Yet To Occur22
New Jerusalem Not A Literal City24
The Great Tribulation25
Explanation Of The Sixth Seal25
The Seventh Seal26
More Woes28
The Great Multitude29
The Ancient Of Days30
The Seventh Trumpet30
The World Sees Christ Return31
The Millennium and Beyond32

SCRIPTURE INDEX34

CHART OF END-TIME EVENTS .36

The Seventh Sojourn

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INTRODUCTION

WE ARE told in Revelation 12:9 that Satan has deceived the *whole* world. Can it be possible that Satan could again deceive those who were called out of the world and brought into God's Church?

Many lies creep into God's Church as "new understanding", and some of God's people find this disturbing and perplexing.

The Seventh Sojourn has been written to comfort those who feel confused over the many changes which have caused God's Church to be scattered. This article (which needs to be read *slowly* and *carefully*) will give an understanding of *what* is happening with the Church and will also show you *why* God allows these circumstances to exist.

So for all of you who are upset and discouraged by this situation, here is *goodnews* — news that will give you peace of mind and help you to endure to the very end.

“The gates of hell will never prevail against my people,” so says the speaker.

One thing remains as the clouds of darkness descend for the last time. The power of darkness is at its peak before the dawn of a new age, when light lifts the spectacle of confusion and leads into **the Seventh Sojourn**.

Satan has a power as deadly a weapon as any on the face of the earth. That power is the power of deception. A deception so real, but not so frightening to those who labour under it day after day, until they are lured into a slumber that they might never wake up from.

Unless, that is, the voice from the Temple sounds the alarm and stirs those willing to listen to the end-time instructions taking them into the final journey to great and everlasting joy.

“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

— *Revelation 19:10*



1 — THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD

IN SCRIPTURE we are warned that many lies masquerading as the truth would filter through the true Church of God, with the intent to deceive and to draw people away from the revealed truth of God (Romans 16:17–18).

If we are to escape this deception to come, it is imperative that we know and understand *who* and *what* GOD is.

Does God reveal Himself to us? And if so, by what means does He accomplish this? In other words, is it possible for us to know and understand such an awesome and all-powerful Creator God?

The answer is, most definitely, *YES!*

The source of our understanding is God’s Holy book, the Bible. The understanding of who and what God is begins in the very first chapter. Lets open its pages and read this first chapter to begin our journey of understanding.

We begin at Genesis 1:1. It reads, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (*New King James Version* used throughout except where otherwise stated). The word “God” in this verse

comes from the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*, Strong’s Concordance no. 430), a plural word meaning two or more of something.

The word “created” comes from the Hebrew בָּרָא (*bara*, Strong’s entry no. 1254). It has been said that this singular verb *bara* makes the plural word *elohim* take on singular use. But is this true?

By using a concordance, such as Strong’s (used throughout), you will see that the singular verb *bara* means “to create”. Nowhere in the concordance can we find any connection with this Hebrew word *bara* and the word *elohim*. *Elohim* is a plural word, *bara* is a singular word. They are two completely different words with different meanings.

The word *elohim* can never refer to a single deity just because a singular verb like *bara* is placed next to it.

The plural word *elohim* is also used in Exodus 18:11 and compares the true God with all the false gods (*elohim*) by saying none is like Him. This is clearly a plural reference and the word itself does not necessarily imply a family as we may have

believed in the past. The word *elohim* was never intended to refer to a family of God beings. However, the *Elohim* refer to Themselves as a Family in other passages of Scripture as we shall see later.

Psalm 8:5 refers to angels, and uses *elohim*. Exodus 21:6 refers to judges (*elohim*), and 1 Kings 11:5 is referring to “Ashtoreth” the goddess (*elohim*), which needs some explaining.

The word “Ashtoreth” does at first appear to make the plural *elohim* take on a singular use. After all, you might say, how can *elohim* remain a plural word when it is used with the word Ashtoreth, which can only refer to a single deity?

So how can this alleged singular deity, Ashtoreth, make the word *elohim* take on a singular use? The answer is, it does not.

If you will turn to Strong’s Concordance, it will show you that the assumed singular deity Ashtoreth (entry no. 6252) is in fact a plural word.

Now we begin to see the truth of what is being said to us in 1 Kings 11:5. It should correctly be read as follows: “For Solomon went after Ashtoreth [plural] the goddesses of the Sidonians...”

The Hebrew *elohim* is a plural word and does not have a singular use. The simplicity of the Bible with the originally inspired Hebrew words speaks for itself. It is clear that Ashtoreth is used in conjunction with goddess (*elohim*), because it too is a plural word.

We shall touch on three more scriptures which again appear to make the Hebrew word *elohim* take on a singular use.

Firstly, Judges 6:31 reads: “And Joash said to all who stood against him, ‘Would you plead for Baal? Would you save him? Let the one who would plead for him be put to death by morning! If he is a god (*elohim*), let him plead for himself, because his altar has been torn down!’ ”

It reads, “If he [Baal] is a god [*elohim*], let him plead for himself...”

Again, *elohim* is used in conjunction with Baal because Baal is plural, as is seen in the concordance (no. 1168).

Secondly, another scriptural verse is slightly more complicated. This is 1 Samuel 28:13–14. It

begins: “And the king said unto her, ‘Be not afraid: for what sawest thou?’ And the woman said unto Saul, ‘I saw gods [*elohim*] ascending out of the earth.’ And he said unto her, ‘What form is he of?’ And she said, ‘An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.’ And Saul perceived that it was Samuel, and he stooped with his face to the ground and bowed himself” (old *King James Version*).

The picture is clear. Saul, being afraid of the Philistines, enquired of the Lord, but the Lord did not answer him (verses 5–6). Verse 7 goes on to say: “Then Saul said to his servants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her...’ ”

Saul went to a medium to ask her to bring up Samuel (verse 11). This whole scenario is one of confusion and deception. Saul is confused into believing that Samuel the

prophet, who is dead, can be brought back to life by this medium so that he may ask for advice. The medium is also deceived into believing that she has the power to raise the dead.

Let us go back to verses 13–14 and work our way through this confusion. Saul says, “Do not be afraid. What did you see?”

The woman replies, “I saw gods [*elohim*] ascending out of the earth” (*King James Version*).

Do you fully understand what this medium is saying? Saul, desperately wanting to receive advice from Samuel, who we know was dead and buried, asks: “What is his form?” The woman says: “An old man is coming up.” Again, notice what the woman says. She says an old man *is* coming up. It does not say the old man *had* already come up from the ground.

Clearly the woman first saw gods (*elohim*), no doubt a reference to evil spirits, and after she saw these gods she began to see an image of an old man, supposedly that of the prophet Samuel. It is crystal clear that the gods mentioned in this verse are not a reference to Samuel.

Thirdly, let us now look at Exodus 7:1. It reads, “So the Lord said to Moses: ‘See, I have made you as God [*elohim*] to Pharaoh, and Aaron your brother shall be your prophet.’ ” What exactly is the Eternal saying to Moses?

**GOD (THE WORD)
INSPIRED MOSES TO USE
THE WORD ELOHIM TO
EXPLAIN, TO THOSE
WILLING TO LISTEN, THAT
THERE ARE AT LEAST TWO
GODS, NOT ONE**

The scripture is plain and speaks for itself. The Lord is speaking to Moses and explains to him that He (the Lord) has made you (Moses and Aaron collectively) as Gods (*elohim*) to Pharaoh.

The Lord then says that Aaron is to be the prophet. A prophet is one who speaks by inspiration. Here we can see two: Moses as a type of God the Father and Aaron who is a type of the *Logos*, the One who speaks.

It is plainly obvious that “God” (*elohim*) is used in connection with Moses and Aaron collectively, as how else can a plural word be used?

The original Hebrew word *elohim* is a plural word. God is not the author of confusion (1 Corinthians 14:33). He inspired Moses to write the first five books of the Bible, which were originally written in the Hebrew language.

God (the Word) inspired Moses to use the word *elohim* to explain, to those willing to listen, that there are at least two Gods, not one. If there was only one God, He would not have inspired a plural word to have been used in reference to Himself; He would have inspired a singular word. Again, God is not the author of confusion.

The Concise Oxford Dictionary states that the word *plural* means: “1. more than one in number; 2. (of a word or form) denoting more than one, or (in languages with dual number) more than two.” The word *singular* means: “1. (of a word or form) denoting or referring to a single person or thing.”

Something that is plural cannot refer to something singular, just as something singular cannot refer to the plural. The singular word God in English has been translated from the original Hebrew word אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*) meaning more than one.

Now that we have seen that *elohim* cannot possibly take on a singular use, we can begin our search for the truth of who and what God is.

God And The Word

If we turn to John 1:1, it reads: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Those of us in the Church are aware that the Greek word for “Word” in this verse is *Λογος* (*Logos*). *Logos* is the original Greek word used by the apostle John as inspired by God.

Looking into Strong’s Concordance again, we see that *Logos* (no. 3056) means “something said (including the thought), communication, mouth, preaching, speaker, utterance” etc.

So the Word is a *Speaker*, someone who is used as a mouth to preach, communicate and convey thought.

This Word was *with* God. Let’s stop here for a moment and look into the original Greek word for God (no. 2316) to see what it means. The meaning of the Greek word *Θεος* (*Theos*), which is the word originally inspired for the word “God”, is “deity”. It also means the Supreme Divinity. Figuratively it can mean magistrate.

Let’s go back to John 1:1 and read it in the light of the original language it was inspired to be written in: “In the beginning was the Word,” the *Logos*, the Speaker, the One who communicates, and this Speaker was with God. That is, He was with the Supreme and Most High Deity. And the Word was God, the Word was also a deity but not the Most High Deity, but nonetheless a distinct and separate God Being.

In verse 2, the same deity, the Word, “was in the beginning with God”, meaning that He was with the highest authoritative deity in this united divinity.

Verse 14 reads: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

The simplicity of the Bible in this scripture alone speaks for itself. The scripture does not say, “In the beginning was Myself, and Myself was with Myself, and Myself was Myself.” It is clear to those willing to accept the simplicity of the Bible that there are two separate deities described to us in these verses. One God is the Supreme Authority and the other God, who later became Christ, is His Spokesman.

Let’s now turn to Genesis 1:1 to shed further light on this subject: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” Let’s go to the concordance and find the original Hebrew word for God. Concordance no. 430 tells us that the word God is אֱלֹהִים (*elohim*). *Elohim* is a plural word and means “gods in the ordinary sense; but specifically used (in the plural...) of the Supreme God[s]”.

So here we can clearly see that the word “God” in Genesis 1:1 is plural and therefore should read “Gods”.

Thus Genesis 1:1–4, should correctly be read as follows: “In the beginning *Gods* created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of *Gods* moved upon the face of the waters. And *Gods* said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And *Gods* saw the light, that it was good and *Gods* divided the light from the darkness.”

The plural word *elohim* is used continually throughout this chapter, and when we come to verse 26 more light is shed on this subject. Again, using

the plural form *elohim*, we read as it should be read: “And *Gods* said, “Let Us create man in Our image, after Our likeness...””

Both the Supreme God and the Logos God said, “Let Us create man in our image, after Our likeness...” If there was only one God Being, He could only have been talking with the angels.

But angels do not create — only God creates, through Christ (Col. 1:16–17; John 1:3).

Nowhere in the Bible does it mention that angels can create or have created; the Bible does, however, say that they have been created, and created by two God Beings who are both composed of spirit (Ephesians 3:9).

In our minds it should be clear that the Logos deity was speaking and carrying out the act of creation alongside the Supreme overall authoritative deity we know as the Father.

The Family Name Of The Elohim

For further proof that there are two Gods who are together in unity, and, who both have holy righteous character, let us turn to Psalm 2:7 where it reads: “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’”

On reading this, we should ask ourselves:

1. *Who* gave the decree?
2. *Who* was speaking?
3. *What* was the decree?
4. *Who* was begotten?

It is easy by a quick glance to assume that King David the psalmist is speaking and declaring the decree, and to think that the Lord is saying to David: “You are My son, today I have begotten you.”

We will see that this scripture has nothing to do with David other than the fact that he was inspired to write it as a psalm. Let us understand what “Lord” means in the original Hebrew language.

The original word for “Lord” (no. 3068) in this passage of scripture is יהוה (YHWH). The Hebrew language did not have any vowels and YHWH could be pronounced YeHoVaH or YaVaH.

It means self-existent or eternal and is the Jewish national name of God. When compared with the Hebrew word יה (Yahh, no. 3050) we see that YHWH is God’s sacred name.

The key word in this Psalm is the word “Me”. Notice that “Me” begins with a capital letter in the New King James Version, published by Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1983, USA Edition.

Notice from this edition, under the heading “How to use”, it reads: “personal pronouns and certain nouns are capitalised when they refer to a Deity”. The Concise Oxford Dictionary explains that *Deity* means:

1. a god or goddess.
2. divine status, quality, or nature.
3. the Creator, God”.

The word “Me” with a capital M in Psalm 2:7 is a reference to God the Father.

Let us go back to Psalm 2:7. Notice that the comma is placed after the “Me”. This has been placed incorrectly. The comma should have rightly been placed after “said”.

We have just seen that the word “Me” refers to God and therefore cannot refer to the Psalmist. Let’s now read this Psalm in its true light. “I will declare the decree: The LORD [YHWH] has said, ‘To Me [God] You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.’”

The Psalm is telling us that one YHWH God, a self-existing being, says to another YHWH God, “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”

YHWH is the sacred name of the *Elohim*. YHWH is the Gods’ family name.

Now our earlier questions can be answered:

1. The Most High YHWH God whom we know as the Father, gave the decree to the other YHWH God who is called the Logos.

2. The Logos was the one speaking.

3. The decree given: “To Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.”

4. The one begotten was the Word of John 1:1, who later became Jesus Christ (John 1:14).

One more time for emphasis: YHWH is the family name of the Gods. Both Gods are eternal, and both are united together as one divinity. Compare Psalm 2:7 with Matthew 3:17, Acts 13:33 and Hebrews 1:5.

A Family

So far we have seen that there are two Gods who are united together as one Divinity, and who have a

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sacred name (YHWH).

Let's now look into the Bible and see how the Elohim reveal that they are a family and how that family is to grow.

Read and see with your own eyes the following scriptures: Luke 22:29, 42; 23:34, 46; 24:49; John 1:14, 18; 3:35; 6:37, 65; 8:16.

Please look at John 8:16 again. You will see that God is *more* than one because the Son says He is *not* alone. All the above Scriptures plainly reveal to us that Christ has a Father.

Now turn the pages of your Bible to Matthew 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; Mark 5:7; Hebrews 1:2, 5; 1 John 4:9–10, 14–15 and 2 John 3, 9. These scriptures clearly explain that the Father has a son and separates both Father and Son from each other.

Galatians 4:26 explains: "...the Jerusalem above is free, which is the *mother* of us all."

Romans 8:16; 9:26 and Galatians 3:26 refer to us as the *children* of God. Matthew 9:15; 25:1, 5–6 refer to Christ as the *bridegroom*.

Revelation 12:1, 14–17 tell us that the Church is likened to a *woman*. And Revelation 19:7 and 21:9 clearly explain, without a shadow of a doubt, that the woman becomes the *wife* of Christ, the eldest Son of the Most High.

We can now put these scriptures together so that the pieces of the jigsaw can be connected, and the picture clearly seen by those willing to acknowledge the simplicity of what the Gods are. The picture is, as you will see, a very familiar one.

The picture is one of a **FAMILY**. We have a father and mother, a son who is Christ the *first* begotten of the Father; we see children, a bridegroom who becomes a husband, and a woman who becomes a wife.

How clear does it have to be? It can't be any clearer.

Now we are ready to see the biblical proof that these scriptural verses do indeed reveal that there is a family of God Beings who intend to *expand* their family.

Turn with me to Romans 1:20. It reads: "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse."

Listen to that again! It says that which is invisible is clearly seen. Have you been under the impression that the invisible, God included (Colossians 1:15), could not be seen?

How do we begin to understand spiritual creation? We understand those invisible things by the things that were made.

Both Gods played a part in the creation of man. They created man in *Their* image, after *Their* likeness. They then made the woman from the man, and brought the woman to the man, thus ordaining the marriage institution (Genesis 1:26–27; 2:23–24).

This first man (Adam) and his wife (Eve) had children (Genesis 4:1–2). The man then became a father and the woman a mother. Thus we see the first human family which was planned, designed and made by the Elohim of the Holy Bible.

But, does the creation of the human family help us to understand, know and believe that YHWH is also a family? The answer is *YES* — if we are willing to believe the Bible, because we understand this wonderful truth by the things that are made (Romans 1:20).

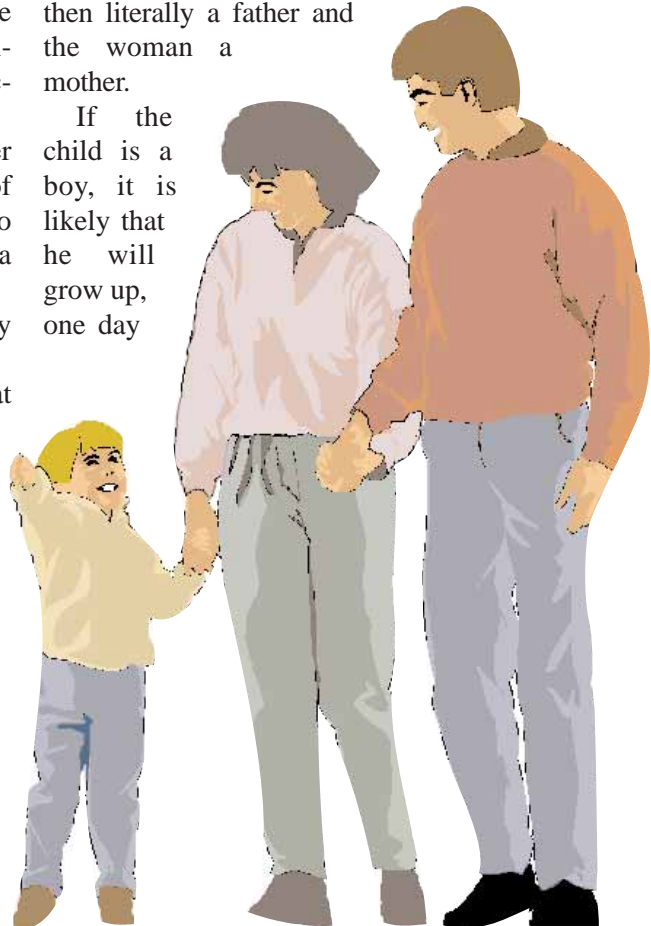
The Growth Of A Family

We need not explain in much detail the growth of the human family. We will, however, briefly look at how the human family develops and grows.

For a family to develop and grow, a man and woman must first become husband and wife. Through this union of two people and by the act of sex, the male sperm enters the woman.

When an ovum is fertilised, life can begin. After about nine months the woman gives birth; the man is then literally a father and the woman a mother.

If the child is a boy, it is likely that he will grow up, one day



meet a woman and eventually get married. His wife will then give birth to their children. The son also becomes a father and his wife a mother, while his father becomes a proud grandfather. The children — the offspring of his (the grandfather's) son — become his grandchildren and so the family continues to grow.

By now you might be asking yourself what this has to do with the family of YHWH. It has *everything* to do with the YHWH family as the Bible will now explain.

Isaiah 9:6 states with clarity: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government *will* be upon His shoulder. And His name will be [future tense] called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”

Did you notice that? The *Son* is to BECOME a FATHER. He is not a father at this time because the government is not yet upon His shoulder. It says He *will* bear the name Father, clearly a future reference. So the Son (Christ) will also become a father.

We must add at this point that the word God used in this verse comes from the Hebrew אֱלֹהִים (*el*) which can refer to either of the God beings.

In Isaiah 9:6 the reference is directed to the Son. You can see the meaning of the Hebrew word *el* (no. 410) in a concordance.

More Than An Analogy

God the Father, through the woman (the Church), begets His children with His Spirit.

James 1:18 shows that these children become the Firstfruits of the YHWH family. The mother of these Firstfruits is the Jerusalem from above. This Jerusalem is the mother of all the Firstfruits (Galatians 4:26).

We have seen that Christ is to become a husband and the woman (the Church) His wife (Matthew 25:1, 5–6; Revelation 19:7; 21:9).

Now for the amazing truth of the growth of the YHWH family. When Christ the bridegroom returns, He will return to marry His woman (Church) who will become His wife. Through that holy union, Christ the husband and His wife (the Firstfruits of God the Father) will together begin to produce godly offspring.

During the millennial rule of Christ and His wife, the Holy Spirit will be given freely to all nations (Joel 2:28). Those who at that time are begotten by

the Spirit will become the offspring of Christ and His wife. This is how the Son of the Most High becomes a father; this title of father will remain forever (Isaiah 9:6).

Christ's wife will be the mother of these godly offspring and the offspring born after them. The YHWH family will develop and grow into far more than it is today.

Are you willing to ACKNOWLEDGE and BELIEVE the simplicity of the Bible?

Elohim created man and woman and brought them together as husband and wife. The man and woman produced children, thus becoming parents, and so the family of many individuals was created.

But how do we know that *God* is a *Family*, and not just a *single* deity? We know this BY THE THINGS THAT ARE MADE: the spiritual and invisible attributes of YHWH can be *clearly* seen and understood (Romans 1:20).

If you want to know and understand *who* God is, then *believe* what the Bible says.

But *why* has this wonderful TRUTH been replaced by the LIE that God is ONLY ONE BEING — OR A TRINITY COMPOSED OF THREE-IN-ONE? We can find the answer in Jeremiah 23:25–27:

“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy in My name, saying, ‘I have dreamed, I have dreamed!’ How long will this be in the heart of the prophets who prophesy lies? Indeed they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart, who try to make My people FORGET MY NAME [YHWH] by their dreams [imagination and human ideas] which everyone tells his neighbour, as their fathers forgot My name for Baal [false gods].”

We, however, do NOT need to forget the name of God as some do, but we do need to hold fast to the truth that has been given to us.

That truth will deliver us from the deception to come (Matthew 24:4–5) and will help our minds to be free (John 8:32). The TRUTH of *who* and *what* GOD *is*, and what His children will eternally experience when Christ returns, is *absolutely wonderful*. We have been called for a fantastic, almost mind-boggling PURPOSE.

That purpose is to eternally live with God as the YHWH family. This is our joy — a joy more than anything we could ever experience. We must NOT throw this joy away for a *counterfeit* joy that will be worthless to us at the end of the day! ❑

2 — PROPHECY BEING FULFILLED

CAN OUR questions as to what is happening with God’s Church today be answered? Could there be a biblical explanation as to why false doctrine has scattered the Church of God?

If there is a biblical reason, what is it and where does it lead to? This chapter will help to answer these questions, and will present to us a clearer picture of what the Bible, in its own words, describes is happening, and where it is leading the Church in the near future. Through Mr Herbert W. Armstrong, God revealed truth to His Church. Since his death in 1986, much has changed with the Church of God.

Before we look into the biblical explanation of the above questions let’s take a brief look into the history of God’s Church, as explained by the late Herbert W. Armstrong in his book *Mystery Of The Ages*.

The Seven Church Eras

The Book of Revelation records seven messages to seven churches that existed in Asia Minor towards the end of the first century A.D.

These churches — Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea — were located along one of the mail routes of the old Roman Empire. Riders would follow the route — carrying messages from town to town.

The messages to the seven churches have words of both encouragement and correction and they clearly show the dominant characteristics of each of the congregations at that time.

The history of the Church would fall into seven distinct eras — each with its own strengths and weaknesses, and its own special trials and problems. Just as a message could pass along the mail route from Ephesus to Laodicea, so the Truth of God has been revealed to God’s people from era to era.

It was like a relay race — in which the baton is passed from runner to runner, each one doing his part, until the finish line is reached. Sometime during the early decades of the second century the baton was passed on from the Ephesus era to the people God had called to the Smyrna era of His Church.

Powerless, often persecuted, and rejected as

heretics, the world lost sight of them. Instead, there emerged from the lost century a Church that was steadily growing in popularity but growing further away from the Gospel that Jesus taught.

The Church during the Smyrna era left few records. Occasionally they appear as a footnote of history, rejected as heretics, ridiculed and hounded by their enemies. But their strongest testimony comes from Jesus Christ Himself, in His words of encouragement to the Church that was at Smyrna: “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty. . . Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. . . Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life” (Revelation 2:9–10).

And so the baton passed from the Smyrna Christians to those of the Pergamos era.

The Church In The Dark Ages

These had been called to carry the truth through one of history’s most difficult periods — the Dark Ages. The power and influence of the great universal church spread far and wide, driving those who clung to the truth of God ever further into the wilderness.

But they were never far from the threat of persecution and martyrdom. And so very few of the Pergamos Christians remained faithful.

One thousand years after Jesus had founded His Church, the exhausted remnant of the Pergamos era handed over the baton.

The Thyatiran era got off to a vigorous start, preaching repentance throughout the Alpine valleys of southern France and northern Italy. Many heard and were converted; the religious authorities quickly reacted to this challenge. Leaders of the true Church were arrested; some were martyred.

After the death of its leaders the Church went into a temporary decline — but emerged once more under the dynamic leadership of Peter Waldo.

For several years in the 12th century these Waldensians flourished in the Alpine valleys, preaching what truth they had. This was still before the days of printing.

As Jesus prophesied of the Thyatiran era, they had faith and they worked hard. Their latter works

were greater than the first.

But once again persecution followed, as the full force of the Inquisition was felt in the peaceful valleys that had once provided a safe haven for the work of God. Many who remained began to adopt the customs and traditions of the world around them.

As religious wars swept across the European continent during the Middle Ages, many refugees fled to the relative safety and tolerance of England. Among them were members of the true Church, who brought with them their doctrines and beliefs, especially knowledge of the Sabbath.

The strict Sunday-observing Puritans resisted, but in spite of a rising tide of opposition in the early 17th century, there were several small Sabbath-keeping congregations in England. Jesus was raising up the fifth era of His Church — Sardis.

Stephen Mumford, a member of a Sabbathkeeping church in London, left England for Newport, Rhode Island, in 1664. Rhode Island was the smallest of the American colonies, and had been founded by Roger Williams, a Baptist fleeing persecution from the Puritans of Massachusetts.

Rhode Island was the first place in the world to guarantee freedom of religion as a basic tenet of its constitution. Finding none who kept the Sabbath, Mumford and his wife began to fellowship with the Baptist church in Newport.

He did not proselytize, but quietly maintained his own belief. Several members of the Sunday-keeping congregation became convinced that they, too, should observe the Sabbath.

They became the first Sabbath-keeping congregation in America. At first they met in private homes. In the historical museum in Newport their record book is preserved, containing names, contributions and records of their ordination services.

Also preserved is the simple but elegant meeting hall they built in Newport early in the 18th century. Others joined them in their belief, as God began to call more to His work in the New World. A second congregation was established at Hopkinton which soon became a thriving church of several hundred. Several thousand were baptised here on the banks of the Pawkatuk River. Then spiritual decline set in.

God's Church had come a long way across the turbulent centuries since the day of Pentecost. It was weak, and lacked influence. Years of persecution and compromise had taken their toll. Much truth had been lost. But they had stayed the

course.

In the Willamette Valley, they waited. It was nearly time for the baton to change again — into the hands of those God would call to do His endtime work.

Restoration Of God's Truth To Church

From the year 1931, exactly 1,900 years (a century of time cycles) from the foundation of the Church, this small remnant of the original true Church of God began to take on new life as the Philadelphian era. This sixth era is described in Revelation 3:7–13. The Sardis era (Revelation 3:1–6) was by this time... impotent in spreading the true Gospel of Christ. Indeed they had by this time lost knowledge of the true meaning of that Gospel.

They knew they were approaching the second coming of Christ, but they had no knowledge of what would happen during the thousand years millennium, further than the fact Christ would rule.

Of the Philadelphian era of God's true Church we read: "And to the angel of the church..." This word *angel* translated from the Greek *aggelos* means messenger or agent. This is not necessarily always referring to a spirit angel but can refer as well to a human agent.

It is possible that God's principle of duality may apply here. It may apply to an actual spiritcomposed angel that has been assigned as an overall agent or helper of this particular era of the Church. Or it may also apply to the human messenger or agent God has raised up to lead this era of His Church.

At the same time another principle of duality may apply to Revelation 3:7–13. It may apply to the Church of this era as a whole, and also it could apply to the human leader God had raised up in this era of His Church.

Continue with verse 8: "I know your works. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name."¹

During the early part of the first century God had revealed much knowledge to His Church. They would have had a good understanding of the Gospel, the Sabbath, the annual Holy Days and many other biblical truths.

But as each era of the Church progressed, many began to lose sight of that knowledge and understanding, and by the end of the Sardis era much of God's revealed truth had become lost.

As the Sardis era was drawing to a close, God raised up a messenger who would restore much of the knowledge and understanding which had

become lost. That messenger was the late Herbert W. Armstrong, and through him God raised up the Philadelphian era of His Church.

It was during this era of the Church that Mr Armstrong’s mind was opened to an understanding of biblical truth, and over a period of about 55 years he preached much of the knowledge and understanding which had become lost throughout the preceding eras of the Church.

Before his death he left this message from his last letter to the Philadelphian era: “After much counsel and prayer over the past months God has led me in announcing a decision last week to appoint Mr Joseph W. Tkach, Director of Church Administration, to assist me while I am in a weak ned state, and should God choose to take my life, to place himself totally in Christ’s hands to lead God’s Church under Christ, succeeding me as Pastor General, in the difficult times ahead.”

Mr Armstrong’s life ended 16th January 1986, and was announced by the then newly appointed Pastor General, Mr Joseph W. Tkach, in this manner:

“Dear brethren and co-workers in Christ, I am deeply saddened to have to inform you that Herbert W. Armstrong’s illness has ended in the manner least expected by all of us. Mr. Armstrong died peacefully in his sleep at 5:59 this morning while sitting in the favourite chair of his late wife Mrs Loma Armstrong.”

The baton was again passed on. This time it was to the final leg of the race, the Laodicean era of the Church of God.

Malachi’s Prophecy

Certain events were prophesied to occur during the Laodicean era of the Church. Those events have been recorded for us in the Bible. The place to start our journey is the Book of Malachi, which is essentially a prophecy for the end time.

As we read through each of the scriptures in context, for our time today, it may at first be difficult to see the relevance it has for the end time, especially in regards to the Church. However, the proof that Malachi is an end time prophecy for the people of God is proven in this very book itself, as you will see.

God (the Word) foresaw lies being taught to His

people by ministers in the end time — shortly prior to His second coming. It is the Book of Malachi that gives us the understanding of why error will surface, and other related books help us to understand where it is all leading.

With an open mind let us prayerfully and patiently see what this prophetic book indicates: “‘And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to my name,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings. Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart’ ” (Malachi 2:1–2).

Here God gives a commandment to His ministry (priests): He admonishes them to think very carefully to what is being said. He reminds them to give glory to His name (YHWH).

In Chapter 1 we saw from the Bible that there are in fact two spiritcomposed God Beings, who are

united and alike in character and are together as One Divinity.

Together they are a Family, and God’s children are to live with them for all eternity in the very near future. It is this understanding that God wants His ministry to take to heart.

The latter part of Malachi 2:2 explains that the ministers (priests), but by no means all, have not taken the name of God to heart.

Continuing in verse 3: “Behold I will rebuke your descendants and spread refuse on your faces...” Clearly God is not pleased. Verse 4 tells us that God would like His covenant (agreement) with Levi (or modern day ministry) to continue. The agreement with God that the ministers have made, is to teach and serve the children of God the Father (see Numbers 16:8–10; Deuteronomy 10:8).

Continuing in verse 5: “My covenant was with him, one of life and peace, and I gave them to him that he might fear Me; so he feared Me and was reverent before My name.”

The agreement God had made with His ministers was (past tense) kept. We are told that God was feared and His name held in high respect: “The law of truth was in his mouth, and injustice was not found on his lips. He walked with me in peace and equity, and turned many away from iniquity” (verse 6).

God’s children should be able to seek the Law

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(God's Word) from the ministers who are responsible for retaining the knowledge that God has revealed (Malachi 2:7).

Unfortunately, some of the ministry, and some of the lay members, have not held on to the truth: "But you have departed from the way [the truth]; you have caused many to stumble at the law [God's Word]" (verse 8).

Continue in verse 9: "Therefore I also have made you contemptible and base before all the people, because you have not kept My ways and have shown partiality in the law." Here God expresses the fact that His ministers, are, by some, not looked up to any longer in regards to keeping the knowledge and understanding of God's Truth.

"Have we not all one Father?" (verse 10). The English *Father* was translated from the original Hebrew word אב (*Ab*). It literally means a *Father* (concordance entry number 1).

Still in Malachi 2:10: "Has not one God created us?" The Hebrew used here for God is אֱלֹהִים (*El*). It means "mighty", especially the *Almighty* (but used also of any deity). It is not a plural word (see concordance entry no. 410).

We are told that the God mentioned in this verse created us. And Colossians 1:15–16 reveals that Christ is the one who carried out the act of creation.

Furthermore, John 8:16 explains that Christ, who created all things, is "not alone", but with the Father who sent Him.

God (the Word) is using these verses to explain that we all have one Father and that one God, Christ (God the Father's Son) our Saviour, was the one who carried out the act of creation. Thus John 8:16 clearly shows more than one God Being.

Malachi goes on to ask: "Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers?" (Malachi 2:10).

In verse 11 we are told: "Judah has dealt treacherously, and an abomination has been committed in Israel and in Jerusalem, for Judah has profaned the LORD's holy institution [marriage] which He loves..." Judah here can refer to God's modern-day ministry. And they are responsible for teaching God's Law.

Continuing in verse 11: "He has married the daughter of a foreign god." Verse 14 goes on to say that Judah has a wife whom he has dealt treacherously with, and in verse 15 we see that God made Judah and his wife one. Notice that Judah and his wife are one, having a remnant of the Spirit. That Spirit is God's HOLY SPIRIT! *Only* God's true Church today has been given that gift.

But *why* have Judah and his wife been made one?

It is so God can produce GODLY OFFSPRING.

Judah (Lawgiver) is symbolic of God's ministers today. His wife is symbolic of the lay membership of the true Church today. It is through the ministry and the lay members that God the Father is producing His offspring.

We are told in verse 11 that Judah has dealt treacherously (with his wife) by marrying the daughter of a foreign god. This foreign god refers to the Babylonian Mystery religion, and the one whom Judah marries is one of her daughters (prostitutes) (Revelation 17:5). Those ministers who have married into the Babylonian Mystery religion have profaned God's Holy institution of marriage which He loves. Through this unholy act, those ministers are dealing treacherously with God's people.

"Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. For the LORD God of Israel says that HE HATES DIVORCE, for it covers one's garment with violence... Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously" (Malachi 2:15–16).

The treachery committed by those who have made themselves one with the false religion of Revelation 17 is to replace God's truth with a lie!

God prophesied that many would depart from the truth and return to the religious confusion they were called out of (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12).

Today, some of God's people are being fed religious confusion and the errors of the world (Malachi 1:6–7). *But what should God's people do?*

Remaining Faithful

We have seen so far that Judah, as mentioned in Malachi, is symbolic of God's ministry, and that Judah's wife is symbolic of the lay members. Both this husband and wife are made one by having a remnant of the Holy Spirit.

But the husband is committing adultery with another woman — a prostitute (false religion) — and by doing so is being treacherous to his wife. Many of God's people today are unhappy, discouraged and confused about *why* the truth they love and understand has been maligned.

But God the Father and Jesus Christ know and understand the mental and emotional discomfort this is having on them, and they very much want to help and comfort them and provide them with UNDERSTANDING.

"'For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garments with violence,' says the LORD of hosts, 'Therefore take heed to your spirit that you do not deal treacherously'" (Malachi 2:16).

Those people who fall back to the daughter of Babylon have, by so doing, divorced (separated) themselves from God and His people. God is not pleased when people separate themselves from Him and then deal treacherously with each other.

For those who remain obedient to God, this situation can be an unpleasant and trying time. But, as God's children, we should be confident that God is in control and that He uses the situation to accomplish His purpose.

During a period like this we need to put our trust in God, faithfully relying on Him to give us the understanding that we seek (Proverbs 3:5–6).

God promises to provide His people with understanding (Psalm 111:10; 119:104; Luke 24:45), and as God's people we should look to Him for the understanding which we seek and not look to men.

“Thus says the LORD: ‘Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, which spreads out its roots by the river, and will not fear when heat comes; but her leaf will be green, and will not be anxious in the year of drought, nor will cease from yielding fruit’” (Jeremiah 17:5, 7–8).

Man Of Sin

There is a cause for every effect. But what is the cause of the confusion sweeping through God's Church today?

People can be drawn back into a Babylon of religious confusion so widespread in today's world (Malachi 2:11). The next verse tells us why: “May the LORD cut off from the tents of Jacob [God's people] the man who does this, being awake and aware, and who brings an offering to the LORD of hosts.”

So there will be a man who will cause people to err from the truth. This man knows what he is doing and why, for he is *awake* and *aware*. But who is this man and for what purpose does he fit into the plan of God?

The word of God reveals a falling away from the truth just prior to Christ's return: “Let no one

deceive you by any means; for that day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition” (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

This falling away is already happening in the Church today. “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he [the restrainer] is taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

Today, a web of deception is being weaved. This lawlessness, as we have just read, is already at work.

Could the man of Malachi 2:12, being awake and aware, be the lawless one mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and the son of perdition in verse 3? If he is, he will be restrained by someone who will be taken out of the way (verse 7). When the restrainer is removed the man of sin will be

revealed.

He then “opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God” (verse 4).

But where is this temple of God that the man of sin sits in shortly prior to the coming of Christ? To locate it we need to first look briefly into the history of God's

temples in both Old and New Testaments.

The Temples Of Solomon And Zerubbabel

King Solomon began building the temple in the fourth year of his reign, in the second month (Ziv), following the architectural plan that David had received by inspiration (1 Kings 6:1; 1 Chronicles 28:11–19). The work continued over a seven-year period (1 Kings 6:37–38). This temple existed until it was destroyed by the Babylonian army under King Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 25:8–9; 2 Chronicles 36:19; Jeremiah 52:13).

Sometime afterwards, as foretold by God's prophet Isaiah, God raised up Cyrus King of Persia as a liberator of Judah from the power of Babylon (Isaiah 45:1).

God also stirred up His own people under the leadership of Zerubbabel of the tribe of Judah to return to Jerusalem, for the purpose of rebuilding the temple, after 70 years of desolation, as Jeremiah had foretold (Ezra 1:1–6; 2:1–2; Jeremiah 29:10).

This structure, though not nearly so glorious as

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SAYS THAT HE HATES
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Solomon's temple, endured longer, standing for nearly 500 years until near the end of the first century B.C.

In the seventh month (Tishri) the altar was set up, and in the following year the foundation of the new temple was laid.

Despite some opposition by Samaritans and a temporary halt to building (Ezra 4), the temple was completed, after which the Jews inaugurated it and held the Passover (Ezra 5:1–2; 6:1–12, 19).

This second temple did not contain the Ark of the Covenant. Like Solomon's temple, this second one does not stand today.

The Temple Built By Herod

We need not go into much detail regarding the temple built by Herod.

The temple area was used as a citadel or fortress by the Jews during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (they set fire to the colonnades). A Roman soldier, contrary to the wishes of the Roman commander Titus, fired the temple itself, thereby fulfilling the words of Jesus regarding the temple buildings: "not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down" (Matthew 24:2).²

This temple was destroyed in A.D. 70. It is clear the man of sin cannot sit in these former temples. So, *where* then is the temple which the lawless son of perdition sits in?

The Spiritual Temple

The material temples of Solomon, Zerubbabel and Herod were only typical or pictorial, as shown by Solomon's inaugural prayer: "But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you. How much less this temple which I have built!" (1 Kings 8:27).

God Himself tells us (through His apostles), "However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 'Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, or what is the place of My rest? Has My hand not made all these things?' ... God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 7:48–50; 17:24).

The physical temples were only a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

If God says He does not dwell in material temples made by the hands of men, what kind of temple *does* He dwell in? Once we find where the temple of God is today, we will know where the man of sin is to sit. Where is this temple?

God says to His people: "Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are" (1 Corinthians 3:16–17).

"Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

God states that we (the Church) are His building:

"For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building." And this building is growing into a holy temple in the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:9; Ephesians 2:19–22).

The Word of God tells us that the Church is His temple! *This* is the temple that the man of sin is to sit in — there is no other possible temple, as we have seen, and the lawless one may already be sitting in the midst of

God's people — today!

Thus the Bible proves that the man of sin (the false prophet) will sit in the Church of the living God. The Bible explains that he is to be restrained (2 Thessalonians 2:7). And when the restrainer is removed, the man of sin will be revealed (verse 8).

Then his deceptive work will no longer be restrained, and will be "according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders" (verse 9).

And, in verse 10, he will work "with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved." Those who do not believe the truth will be deceived with all unrighteous deception.

"And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

**THERE IS A CAUSE
FOR EVERY EFFECT.
BUT WHAT IS THE
CAUSE OF THE
CONFUSION SWEEPING
THROUGH GOD'S
CHURCH TODAY?**

The great falling away is from the truth of God. And the falling away of 2 Thessalonians 2:3 is already taking place.

At this point it is helpful to have a brief look into the Book of Zechariah.

Vision Of The Flying Scroll

The Book of Zechariah contains strange visions and unusual symbolism. Can it be understood today? Or are its writings confined to the pages of history? Could it be that this book is today explaining end time events leading directly to the return of Christ? We need to look carefully into the pages of this unusual book, and understand that it is a prophetic account of things which are to happen in the Church of God.

Let's start in chapter 5:

“Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll. And he [an angel] said to me, ‘What do you see?’

So I answered, ‘I see a flying scroll. Its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.’

Then he said to me, ‘This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth: “Every thief shall be expelled,” according to what is on this side of the scroll; and “Every perjurer shall be expelled,” according to what is on that side of it’” (verses 1-3).

These scriptural verses are plain to understand: they explain to us that the prophet Zechariah sees in vision a flying scroll — a curse from God that goes out to the whole world.

“‘I will send out the curse,’ says the LORD of hosts; ‘it shall enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by my name. It shall remain in the midst of his house and consume it, with its timber and stones’” (verse 4).

Here we see that this curse enters the house of a thief and that of a man who swears falsely by God's name. The one who swears falsely is the man of sin, and the curse remains in his house eventually destroying it.

Vision Of The Woman In The Basket

“Then the angel who talked with me came out and said to me, ‘Lift your eyes now, and see what this is

that goes forth’” (Zechariah 5:5).

After seeing the scroll the prophet now sees another vision. He asks, “What is it?” and the angel replies, “It is a basket that is going forth. This is their resemblance throughout the earth: Here is a lead disc lifted up, and this is a woman sitting inside the basket. Then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’ And he thrust her down into the basket, and threw the lead cover over its mouth” (verses 6-8).

Inside the basket is a woman of great Wickedness. She reflects the Babylonian Mystery religion and the abominations associated with her.

“Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were two women, coming with the wind in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven.

So I said to the angel who talked with me, ‘Where are they carrying the basket?’

And he said to me, ‘To build a house for it in the land of Shinar [Babylon]; when it is ready, the basket will be set there on its base’” (verses 9-11).

The basket reflects the Babylonian Mystery religion, and a house is to be built for this religious confusion in the land of Shinar. Shinar was a plain in Babylon and was the original name of the area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, later

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called Babylonia.

It was there that Nimrod assumed kingship over Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh, and where construction of the temple-tower of Babel was aborted (Genesis 10:9-10; 11:2-9).

The Bible is not necessarily saying that the house to be built is a material building geographically situated at this location. Shinar was simply a plain in Babylonia where confusion was placed on the inhabitants of the land.

Similarly, the basket is to be placed in the house built for it, and set there on its base, in a place that reflects confusion. That house is being built today — and IS COMPOSED OF INDIVIDUALS WHO DO NOT BELIEVE THE TRUTH!

It is the house mentioned in Zechariah 5:4, and will be built by the man of sin, who is to sit in the

temple (Church) of God. When this house is built, the basket of confusion will be set on its base.

Vision Of The High Priest

“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him” (Zechariah 3:1).

Who or what is this Joshua? To find out, it will help to see whom he is NOT.

He is not the Joshua who took over the leadership after Moses on the way to the Promised Land (Joshua 1:1–2). The Bible never uses the title HIGH PRIEST in reference to this Joshua. The priests of God were chosen from the tribe of Levi; however, Joshua the son of Nun was from Ephraim (Numbers 13:8, 16).

But there is another Joshua mentioned in the Bible who came from the tribe of Levi and was a high priest (Ezra 2:40 — spelt *Jeshua*; Haggai 1:12). He, with Zerubbabel, built the altar of God to offer the burnt offerings (Ezra 3:2). And he oversaw the construction of the house of God (Ezra 3:9).

However, the Joshua in Zechariah 3 is a different Joshua. Let’s see who this Joshua represents. Zechariah 3:1 shows us that God is with this end-time Joshua (the Angel of the LORD stands by him). But God also allows Satan to stand at Joshua’s right hand to oppose him.

“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments [unrighteousness], and was standing before the Angel. Then he [the Angel] answered and spoke to those who stood before him, saying, ‘Take away the filthy garments from him [Joshua].’ And to him [Joshua] he said, ‘See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes’” (Zechariah 3:3–4).

The English word *rich* has been translated from the Hebrew מַחֲלָטָה (machalatsah) meaning “a mantle” (concordance no. 4254). A mantle in the Bible is a loose item of clothing denoting authority (see 2 Kings 2:13).

The filthy garments which Joshua has taken away from him represent iniquity. The rich robes represent authority.

Then Zechariah says: “Let them put a clean turban on his head. So they put a clean turban on his

head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the LORD stood by” (verse 5).

This scripture reveals that this end-time Joshua is to be cleansed from iniquity and then given authority. But *who or what does Joshua represent?*

Notice again the final part of Zechariah 3:1 – “...and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.” The English word *oppose* has been translated from the original Hebrew word שָׂטָן (*Satan*) and means “to attack”; figuratively it can mean “accuse:– (be an) adversary, resist” (concordance no. 7853).

It is interesting to note the following scriptures: “...because your adversary the devil walks around like a roaring lion” (1 Peter 5:8); “...for the accuser [Satan] of our brethren, who accused them day and night, has been cast down” (Revelation 12:10).

Linking the above scriptures with Zechariah 3 strongly suggests that Joshua is a representation of God’s Church today. Satan is standing at the right hand of God’s people (the Church) to oppose and accuse them day and night.

Continuing in Zechariah 3 we read: “Then the Angel of the LORD admonished Joshua, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house, and likewise have charge of My courts; I will give you places to walk among these who stand here”’” (Zechariah 3:6–7).

The English translation here uses the word *if*, suggesting the possibility of Joshua (who represents God’s Church) not walking in God’s ways or keeping His command.

The *if* in verse 7 is misleading because Zechariah has already explained that Joshua’s filthy garments (unrighteousness) were taken away from him, and his iniquity was removed.

If God has taken Joshua’s iniquity away from him, and has clothed him with authority (rich robes), then how can he fail to walk in God’s ways and keep His command? God reads very plainly in Zechariah 3:4 “... I will clothe you with rich robes”. There is nothing in that statement which suggests otherwise.

Another interesting point is the use of the word

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judge in Zechariah 3:7, which has been translated from a Hebrew word (שָׁפַט, *diyn*) meaning “to rule; by implication to judge (as umpire)... minister judgment” (concordance no. 1777).

Speaking of God’s people we read: “Do you not know that the saints will judge the world?” (1 Corinthians 6:2). “Do you not know that we shall judge angels?” (verse 3). “But they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:6).

As God’s people (endtime Joshua) we are to rule with Christ and minister judgment for a thousand years.

In Zechariah 3:7 the phrase “then you shall also judge My house” could be better translated as: “then you shall rule and minister judgment from My house”.

There is further proof that Joshua represents God’s Church as we shall soon see. But before we do, it is necessary to explain why the title “high priest” is attributed to this Joshua.

The name *Joshua* means “saviour, self-existent, or eternal” (concordance no. 3091 and no. 3068). Jesus Christ is the Saviour of the world (John 4:42) who has eternally existed (Hebrews 7:3).

Christ is also our High Priest who bore our sins in His own body (Hebrews 10:21; 1 Peter 2:24). And as God’s children (Romans 8:16) we are all members of Christ’s body. “For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones” (Ephesians 5:30).

Christ is also referred to as the Church: “I now rejoice in my suffering for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24).

The Joshua of Zechariah 3 represents God’s Church prior to Christ’s return and bears the title “high priest” because we, as the Church of God, are members of Christ’s body.

Continuing in Zechariah 3: “For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: upon the stone are seven eyes...” (verse 9). Who or what does this stone represent?

Notice carefully the following scriptures: “By the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands before you whole. This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief corner-stone” (Acts 4:10–11).

“And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes,

which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth” (Revelation 5:6).

The stone that has been laid before Joshua (who represents God’s Church) is symbolic of Jesus Christ, who walks in the midst of God’s people (Revelation 2:1; 1:20).

Through Zechariah’s vision of Joshua the high priest we see an end-time prophecy relating to God’s people. When Christ returns in power and glory, God’s chosen people (spiritual Israel) are to have their iniquity taken away from them and are to be given authority (clothed with rich robes) to rule with Jesus Christ in His Kingdom.

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: ‘...Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Then speak to him [Joshua], saying, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both [Christ and Joshua]’ ”” (Zechariah 6:9, 11–13).

We are, as the Church of God, going to have our iniquity taken away from us and shall be given authority to rule with Christ in His Kingdom. But before we do other prophesied events must first take place.

Vision Of The Lampstand And Olive Trees

“Now the angel who talked with me came back and wakened me, as a man who is wakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’ So I said, ‘I am looking, and there is a lampstand of solid gold with a bowl [Christ] on top of it, and on the stand seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps’ ” (Zechariah 4:1–2).

The lampstand of gold represents the Church (Revelation 1:20), composed of those who believe the truth and have not denied God’s name (Revelation 3:8). Continuing in Zechariah 4:3 — “Two olive trees are by it, one at the right of the bowl [Christ] and the other at its left.”

Who or what are the two olive trees? “These are the two anointed ones, who stand beside the LORD of the whole earth” (verse 14).

The two olive trees are none other than the TWO WITNESSES of Revelation 11:3–4, who stand by God’s Church (Zechariah 4:3, 11). The picture is clear: when the false prophet rises to power, those who do *not* believe the truth of God will fall away

2 — Prophecy Being Fulfilled

and follow the lead of this man of sin. But those who BELIEVE THE TRUTH OF GOD and REMAIN FAITHFUL are the ones who are a part of the true Church of God. That Church is represented by the lampstand in verse 2.

When the false prophet emerges, so also do the two witnesses, who will stand by God's faithful people (verse 11). This is what the Word of God explains to us. The picture is very clear to those who are willing to accept the simplicity of it. □

1. (Pages 11–12) Information adapted from *Mystery Of The Ages* by Herbert W. Armstrong, published by Worldwide Church of God, 1985, pages 282 to 291.

2. (Pages 15–16) Information on temples adapted from *Aid to Bible Understanding* (pages 1582–1586), published by Watchtower Bible & Tract Society of New York, Inc., and International Bible Students Association, New York, in 1971.

3 — BEFORE THE NEW AGE

THE BIBLE affirms a falling away from the truth shortly prior to the coming of Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:3).

False teachers will rise up from within the Church of God (2 Peter 2:1). “Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute” (verse 2, New International Version).

Many of the people whom God has called out of this world and into the light of His Truth will be deceived before the Return of Christ. The world, in general, because of our original parents’ sin in the Garden of Eden, has always been deceived and continues to be under that cloud of deception (Revelation 12:9).

“For many will come in my name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many” (Matthew 24:5).

The world is already deceived, has always laboured under deception and has been “tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

The deceived cannot become more deceived; if people are deceived they are just that — *deceived*.

Since the world has always been deceived, the many of 2 Peter 2:2 must refer to another group of people. The only ones to have come out of this world’s labour of deception are those to whom the truth of God has been revealed.

Many, because of unbelief, will abandon that revealed truth and fall back into the deception they were called out of (2 Thessalonians 2:10–12). As mentioned in the previous chapter, this deception is caused by the man of sin, who is awake and aware (Malachi 2:12); he is the lawless one and the son of perdition (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8). This man of sin is to sit in the Temple of God (the Church), where lawlessness is already at work (verses 4, 7).

The Bible refers to many who are to be deceived just prior to the millennial reign of Christ. However, God’s people will not be deceived indefinitely.

But who are they? What does the Bible tell us about them?

“For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to deceive, IF POSSIBLE, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24; also Mark 13:22).

Notice that these verses say if it were possible the elect would also be deceived. But, it is NOT POSSIBLE for God’s elect to be deceived indefinitely.

Speaking of the coming tribulation, the Word of God states: “And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect’s sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days” (Mark 13:20).

The elect, whom God has chosen, are the weak and foolish of the world (1 Corinthians 1:27), chosen before the foundation of the world — holy and without blame before God (Ephesians 1:4).

They are few in number: “For many are called, but FEW are CHOSEN” (Matthew 20:16; 22:14). Many were called out of this deceived world, and their minds were opened to an understanding of the truth that God revealed to His Church.

However, the Bible tells us that many of them will lose sight of that truth, probably because they never truly understood or believed it to begin with.

“But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13). Those chosen by God *believe* the TRUTH.

They believe it with all their being, they know that the truth revealed to God’s Church through the pages of the Bible is the truth, and they know that they know. They talk to one another about the things of God the Father and Christ, and meditate on their name (YHWH).

“Then those who feared the LORD [YHWH] spoke to one another, and the LORD [YHWH] listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD [YHWH] and who meditate on His name” (Malachi 3:16).

The chosen of God (the Father) are His special people — spiritual Israel — sealed in their foreheads with the name of God (Revelation 7:3–4; 14:1). They are not defiled by the Babylon of religious confusion so widespread in this deceived world.

They are the Firstfruits of God the Father, the ones who hear the voice of Christ (John 10:4) and

follow Him wherever He goes (Revelation 14:4). It is they who are numbered as the 144,000 — called, chosen and faithful (Revelation 17:14).

Nowhere in the Bible will you find any other group of people who are redeemed from among men and from the earth (Revelation 14:3–4). It is those chosen from the foundation of the world who will remain faithful and escape the deception now sweeping through the world and the Church of God today.

Persecution From Within

Those who do fall away from the truth of God have a familiar characteristic. It is a basic lack of genuine love and concern: “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).

As time goes on, those chosen by God will suffer much bitterness, resentment and hatred from the many who fall away from the truth and who, like the world, are caught in a net of deception.

“Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name’s sake, because they do not know Him [the Father] who sent me” (John 15:20–21).

But God’s Word gives us encouragement: “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:11–12).

For the few who believe the truth of the living Gods (the Father and Christ), life within the Church will become a painful and unpleasant experience.

“For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now. And not only they, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:22–23).

And to His chosen people, God says, “Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at His word:

‘Your brethren who hated you, who cast you out for My name’s sake, said, “Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy.” But they shall be ashamed’” (Isaiah 66:5).

The persecution that occurs within the Church will lead to a worldwide hatred and persecution of God’s saints, as we are told in 1 John 3:13, “do not

marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you”!

Before His crucifixion, Christ prayed to His Father: “I have given them [true Christians] your word [truth]; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world... And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (John 17:14, 19).

Persecution — firstly from those who have rejected God’s Truth, secondly from the world — will become an unpleasant reality to all who hang on to the truth.

But as the apostle Paul explains, “we are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, BUT NOT DESTROYED” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

God’s people, who believe the truth revealed in the pages of the Bible, can expect to be hated by those who have been called to an understanding of God’s Master Plan but who do not believe that revealed truth.

Events Yet To Occur

Division and religious confusion can spread like wildfire through the Church of God. As a consequence of deception, God’s truth can be replaced, and His people could be taught things that come from the imaginations of the minds of men rather than from the Word of God (2 Peter 2:18–20).

Such confusion has come into God’s Church because of Satan the Devil, who deceives both ministers and lay members alike.

But all these events are prophesied to occur before the Second Coming of Christ. When they begin to really take effect, other prophesied events will also follow; events which will take us on a journey ending with the return of Christ.

**BEFORE THE GREAT
TRIBULATION CAN BEGIN,
AND THE KILLING OF GOD’S
PEOPLE AS MENTIONED IN
REVELATION 6:9–11,
A PERIOD OF 6 YEARS,
4 MONTHS AND
20 DAYS MUST ELAPSE**

Let us see what is to happen along the road that leads to the destruction of modern-day Babylon and the beginning of a new and better world: “And I saw in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne a scroll written inside and on the back, sealed with seven seals. Then I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, ‘Who is worthy to open the scroll and to loose its seals?’ And no one in heaven or on the earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll, or to look at it” (Revelation 5:1–3).

The one who sits on the throne is God the Father, holding in His right hand a scroll that no one could open or even look at — no one was found worthy!

“But one of the elders said to me, ‘Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals.’” (verse 5).

The Lion is Jesus Christ, also pictured as the Lamb of God (verse 6). It is He who is found worthy to take “the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne” (verse 7).

This scroll, now in the hands of Christ, is sealed with seven seals. These seals explain the catastrophic events which lead directly to the end of this present age and into the millennium.

Let’s now look at the first seal: “Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals; and I heard one of the four living creatures saying with a voice like thunder, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked, and behold, a white horse. And he who sat on it had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer” (Revelation 6:1–2).

The white horse, its rider and the bow are symbolic of the false prophets who come in the name of Christ and deceive the nations. This becomes clear when we look into Matthew’s gospel, chapter 24. The words in Matthew are written clearly, whereas Revelation uses symbolism to describe the same things.

Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many, even saying “I am the Christ” (Matthew 24:5, 11).

“When He opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, ‘Come and see.’ And another horse, fiery red, went out. And it was granted to the one who sat on it to take peace from the earth, and that people should kill one another; and there was given to him a great sword” (Revelation 6:3–4).

This is symbolic of worldwide wars. Through the horror of war, peace will be taken from the earth and people will kill one another at an alarming rate.

“And you will hear of wars and rumours of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things

must come to pass, but the end is not yet” (Matthew 24:6).

“When He opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, ‘Come and see.’ And I looked, and behold, a black horse, and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, ‘A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not harm the oil and the wine’” (Revelation 6:5–6).

This third seal with its black horse is symbolic of extreme famine, mentioned also in Matthew 24:7, “there will be famines”. When the fourth seal was opened, there was “a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and Hades followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth” (Revelation 6:8).

Many (possibly as much as one quarter of the world’s population) will die because of wars, hunger and disease, and “nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places” (Matthew 24:7).

“When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word [the truth] of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, until you judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?’ And a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they had been, was completed” (Revelation 6:9–11).

The Church has, in the past, taught that this fifth seal is the Great Tribulation. However, when we read through these verses carefully, we can see that this fifth seal is merely an explanation of the coming martyrdom of God’s people.

Verse 9 mentions that some of God’s chosen people have already been martyred for their belief in the truth (Hebrews 11:37–40). In verse 11 they have been given white robes, symbolic of God’s righteousness. They are told to rest a little while longer, until the full number of the saints have been martyred. Notice it reads “would be killed”, indicating that they have not yet all been killed.

This fifth seal merely announces that God’s people will be killed as their brethren were. But when does this killing of the saints begin, and for how long? (verse 10).

As Mr Herbert W. Armstrong often said, the Book of Daniel is the KEY to the Book of Revelation, so it is that book that we must now turn to for the answer.

“Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, ‘How long [far ahead] will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation [the “abomination of desolation” mentioned in Mark 13:14], the giving of both the sanctuary and the host [God’s people] to be trampled underfoot?’ And he said to me, ‘For two thousand three hundred days; then the sanctuary shall be cleansed’ ” (Daniel 8:13–14).

The trampling underfoot of God’s people is, as the Bible will show, a reference to the coming tribulation. Some of God’s people are to go through the Great Tribulation to be cleansed (spiritually refined).

However, 2,300 days will be completed before the coming tribulation. 2,300 days is 6 years, 4 months and 20 days (counting 30 days per month).

So before the Great Tribulation can begin, and the killing of God’s people as mentioned in Revelation 6:9–11, a period of 6 years, 4 months and 20 days must elapse. This period of time will be explained from the Bible, as you read on.

Before moving on, we shall show from the Bible that “the sanctuary and the host” which will be trampled underfoot mentioned in Daniel 8:13, is a reference to God’s people and the prophesied Great Tribulation to come.

New Jerusalem Not A Literal City

“Then I was given a reed like a measuring rod. And the angel stood, saying, ‘Rise and measure the temple of God, the altar, and those who worship there. But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months’ ” (Revelation 11:1–2).

We see from these verses that the holy city is to be trampled underfoot. Is it possible that this holy city and the sanctuary mentioned to us in Daniel are the same thing?

Let the Word of God give us the answer: “Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls filled with the seven last plagues came to me and talked with me, saying, ‘Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife.’ And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God” (Revelation 21:9–10).

We have, in the past, believed this city to be a literal city that God’s people were to dwell in as Spirit-composed children of God. But this is not what the Bible says. It reads, “Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (verse 9).

The angel then begins to describe the New Jerusalem. The bride, the Lamb’s wife, refers to the Church, as we briefly covered in chapter 1. It is the Church of God which will marry Christ at His Second Coming.

The angel describes to the apostle John, in symbolic language, the actual bride of Christ. The Church, therefore, is the New Jerusalem — the holy city of the living God.

Let us now briefly look into some of this symbolic language: “Also she had a great and high wall with twelve gates, and twelve angels at the gates, and names written on them, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel” (Revelation 21:12).

Compare this with Rev. 7:4–8, which describes the sealing of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel.

Continuing: “Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb” (Revelation 21:14). Compare this with Ephesians 2:19–20.

“And the city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it, and the Lamb is its light” (Revelation 21:23). See also Isaiah 60:19–20, which describes the Lord as our everlasting light.

Continuing in verse 25 of Revelation 21: “Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).” (Compare with Isaiah 60:11).

“And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth [during the millennium] bring their glory and honour into it” (Revelation 21:24; compare with Isaiah 60:3).

It is clear from these scriptural verses and Revelation 21:9–10, that the holy city — the New Jerusalem — is the true Church of God. It is God’s chosen people who “shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads” (Revelation 22:4; also look at Revelation 14:1).

“And there shall be no night there: they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 22:5; cf. Rev 21:23 quoted earlier).

Isaiah, inspired by God, wrote: “Also the sons of those who afflicted you shall come bowing to you, and all those who despised you shall fall prostrate at the soles of your feet; and they shall call YOU [God’s people] the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One

of Israel” (Isaiah 60:14; also see Hebrews 12:22–23 regarding Zion).

The Great Tribulation

Remember in Daniel 8:13 we read: “Then I heard a holy one speaking; and another holy one said to that certain one who was speaking, ‘How long [far ahead] will the vision be, concerning the daily sacrifices and the transgression of desolation, the giving of both the sanctuary and the host to be trampled underfoot?’ ”

And in Revelation 11:2 we read: “But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the Gentiles. And they will tread the holy city underfoot for 42 months.”

The *holy city* refers to God’s chosen people, and the scripture says that some of them will be trodden underfoot for 42 months (3½ years) by Gentiles.

How long will it be until this vision begins its fulfillment? The answer is 2,300 days (Daniel 8:14). This period of 6 years, 4 months, 20 days will lead directly to the coming 3½-year tribulation. Some of God’s chosen people are to be given over to the Gentiles to be trodden underfoot for a period of 42 months to be cleansed and purified (Daniel 12:10).

Now let the Bible shed some more light on the subject. Going back to Revelation 11:2, where we read “But leave out the court which is outside the temple, and do not measure it...”, we need to understand the courts of the temple. The material temples of God, made by men’s hands, had been constructed with two courts (2 Kings 21:5; 2 Chronicles 33:5), known as the inner and outer courts.

The temple of God today also has an inner court and an outer court. The outer court consists of God’s people who are to be trampled underfoot for the duration of the coming tribulation (Revelation 11:1–2). The inner court, however, consists of those who escape the coming martyrdom (Revelation 12:14).

Both inner and outer courts are God’s chosen people, and both hear the voice of God. The inner court is filled with the brightness of “the glory of the LORD”, and is also referred to as “the threshold of the temple” (Ezekiel 10:3–5).

Those in the inner court will be given a mark on

their foreheads, though not to be mistaken for the sealing of spiritual Israel in Revelation 7, for all of God’s chosen people will be sealed with the name of the Father (Revelation 14:1).

This mark is to separate those who are to escape the tribulation.

“Now the glory of the God of Israel had gone up from the cherub, where it had been, to the threshold of the temple. And He called to the man clothed with linen, who had the writer’s inkhorn at his side; and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city [God’s people], through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that

are done within it.’ To the others [outer court] He said in my hearing, ‘Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity’ ” (Ezekiel 9:3–5).

The outer court of the people of God are the ones to be martyred in the coming tribulation (Revelation 6:11), which “shall be for a time, times, and half a time;

and when the power [the strength] of the holy people has been completely shattered, all these things shall be finished” (Daniel 12:7).

It is only when God’s people (a remnant) have been completely shattered that the Great Tribulation will come to the end of its three and a half year duration.

Explanation Of The Sixth Seal

Before we can come to a correct understanding of the sixth seal, it must be understood that each one of the seven seals of Revelation 6 are only descriptions of events that would be fulfilled as prophesied by Christ.

The opening of the seals is not the beginning of the events they portray. The apostle John saw Christ open each seal, each time seeing an event to be enacted in the future. The seals are not the events but descriptions of end-time occurrences prior to Christ’s return.

The first four describe world conditions prior to the Second Coming of Christ, which, as we look at today’s world conditions, have clearly begun.

The fifth seal explains that a martyrdom of saints will also happen before Christ returns. And the sixth seal also reveals something that will transpire before the millennial reign of Christ.

**THE BOOK OF DANIEL
IS THE KEY TO THE
BOOK OF REVELATION,
AND IT IS TO DANIEL
THAT WE SHOULD
TURN FOR ANSWERS**

But what is this event? The Bible always explains itself:

“I looked when He opened the sixth seal, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood. And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind. Then the sky receded as a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island was moved out of its place.

And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves 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 who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’” (Revelation 6:12–17).

Let’s relate the sixth seal with what Isaiah says about the Day of the Lord: “Enter into the rock, and hide in the dust from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty... For the day of the LORD of hosts shall come upon everything proud and lofty, upon everything lifted up — and it shall be brought low... They shall go into the holes of the rocks and into the caves of the earth, from the terror of the LORD and the glory of His majesty, when He arises to shake the earth mightily” (Isaiah 2:10, 12, 19).

On the Day of the Lord, we are told that men will enter caves and holes, and the earth will be shaken mightily. The only mighty jolting of the earth is mentioned in Revelation, in reference to the seventh and final plague: “And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake...” (Revelation 11:19), “such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth” (Revelation 16:18).

This mighty shaking of the earth will divide the great city into three parts, and the cities of the nations will fall (Revelation 16:19).

The sixth seal of Revelation, the Day of the Lord (Isaiah 2) and the earthquake in Revelation 16, are all depictions of the same event — the Day of the

Lord. That day will result in the destruction of all those who still refuse to repent.

“...And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath [cf. Rev. 6:17]. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:19–20). Now we have shown from the Bible that the sixth seal is a description of the Day of the Lord, we can move on to the seventh seal to find out what that portrays.

The Seventh Seal

“When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets... So the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound” (Revelation 8:1–2, 6).

This seventh seal proceeds to announce the fulfilling of all end-time events prophesied to occur prior to the second coming of Christ, in the form of seven trumpet blasts (Revelation 8; 9; 11:15).

The beginning of the end of the age and the destruction of modern-day Babylon commences with the sound of the first trumpet: “The first angel sounded: and hail and fire followed, mingled with blood, and they were

thrown to the earth; and a third of the trees were burned up, and all green grass was burned up” (Revelation 8:7).

After the second trumpet, “a third of the living creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed” (verse 9). The next event, which follows the third trumpet, is a contamination of a third of the world’s water supply. Those who drink from it will become sick and eventually die (verses 10–11).

“Then the fourth angel sounded: and a third of the sun was struck, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars, so that a third of them were darkened; and a third of the day did not shine, and likewise the night” (verse 12).

These events, as will be seen from the Bible, precede the coming of the prophesied 3½-year tribulation. The fifth trumpet will herald the onset of the greatest time of world trouble ever to take place on

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the earth — the Great Tribulation (Daniel 12:1; Matthew 24:21).

And we are told: “Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth, because of the remaining blasts of the trumpet of the three angels who are about to sound!” (Revelation 8:13).

Let’s look into the biblical interpretation of this fifth trumpet, and see whether the 3½-year tribulation follows the sounding of it. “Then the fifth angel sounded: and I saw a star fallen from heaven to the earth. And to him was given the key to the bottomless pit” (Revelation 9:1).

Notice carefully that a star has fallen from heaven to the earth, and is referred to as “him”. So it must refer to someone, because to “him was given the key to the bottomless pit.”

This same star is “the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, but in Greek he has the name *A p o l l y o n*” (Revelation 9:11). The Hebrew *Abaddon* means “a destroying angel” (concordance no. 3). And the Greek name *Apollyon* means “destroyer” (concordance no. 623) — ie. Satan.

THE BEGINNING OF THE END OF THE AGE AND THE DESTRUCTION OF MODERN-DAY BABYLON COMMENCES WITH THE SOUND OF THE FIRST TRUMPET

So at the sound of the fifth trumpet Satan will have fallen from heaven to the earth. But why?

The answer is in Revelation 12:7–8. “And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they did not prevail, nor was a place found for them in heaven any longer.”

The “star” of Revelation 9 is Satan (the dragon), who falls from heaven to the earth because war breaks out in heaven, shortly before the coming tribulation. Satan loses the battle and is cast out (Revelation 12:9; 9:1).

Then notice: “...Woe [first woe] to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time” (Revelation 12:12).

Then Satan will start to persecute the saints: “Now when the dragon saw that he had been cast to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male Child... the serpent spewed water out of his mouth like a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away by the flood. But the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the flood which the drag-

on had spewed out of his mouth” (verses 13, 15–16).

“But the woman was given two wings of a great eagle, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place, where she is nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent” (verse 14; also see verse 6).

When Satan’s attempt to destroy the inner court of God’s elect fails, he becomes greatly angered. “And the dragon was enraged with the woman, and he went to make war with the rest of her offspring [the outer court], who keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Revelation 12:17).

When those in the inner court are taken to their place, Satan begins to martyr the saints of the outer court, using the false prophet (Daniel 7:25) and the Beast (Revelation 13:5–7).

When the inner court is safe, the two witnesses will start their work: “And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth” (Revelation 11:3).

Thus the greatest time of world trouble ever to come on the earth will commence.

It is important to note at this point that God’s elect would have been sealed in their foreheads before the Great Tribulation commences.

“After these things I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds [trumpets] of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, on the sea, or on any tree. Then 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 granted to harm the earth and the sea, saying, ‘Do not harm the earth, the sea, or the trees till we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads’” (Revelation 7:1–3).

God’s elect (inner and outer courts) are sealed (with the Father’s name — Revelation 14:1) before the first four trumpet blasts, which occur before the 3½-year Great Tribulation.

The only difference between the inner and outer courts is that the inner court will also receive a mark (Ezekiel 9:4), separating them from the outer court who are to be martyred (Revelation 11:2).

Only the inner court of God's elect, those with this special mark, will be delivered from the coming tribulation. In Daniel we read that a 2,300-day time period must elapse before the Great Tribulation (Daniel 8:13). This period, which is a little more than six years, may begin and end with the first four trumpet blasts of Revelation 8.

As we have already seen, these events (first four trumpets) occur before the fifth trumpet, which is the Great Tribulation. The Bible strongly suggests that the events to occur during the first four trumpet plagues happen within the 2,300-day period prior to the Great Tribulation. Those in the inner court would have been given a mark on their foreheads protecting them from Satan's wrath, whereas the outer court will be given into his hands.

The overall number of saints to be sealed with the name of God, from righteous Abel to our time today, will be 144,000 (Revelation 14:1; 7:4).

As the outer court is being slaughtered, Satan will stir up the Beast power and his armies: "Then out of the smoke locusts came upon the earth. And to them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were commanded not to harm the grass of the earth, or any green thing, or any tree, but only those men who do not have the seal of God on their fore-heads. And they were not given authority to kill them, but to torment them for five months..." (Revelation 9:3-5).

Of those with the seal the outer court will be killed, and the inner court would have been taken to a safe place. The rest of the world who do not have the seal of God will be tormented for five months, not killed as the outer court will be.

It is the fifth trumpet blast which triggers the 3½-year Great Tribulation. During the first few months of this, "men will seek death and will not find it; they will desire to die, and death will flee from them" (verse 6).

When the first woe to occur at the commencement of the Great Tribulation ends, two more woes follow. "One woe is past. Behold, still two more

woes are coming after these things" (verse 12).

More Woes

The next event to take place during the 3½-year Great Tribulation is described as follows: "Then the sixth angel sounded: And I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, 'Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.' So the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released to kill a third of mankind. Now the number of the army of the horsemen was two hundred million, and I heard the number of them" (Revelation 9:13-16).

During the Great Tribulation a vast army of 200,000,000 men [the second woe] will come into existence. Through the act of war, and the use of high-tech weapons of mass-destruction so readily available in today's world, one third of the world's population will be wiped out (verses 17-19).

"But the rest of mankind, who were not killed by these plagues, did not repent of the works of their hands, that they should not worship

demons, and idols of gold, silver, brass, stone and wood, which can neither see nor hear nor walk; and they did not repent of their murders or their sorceries or their sexual immorality or their thefts" (verses 20-21).

People will still refuse to repent of their wrongdoing, and will not turn to God or accept the sacrifice of Christ.

The Bible does not mention how long this destruction of a third of mankind will take. But we do know that when this killing comes to an end, the two witnesses will be martyred. "Now when they finish their testimony, the beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit will make war against them, overcome them, and kill them... And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them, make merry, and send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 11:7, 10).

DURING THE FIRST FOUR TRUMPET PLAGUES... PRIOR TO THE GREAT TRIBULATION... THOSE IN THE INNER COURT WOULD HAVE BEEN GIVEN A MARK ON THEIR FOREHEADS PROTECTING THEM FROM SATAN'S WRATH, WHEREAS THE OUTER COURT WILL BE GIVEN INTO HIS HANDS

When these two witnesses of God are martyred, the 3½-year Great Tribulation will be coming to an end. “Now after three and a half days the breath of life from God entered them, and they stood on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, ‘Come up here.’ And they ascended to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies saw them. In the same hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. In the earthquake seven thousand men were killed, and the rest were afraid and gave glory to the God of heaven” (verses 11–13).

After these events the Great Tribulation [Satan’s wrath] of those days will finally be complete. “The second woe is past. Behold, the third woe is coming quickly” (Revelation 11:14).

The Great Multitude

Many who would have heard the preaching of the two witnesses will acknowledge God and accept the sacrifice of Christ for the remission of their sins.

“After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands...

Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, ‘Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?’ And I said to him, ‘Sir, you know.’ So he said to me, ‘These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’

Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple [but not as His Temple]. And He who sits on the throne will [future tense] dwell among them... For the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them [during the Millennium] to living fountains of water [the Holy Spirit]...” (Revelation 7:9, 13–15, 17).

The great multitude serve God in the presence of the elect (God’s Temple) because they turn to Him in repentance, thus their opportunity for salvation begins.

“They shall neither hunger any more nor thirst

any more; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat” (verse 16).

This Scripture is, as we shall see from the Bible, a reference to this great multitude being delivered from the torment of the last seven plagues. They do not have the seal (Revelation 14:1) of God in their foreheads, and there is no mention of them having the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. They are merely a body of people who show fruits of repentance as a direct result of the two witnesses prophesying for 3½ years.

When Christ returns they will be taught the way of life that will bring peace to the millennial world they enter. Being physical human beings they will need to eat and drink.

They will have the four seasons: spring, summer, autumn and winter. And of course, they will feel the sun’s heat in summer. So why do we read in Revelation 7:16 that they will not hunger or thirst, and that the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat?

The answer is in Revelation 16: “Then the third angel poured out his bowl on the rivers and springs of water [drinking water] and they became blood [undrinkable]... Then the fourth angel poured his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with

fire. And men were scorched with great heat...” (verses 4, 8–9).

These two plagues are two of the seven plagues to be poured out, and fulfil a part of the wrath of God Almighty (Revelation 15:7).

The third plague renders the water supply undrinkable; the fourth scorches men with great heat.

So when we read that the great multitude who come out of the Great Tribulation will not hunger or thirst anymore, and the sun will not strike them, nor any heat, it is speaking of them being worthy to escape the wrath of God and the terrible plagues poured out on those who still refuse to repent.

“...the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:17).

During the dispensing of the seven plagues, God promises to provide the physical needs of the great

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multitude. And He will lead them to rivers of living water — clearly a reference to eventually giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 4:14).

The very next prophetic events are carried out at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. But before we look at that, it is important to have a brief look at an event that takes place before the sounding of this trumpet.

The Ancient Of Days

“I watched till thrones were put in place, and the Ancient of Days [God the Father] was seated... I watched then because of the sound of the pompous words which the horn [the false prophet] was speaking; I watched till the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given to the burning flame. As for the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away, yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.

I was watching in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man [Christ], coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him” (Daniel 7:9, 11–13).

We do know that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet Christ will return, the dead in Christ will be resurrected to immortality and those who are alive in Christ will be changed from flesh to spirit (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

But did you notice what Daniel said? The scripture says that Christ is coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of Days. The Ancient of Days is God the Father, and, we are told, Christ comes near to Him. So, God the Father must come down to earth prior to the Return of Christ, so that Christ can be brought near to Him. This is what the Bible is telling us.

At some point in time, from the beginning of the Great Tribulation and before the sounding of the seventh trumpet, God the Father will come down to oversee the remaining events that lead directly to the second coming of Christ.

“Then to Him [Jesus Christ] was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is

an everlasting dominion...” (Daniel 7:14).

The Seventh Trumpet

Before the resurrection of God’s elect the individuals who turn to God in repentance (the great multitude) would have been gathered together and will be delivered from the horror of the last seven plagues.

“And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him who sat on the cloud, ‘Thrust in your sickle and reap, for the time has come for you to reap, for the harvest [the great multitude] of the earth is ripe.’ So he who sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth, and the earth was reaped” (Revelation 14:15–16).

“Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, ‘The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord [the Father] and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever!’” (Revelation 11:15).

When the seventh trumpet is blown, Christ returns. Those who are dead in Christ will be resur-

rected, and those still alive in Christ will be changed, rising in the air to meet Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

“Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous: seven angels having the seven last plagues, for in them the wrath of God is complete. And I saw something like a sea of glass mingled with fire, and those [spiritual Israel] who have the victory over the beast, over his image and over his mark and over the number of his name, standing on the sea of glass, having harps of God” (Revelation 15:1–2).

“Then I heard a loud voice from the temple saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the bowls of the wrath of God on the earth’” (Revelation 16:1).

During the pouring out of the first four plagues, people will suffer the effects of foul and loathsome sores on their flesh.

The sea and the world’s water supply is turned into blood, and heat from the sun scorches the inhabitants of the earth (verses 2–9).

The fifth plague is the fall of Babylon: “Then the

AT THE SOUNDING OF THE SEVENTH TRUMPET CHRIST WILL RETURN, THE DEAD IN CHRIST WILL BE RESURRECTED TO IMMORTALITY AND THOSE WHO ARE ALIVE IN CHRIST WILL BE CHANGED FROM FLESH TO SPIRIT

fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom [Babylon] became full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues because of the pain” (verse 10).

“And he [the angel] cried mightily with a loud voice, saying, ‘Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a habitation of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!’ .. And the kings of the earth who committed fornication and lived luxuriously with her will weep and lament for her, when they see the smoke of her burning, standing at a distance for fear of her torment, saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! For in one hour your judgment has come.’

.. And they threw dust on their heads and cried out, weeping and wailing, and saying, ‘Alas, alas, that great city, in which all who had ships on the sea became rich by her wealth! For in one hour she is made desolate’” (Revelation 18:2, 9–10, 19).

Only after the fall of Babylon will the sixth plague occur:

“Then the sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river Euphrates, and its water was dried up, so that the way of the kings from the east might be prepared.

And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs coming out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty [the Day of the Lord]... And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon” (Revelation 16:12–14, 16).

Through demonic influence, the armies of this world will be gathered to the battle of the great Day of the Lord. Then comes the seventh plague.

“Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’ And there were noises and thunderings and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and

great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth” (Revelation 16:17–18).

Remember, this seventh plague is the Day of the Lord, and is described at the opening of the sixth seal.

There is an earthquake, the sun becomes as black as sackcloth of hair, the moon becomes like blood and the stars of heaven fall to the earth (Revelation 6:12–13).

“Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found” (Revelation 16:19–20).

On the Day of the Lord there will be a great earthquake, the sun will turn black and the moon will turn blood red. The stars will fall to earth and the great city will be divided into three parts. Also the cities of the nations, every island and all the mountains will be completely levelled.

The World Sees Christ Return

During the cosmic disturbances, and before the mountains are completely levelled, Christ will begin descending to the earth with His saints.

“Then the temple of God was opened in heaven, and the ark of His covenant was seen in His temple. And there were lightnings, noises, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail” (Revelation 11:19).

Referring to the same event, we read: “And great hail from heaven fell upon men, every hailstone about

the weight of a talent. And men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great” (Revelation 16:21).

As these events happen, Christ and His saints will be seen by the whole world, descending from heaven in the clouds. And as He descends, the fierceness of God’s wrath will carry out the final destruction of those who still refuse to repent and turn to God.

“And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud

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DIVIDED INTO THREE PARTS**

cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Thrust in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe.’

So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses’ bridles, for 1,600 furlongs” (Revelation 14:18–20).

“Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, ‘Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all people, free and slave, both small and great.’

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshipped his image.

These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh” (Revelation 19:17–21).

After the Beast, the false prophet, the armies of the earth, and those who still refuse to obey God are all destroyed, Satan will then be taken out of the way.

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished...” (Revelation 20:1–3).

And so the millennial reign of Christ and His saints will commence.

The Millennium and Beyond

Throughout the millennium mankind will be taught the way of life that brings the peace and happiness that today’s world is unable to enjoy (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this peaceful millennial age, “Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea” (Revelation 20:7–8).

Again, Satan will use the power of deception to sway the minds of the nations (Gog and Magog), using them in an attempt to destroy God’s saints.

“They [Gog and Magog] went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake

of fire and brimstone where the beast and false prophet are [were]...” (verses 9–10).

When the armies of Gog and Magog are destroyed by the power of God, Satan will be thrown into the lake of fire.

When these events are fulfilled, it will be time for the second resurrection to begin: “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books” (verse 12).

These books that are opened are those in the Holy Bible. Those who live according to the way of life expounded in God’s Word, repenting of their sins, admitting their mistakes and turning to God through Christ for forgiveness, will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, along with the promise of eternal life.

But those who utterly and wilfully refuse to repent will lose the opportunity to live forever. They will miss out on an eternity of overflowing love,

LIFE AS IT IS TODAY AND AS IT WILL BE DURING THE MILLENNIUM AND THE GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT, IS ONLY THE INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST CHAPTER OF AN ETERNAL REALITY, AS CHILDREN IN THE GOD FAMILY

peace and happiness as children of God in the Family of God. For them remains only the second death (Revelation 21:8).

“Then death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:14–15).

God will then create a new heaven and a new earth, “for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away” (Revelation 21:1).

God will then present the Bride of Christ (God’s firstfruits) to the newly resurrected saints at that time: “Then I, John, saw the holy city, new Jerusalem [the 144,000], coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away’ ” (verses 2–4).

And so it will be that all who believe and turn to God in sincere repentance will experience new life as eternal spirit beings with God the Father and Jesus Christ His Son.

“Then He who sat on the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new... It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts. He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son’ ” (verses 5–7).

The Plan of God will then finally be complete, and as one Family we will all share the joy of eternal life together.

Our lives and the physical world we live in today are merely a shadow of the spiritual world we are to experience.

Life as it is today and as it will be during the Millennium and the Great White Throne Judgment, is only the Introduction to the First Chapter of an eternal reality, as children in the God Family. Life as Spirit-composed Beings will be meaningful, purposeful and will accelerate with excitement as each new Chapter of our Eternal Joy is opened.

The ending is merely the beginning — a beginning so wonderful that it is beyond words to describe.

“He who testifies to these things says, ‘Surely I am coming quickly.’ Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Revelation 22:20–21). ◻

SCRIPTURE INDEX

Page numbers in **bold**

Old Testament

Genesis

1:1	5, 7
1:1-4	7
1:26-27	9
2:23-24	9
4:1-2	9
10:9-10	17
11:2-9	17

Exodus

7:1	6
18:11	5
21:6	6

Numbers

13:16	18
13:8	18
16:8-10	13

Deuteronomy

10:8	13
------	----

Joshua

1:1-2	18
-------	----

Judges

6:31	6
------	---

1 Samuel

28:13-14	6
----------	---

1 Kings

11:5	6
6:1	15
6:37-38	15
8:27	16

2 Kings

2:13	18
21:5	25
25:8-9	15

1 Chronicles

28:11-19	15
----------	----

2 Chronicles

33:5	25
36:19	15

Ezra

1:1-6	15
2:1-2	15
2:40	18
3:2	18
3:9	18
5:1-2	16
6:1-12	16
6:19	16

Psalms

2:7	8
8:5	6
111:10	15
119:104	15

Proverbs

3:5-6	15
-------	----

Isaiah

2:10	26
2:12	26
2:19	26
9:6	10
11:9	32
45:1	15
60:3	24
60:11	24
60:14	25
60:19-20	24
66:5	22

Jeremiah

17:5	15
17:7-8	15
23:25-27	10
29:10	15
52:13	15

Ezekiel

9:3-5	25
9:4	27
10:3-5	25

Daniel

12:1	27
12:10	25
12:7	25
7:11-13	30
7:14	30
7:25	27
7:9	30
8:13	24, 25, 28
8:13-14	24
8:14	25

Joel

2:28	10
------	----

Haggai

1:12	18
------	----

Zechariah

3:1	18
3:3-4	18
3:4	18
3:6-7	18
3:7	19
3:9	19
4:1-2	19
4:2	20
4:3	19
4:11	20
4:14	19
5:1-3	17
5:4	17
5:5	17
5:6-8	17
5:9-11	17
6:9	19

6:11-13	19
---------	----

Malachi

1:6-7	14
2:1-2	13
2:2	13
2:7	14
2:10	14
2:11	15
2:12	15, 21
2:15-16	14
2:16	14
3:16	21

New Testament

Matthew

3:17	8
5:11-12	22
9:15	9
14:33	9
16:16	9
17:5	9
20:16	21
22:14	21
24:2	16
24:4-5	10
24:5	21, 23
24:6	23
24:7	23
24:11	23
24:12	22
24:21	27
24:24	21
25:1	9, 10
25:5-6	9, 10

Mark

5:7	9
13:14	24
13:20	21
13:22	21

Luke

22:29	9
22:42	9
23:34	9
23:46	9
24:45	15
24:49	9

John

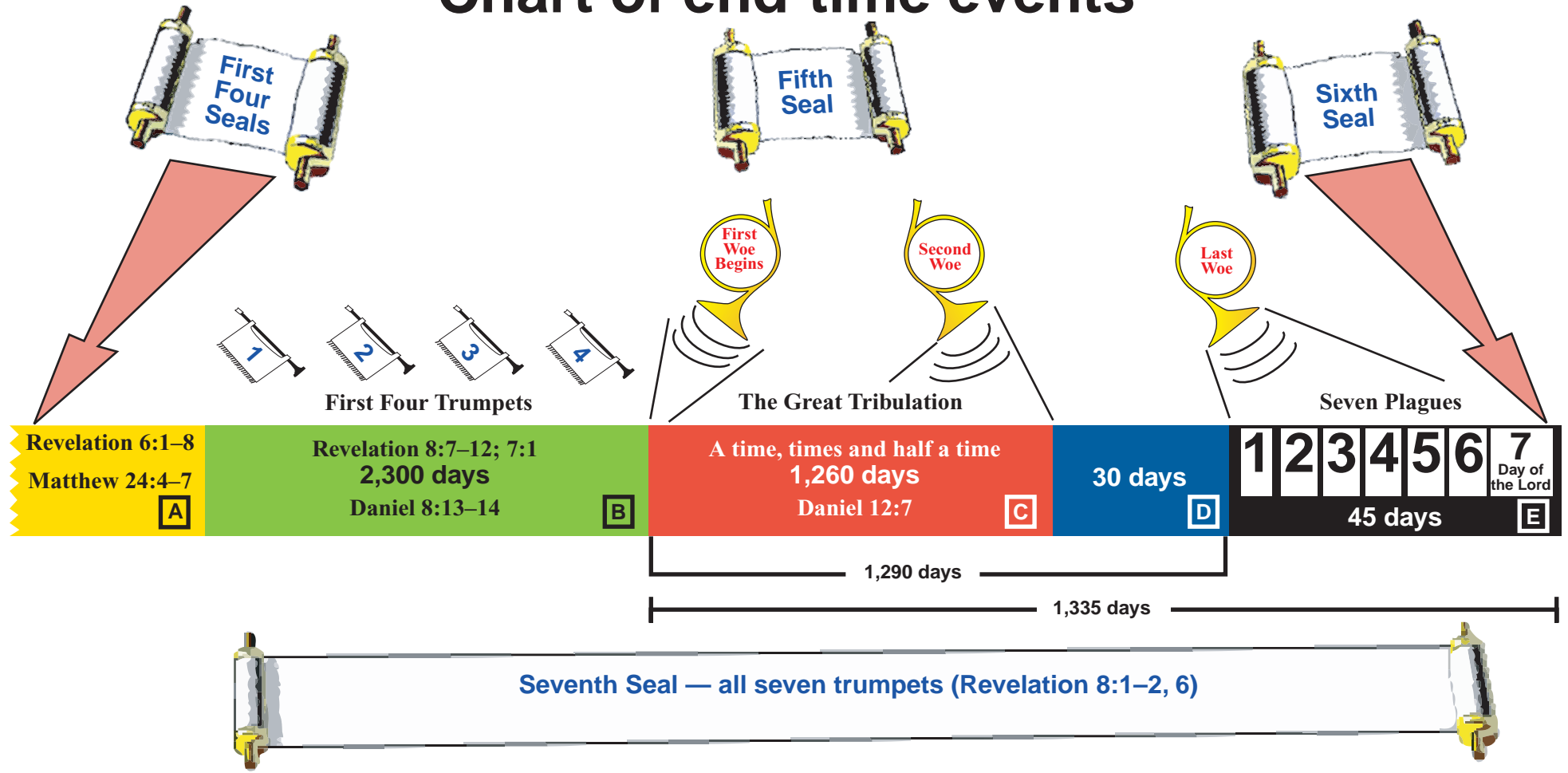
1:1	7
1:3	8
1:14	9
1:18	9
3:35	9
4:14	30
4:42	19
6:37	9

6:65	9
8:16	9, 14
8:32	10
10:4	21
15:20–21	22
17:14	22
17:19	22
Acts	
4:10–11	19
7:48–50	16
13:33	8
17:24	16
Romans	
1:20	9, 10
8:16	9, 19
8:22–23	22
9:26	9
16:17–18	5
1 Corinthians	
1:27	21
3:9	16
3:16–17	16
6:2	19
6:19	16
14:33	7
15:51–52	30
2 Corinthians	
4:8–9	22
Galatians	
3:26	9
4:26	9, 10
Ephesians	
1:4	21
2:19–20	24
2:19–22	16
3:9	8
4:14	21
5:30	19
Colossians	
1:15	9
1:15–16	14
1:16–17	8
1:24	19
1 Thessalonians	
4:16–17	30
2 Thessalonians	
2:3	15, 17, 21
2:4	21
2:7	15, 16, 21
2:8	15, 21
2:10–12	14, 21
2:11–12	16
2:13	21
Hebrews	
1:2	9
1:5	8, 9
7:3	19
8:5	16
10:21	19
11:37–40	23
12:22–23	25

James	
1:18	10
1 Peter	
2:24	19
5:8	18
1 John	
3:13	22
4:9–10	9
4:14–15	9
2 John	
3	9
9	9
2 Peter	
2:1	21
2:2	21
2:18–20	22
Revelation	
1:20	19
2:1	19
2:9–10	11
3:1–6	12
3:7–13	12
3:8	19
5:1–3	23
5:5	23
5:6	19, 23
5:7	23
6:1–2	23
6:3–4	23
6:5–6	23
6:8	23
6:9–11	23, 24
6:11	25
6:12–13	31
6:12–17	26
7:1–3	27
7:3–4	21
7:4	28
7:4–8	24
7:9	29
7:13–15	29
7:16	29
7:17	29
8:1–2	26
8:6	26
8:7	26
8:9	26
8:10–11	26
8:12	26
8:13	27
9:1	27
9:3–5	28
9:6	28
9:10	28
9:11	27
9:11–13	29
9:12	28
9:13–16	28
9:17–19	28
9:20–21	28
11:1–2	24, 25
11:2	25, 27

11:3	27
11:3–4	19
11:7	28
11:14	29
11:15	26, 30
11:19	26, 31
12:1	9
12:7–8	27
12:9	3, 21, 27
12:10	18
12:12	27
12:13	27
12:14	25, 27
12:14–17	9
12:15–16	27
12:17	27
13:5–7	27
14:1	21, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29
14:3–4	22
14:4	22
14:15–16	30
14:18–20	32
15:1–2	30
15:7	29
16:1	30
16:2–9	30
16:4	29
16:8–9	29
16:10	31
16:12–14	31
16:16	31
16:17–18	31
16:18	26
16:19	26
16:19–20	26, 31
16:21	31
17:5	14
17:14	22
18:2	31
18:9–10	31
18:19	31
19:7	9, 10
19:10	4
19:17–21	32
20:1–3	32
20:6	19
20:7–8	32
20:9–10	32
20:12	32
20:14–15	33
21:1	33
21:2–4	33
21:5–7	33
21:8	33
21:9	9, 10
21:9–10	24
21:12	24
21:14	24
21:23	24
21:24	24
21:25	24
22:4	24
22:5	24
22:20–21	33

Chart of end-time events



- A** First four seals have already begun.
- B** First four trumpets will occur before the Great Tribulation and may continue for a period of 2,300 days.
- C** Fifth trumpet is the beginning of the Great Tribulation and is also represented by the fifth seal. The fifth trumpet, the fifth seal and the Great Tribulation are the First Woe. The Second Woe occurs during the Great Tribulation, heralded by the sixth trumpet, and ends with the resurrection of the two witnesses (Revelation 9:1, 12; 6:9-11; 11:11-14).
- D** Time period for the gathering of the great multitude (Daniel 12:11; Revelation 7:9, 14).
- E** Time period for the seven last plagues which are referred to as the Last Woe. The seventh and final plague is the Day of the Lord and is also representative of the sixth seal (Revelation 16:1-21; 6:12-14, 17; Daniel 12:12).