

THE PARTIAL
RAPTURE AND THE
LEFT BEHIND CHURCH

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The author is a retired Colonel, United States Air Force. His wife and children, and their spouses, are all dedicated Christians. His grandchildren are also coming to know and serve the Lord.

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‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS
AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD,
BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. (Acts 2:20)

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**But when these things begin to take place,
straighten up and lift up your heads,
because your redemption is drawing near.”**

(Luke 21:28)

Preface

When I read books written by our prophecy experts, I am astonished. There are so many disagreements, that some of these experts have to be completely wrong.

It is reminiscent of the first century, when Pharisees and Sadducees were the experts in interpreting prophecy about the first coming of Christ. But it turned out that Joseph and Mary, the wise men bearing gifts, Zechariah and Elizabeth, along with Simeon and Anna, were the only ones who understood what was happening at the time of His birth.

When working in the Kairos prison ministry, the instruction for our small groups was to focus on what the scripture being looked at actually says – and not what we think it means. The idea was that we should seek to understand what the scriptures actually say – and be careful not to develop faulty interpretations.

That was how I have studied Bible prophecy the past 30 years. It is much better to take scriptures at face value. As a result, most of what I discovered was fascinating, some of it was magnificent, but some of it was disturbing.

I condensed what I learned into a book, and a handful of YouTube videos. I hope that you enjoy what I found. But more importantly – I pray that it will cause you to keep watch for His return.

Jesus said that we should keep watch for His return – you need to understand why!

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Introduction

Current rapture theories assume that there will be only one rapture of the church. It will be a defining moment when, from among God's people, only Israel will remain on earth. But such a limited view of the rapture has resulted in conflicting theories. Advocates of each rapture theory zealously explain why the other theories are wrong. To resolve these contradictions, and more importantly to get at the truth, the possibility of two separate raptures needs to be considered.

An early partial rapture followed by a complete rapture of the church, much later, meets the criteria upon which the leading rapture theories are based. From this perspective we find in scripture an early rapture that marks the end the Church Age. While it is the birthright of every believer to participate in this early rapture, those destined for discipline, such as promised the Laodicea Church, will be left behind on earth (Revelation 3:19; Matthew 24:50-51).

Other theories place the rapture much later in the final seven years, and emphasize that the church must be raptured prior to God's wrath upon the earth (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). What is found in scripture is a complete rapture of the church, accompanied by the resurrection of God's people, just before the seven bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 14:14-16). In the past this harvest has been largely ignored; it is frequently interpreted as having only symbolic meaning.

Casual observers of our rapture debate sometimes observe that our theories do not matter. Do any of the current theories change the way we live on a daily basis? Some say that knowing that the "blessed hope" of rapture is imminent gives Christians greater security. It is sometimes stated that this security allows believers to live an enhanced Christian life. But is there any proof? After all, a primary criticism of the arrogant Laodicea Church is that they place too much emphasis on their own security (Revelation 3:17).

When Christ appears, there is a requirement that His people must be prepared. John the Baptist was sent in the first century (Matthew 3:1-6). Two witnesses in Jerusalem will prepare Israel for His second coming (Revelation 11:3-6). Those of us with military experience can witness to the fact that when a senior officer is to visit – those who do not prepare in advance will likely regret not having done so. How much exponentially more must we be prepared for the next appearance of Christ.

The last time Christ appeared – His people were not prepared, and Christ suffered.

The next time Christ appears – once again, many of His people will not be prepared.

But this time – it will be the unprepared believers who will suffer.

Christ will be coming with power and great glory.

With the early, partial rapture countless believers will be caught off guard. The Sardis Church is an example of believers who are not ready: *if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.* (Revelation 3:3b) While eternal salvation is by grace through faith, rewards are conditional (Ephesians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15). Participation in the early, partial rapture is a reward.

The promise to rescue believers from the end-times was only given to the Philadelphia Church. The prerequisite for inclusion in this partial rapture is to respond to trials – with mature perseverance. *Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth.* (Revelation 3:10)

1

Salvation

God planted a garden. He gave Adam authority over this Garden of Eden. Life was magnificent; fellowship with God was routine. God walked in this garden. God planted trees in the garden; one was named the tree of life and another one the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God told Adam to refrain from eating fruit from the tree that provided knowledge of what is evil, but he disobeyed. This sin drove humanity outside Eden into our present world to gain first-hand knowledge of what is evil (Genesis 3:1-24).

Adam's transgression disrupted the relationship between God and man. Fortunately, God deeply cared about this broken fellowship and therefore provided a Messiah. God's mighty Savior left a throne in heaven and went to earth in human form to rescue Adam, Eve, and their descendants, to include you and me. Every person on earth has disobeyed God, which resulted in a broken relationship. Every person needs a Savior.

God had a dynamic plan for providing salvation. Jesus excelled as a teacher, a healer, and as a miracle worker. However, none of those things could bridge the gap between a holy God and a rebellious man. A perfect God must hold to perfect justice; accordingly, the offenses (sins) of man must be punished. Because punishment could not be avoided the critical question was—who would endure the punishment?

Scripture tells us that before Jesus died, sin was placed upon him, so that a perfect sacrifice would pay the death penalty for sin (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus took the punishment that you and I deserve because the shedding of blood is the only payment God accepts (Hebrews 9:22). In his resurrection, Jesus demonstrated authority over death.

God provided a way to eradicate the penalty for sin, and to obtain eternal life, but only on his terms. Each person must acknowledge that he or she has rebelled (sinned) against God, and trust that the shed blood of Jesus—received as a gift—paid the penalty for that sin. It is insufficient to simply believe that God exists (James 2:19). It is never enough for a person to behave in a religious manner, or have another person ask God for forgiveness on his or her behalf. Each person must go directly to the Savior (Hebrews 7:24-25).

God offers each man, woman, and child a personal, restored relationship—to anyone who believes him. Belief in God is important because to not believe what God says, is to imply that he is a liar (1 John 1:10). As an illustration of this point, both the Old and New Testament state that God accepted Abraham simply because Abraham believed God (Genesis 15:6; James 2:23). God is able to forgive any sin, but he chooses to not forgive the sin of unbelief.

Faith in Jesus is similar to faith in an airplane. When a passenger boards an airplane, that person believes the plane will fly and land safely. The passenger does not put faith in his or her own ability to fly. In a similar manner, trust God. Trust him to save you, forgive you, and one day safely transport you to heaven. Your belief shows faith in God's abilities, promises, and faithfulness.

2

Covenants

The most meaningful relationships are “covenant” relationships. The best example of a covenant relationship is the marriage covenant. Each person demonstrates whom he or she trusts by the covenants they enter. Just as a bride and groom demonstrate covenant faith in each other, we are called to place covenant faith in God.

The central book of end-time prophecy, titled Revelation, tells about three covenants. Just as with God’s covenants in the Old Testament, scripture depicts covenants in Revelation with a mark on the forehead or hand (Deuteronomy 6:6-8). This type of mark may seem odd. However, consider that a common covenant symbol today, the wedding ring, distinguishes (marks) the left hand of the husband and wife.

During the end-times, it will be most convenient to accept the covenant offered by the preeminent world leader, a powerful man commonly called the Antichrist. Initially the leader of a restored Roman Empire, Antichrist will enter the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and claim to be God. Paul wrote that Antichrist *takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God* (2 Thessalonians 2:4b).

Belief in religion is a second covenant option. A person can have faith in his or her religion without having any faith in God. The Pharisees were the preeminent first-century teachers of Israel; yet their faith was in religion instead of God (Matthew 23:23). Pharisees wore long

flowing robes (Mark 12:38), prayed in an impressive manner (Mark 12:40), and routinely fasted (Matthew 9:14). The typical Israeli citizen thought they set the gold standard for religious behavior.

Those who followed such religion were also in perilous danger. Jesus warned the Pharisees and their congregations when he said, *“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from people; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. (Matthew 23:13)*

The three covenants in Revelation are depicted as a mark on the hand or forehead (Deuteronomy 6:6-8).

Faith in Antichrist: *And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, (Revelation 13:16)*

Faith in Religion: *and on her forehead a name was written, a mystery, “BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.” (Revelation 17:5)*

Faith in God: *They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. (Revelation 9:4)*

The covenant that God offers makes each believer a member of the body of Christ. Jesus took bread during the last supper before his death and said, *“Take, eat; this is My body.” (Matthew 26:26b)*. Paul later noted that *we are members of His body*. (Ephesians 5:30b).

Also at the last supper, Jesus took wine and said, *for this is My blood of the covenant (Matthew 26:28a)*. The shedding of blood pays the penalty for sin because *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness (Hebrews 9:22b)*.

Terms such as “accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior” or “giving your life to Christ” can be used to invite unbelievers to accept a covenant relationship with God.

3

The Rapture

The end-times will bring the worst suffering the world has ever seen. Jesus said of the end-times, *For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.* (Matthew 24:21) There will be global conflict and persecution of Christians. Jesus warned believers, *“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name.* (Matthew 24:9)

But there also is good news. There is a way for God’s people to avoid the end-times. A rapture rescues believers from end-time suffering; rapture occurs when God suddenly removes people from earth—taking them up into heaven. The word “rapture” comes from the Latin word “rapio” which means to take away by force. The benefits of an early rapture are obvious. Those leaving the earth will avoid tremendous persecution and suffering.

Jesus and Paul used the words “caught up” and “taken” to refer to rapture. Paul wrote, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) Jesus said, *“I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.* (Luke 17:34)

Jesus cited Noah as an example of God protecting believers just prior to a worldwide judgment (Luke 17:26-27) Jesus then cited a second example; angels removed Lot and his family immediately before God destroyed Sodom. *It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building: but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed.* (Luke 17:28-30)

Keep Watch

Christians can sometimes be heard saying “I am ready for the rapture – any time!” But Jesus had a much different perspective. He said that His coming to rapture the church will be like a thief in the night. *“Behold, I am coming like a thief. Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.”* (Revelation 16:15) This warning is for believers. Anyone who rejects Christ is not eligible for a rapture that transports participants from earth to heaven. In fact, unbelievers are ineligible for any event that takes people to heaven.

There are scriptures that should cause us to question if the early rapture would be a complete rapture, with not even one Christian being left behind. Jesus warned us to *“Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap;* (Luke 21:34) This is a picture of believers who, by their birthright, should be participating in an early rapture. Christ is warning us to be careful in our lifestyle choices because we could get caught in a trap; that trap being exclusion from an early rapture.

Jesus repeatedly warned us to keep watch for this return: *“Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Lord is coming.* (Matthew 24:42) *Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day*

nor the hour. (Matthew 25:13) Therefore, be on the alert—for you do not know when the master of the house is coming, (Mark 13:35a). What I say to you I say to all, ‘Be on the alert!’” (Mark 13:37)

Jesus described the widespread failure to endure, to stand firm in faith just prior to the early rapture. Jesus said *Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he will be saved. (Matthew 24:12-13)* Jesus was not talking about being spiritually saved, as in eternal salvation, but instead being saved from physical harm.

We know that being “saved” in this verse does not refer to eternal salvation because eternal salvation is not by grace through faith, plus standing firm to the end. Salvation is by grace, through faith alone. *For by grace you have been saved through faith (Ephesians 2:8a)*. This is like when Peter attempted to walk on water. He began to panic and cried out to Jesus, “Save me!” Peter’s request was to be saved from drowning, to be saved from physical harm (Matthew 14:30).

This conclusion requires further explanation for those with an Arminian perspective, which is the belief that our eternal salvation can be lost (1 Corinthians 15:2; 2 Timothy 2:12; Hebrews 6:4-6; 2 Peter 2:20-21). Such a perspective could see a requirement for believers to *endure to the end*. While not disputing whether salvation can be lost, it could be argued that Peter failed to endure to the end – yet Jesus actively sought him out following his denial of Christ. In fact, Peter denied Christ three times, even with an oath (Matthew 26:69-75).

What would more likely cause a person to lose their salvation would be an adulterous (covenant-breaking) act such as taking the mark of the beast (Revelation 14:9-10). Other than possessing a genuine faith in Christ, there is nothing a person does, such as *enduring to the end*, that results in salvation. Christ’s sacrifice on the cross – alone – provides salvation.

With this early, partial rapture countless believers will be caught off guard. While eternal salvation is by grace through faith, rewards are conditional; the early rapture is a reward (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

Concerning the end-times, Jesus said that we should *keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place* (Luke 21:36b). Other translations make what we are to pray about less obscure: *pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen* (NIV). Fourteen different English translations use the phrase “accounted worthy to escape” or “counted worthy to escape” (KJ21, AMPC, BRG, DARBY, DRA, GNV, JUB, KJV, AKJV, MEV, NKJV, RGT, WEB, YLT).

Knowing that the early rapture is conditional gives important perspective. Suddenly Christ’s warning to keep watch, makes sense. Christ’s warning that those who are unprepared will feel robbed, like victims of a thief, makes sense. Christ’s warning that some will be found naked and shamefully exposed, makes sense. Christ’s warning for unprepared believers, that the end-times will close on you suddenly like a trap, makes sense. All this makes His instruction to pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to take place – profoundly good advice

Any interpretation that Christ will return “like a thief” at His second coming, and not the early rapture, is deeply flawed. His return to earth at the end of the final seven years will be predictable; it will occur 42 months after the Antichrist’s proclamation at the Temple Mount (Daniel 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

4

Seven Churches

Jesus sent seven letters to seven churches located in a Roman province, called Asia. In each letter, Jesus urged us to pay attention saying, *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.* Jesus was saying something like, “If you have an ear, my expectation is that you will listen!” He repeated this expectation seven times, once in each letter.

These letters can be used to describe the condition of the church, from the first century until today. While all seven types of churches continued to exist throughout the centuries, there appears to be a time when each was the predominate church, as outlined in the following chart.

Church	Description	Predominance Began
Ephesus	Complacent	90 AD
Smyrna	Persecuted	250 AD
Pergamum	Compromised	313 AD (Catholic)
Thyatira	Misguided	
Sardis	Dead	
Philadelphia	Protestant	1517 AD
Laodicea	Complacent	1945 AD

Ephesus

“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write: The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands, says this: ‘I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot tolerate evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; and you have perseverance and have endured for My name’s sake, and have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’ (Revelation 2:1-7)

Ephesus was a typical church near the end of the first century. Paul ministered in Ephesus for at least two years. Timothy was its pastor; the Apostle John was one of its leaders. Located in a city of 250,000 people, this was a hard-working church with integrity and perseverance. It was doctrinally sound and its members had tested and identified false teachers. Yet the Ephesus Church had lost its passion. Jesus had this criticism: that they had left their first love.

The following are examples of what it means to lose your first love.

- I value praise from people more than praise from God.
- I am callous in the way I treat a Christian brother.
- I choose not to witness because I fear rejection.
- My leisure-time thoughts do not turn to God.
- I do not cheerfully give to God’s work.
- I become complacent to sin.
- I am slow to forgive

Smyrna

“And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life, says this: ‘I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt by the second death.’ (Revelation 2:8-11)

Local Roman officials were responsible for the persecution of Christians during the first two centuries. Starting in 250 AD, empire-wide persecution took place as a consequence of an edict by the emperor Decius. Christians were targeted because they refused to worship the Roman gods or pay homage to the emperor as divine. While Polycarp was the most famous martyr, estimates on the total number of Christians murdered run as high as two million. Smyrna is described as suffering for ten days; historians have suggested that there were ten waves of persecution against Christians. Attacks from outside the church only made it stronger. In this letter, Jesus encouraged Smyrna; He did not have any criticism.

Pergamum

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword says this: ‘I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit acts of

immorality. So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.' (Revelation 2:12-17)

The first-century church at Pergamum accepted Roman dominance, to include paying homage to its emperors. The teaching of the Nicolaitans started to infiltrate the church, which translates “to rule over the laity”—in other words, to rule over non-pastoral members of the church.

The Pergamum time in history saw the rise of Pontiffs, as religious leaders created high-ranking positions that ruled over God’s people. While the Edict of Milan declared tolerance towards Christianity in the Roman Empire, it was done so under the rule of Constantine, a Roman emperor. Constantine made himself Pontifex Maximus of the Christian faith; this was a merging of church and state of historic proportions.

Pergamum was where Satan’s throne is—a possible location of this throne was an ornate altar honoring pagan gods. German engineers moved this altar to Berlin between 1878 and 1886. It was placed in the Altes Museum, and later moved to an adjacent building, the Pergamum Museum. These locations are significant because Adolph Hitler gave rousing speeches to hundreds of thousands of people from a platform built over the steps of the Altes Museum. After this altar was moved to Berlin that city became a focal point for World War I, World War II, and the extermination of Jews. Berlin also was the place of greatest confrontation (the Berlin Wall) during the Cold War.

Thyatira

“And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write: The Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: ‘I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality. Behold, I will throw her on a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. He who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; and I will give him the morning star. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’ (Revelation 2:18-29)

During the Thyatira Church period, Roman Catholic leadership emphasized tradition while setting aside the authority of scripture. A person likened to Jezebel in the Old Testament promoted sexual immorality (1 Kings 16:30-31). An Associated Press report quotes Richard Sipe, a former priest, as saying that priest sexual abuse is a centuries-old problem, “The Vatican is in the know and has documented its knowledge throughout the centuries.” The authors further stated “Vatican officials have known about sex abuse by priests going all the way back to the fourth century”. Immorality

during the Thyatira Church period was clearly documented. [Doyle, Thomas, Sipe, Robert, Wall Patrick. *Sex, Priests, and Secret Codes: The Catholic Church's 2,000 Year Paper Trail of Sexual Abuse*. Volt Press. Los Angeles. 2006.]

Credible sexual molestation lawsuits have implicated Pope Benedict XVI. Plaintiffs in Houston cited a May 18, 2001 letter that he wrote while head of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. In a letter to bishops concerning molestations, then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger wrote that cases of this kind are subject to “pontifical secret.” The lawsuit alleged that Ratzinger was responsible due to his active cover-up of child molestation. The Pope avoided legal problems in the United States because he obtained immunity as the Vatican head of state.

Sardis

“To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My God. So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you. But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes will thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’”
(Revelation 3:1-6)

Although the Sardis Church had a reputation for being alive, Jesus said that this church was dead. This depiction of being alive can be seen in the impressive cathedral construction in Europe. Everything was done for the glory of the “one true church.” Honor was also given

to its papal leader, who was called “the” representative of Christ on earth. While the reputation of the Roman Catholic leaders was zealously protected, precious little was done for the glory of God.

There can be no greater condemnation of a church than for Jesus to pronounce it dead. Sardis is the Catholic Church, in great need of reformation. Philadelphia tells of the success that came from the Protestant Reformation.

Philadelphia

“And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—I will make them come and bow down at your feet, and make them know that I have loved you. Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, so that no one will take your crown. He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write on him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God, and My new name. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Revelation 3:7-13)

The Gutenberg printing press in the fifteenth century increased the availability of Bibles to ordinary people. Through cruel inquisitions, popes opposed those who believed scriptures possessed ultimate authority. Catholic leadership murdered countless Protestant believers; the charge for which believers were burnt at the stake was called “heresy” (John 16:2).

A remnant of Philadelphia believers continues to serve God today. Because these Christians continue to keep God's command to demonstrate *perseverance* (translated "endure patiently" elsewhere), Jesus will act upon his promise to keep this church from *the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world.*

Laodicea

"To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: The Amen, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'" (Revelation 3:14-22)

Laodicea is a primary end-times church; it is the preeminent church in western civilization today. Laodicea places its founder on the outside; Jesus said to this church, *I stand at the door and knock*. Many Christians today have wealth. Yet their spiritual poverty caused Jesus to say they were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. Laodicea is an educated church, smart enough to avoid complete complacency, and therefore is not cold. However, instead of passionately applying that knowledge, to make Laodicea hot, members apply their God-given

talents to sustain their own comfort. Laodicea is a weak church that is lacking credibility and focus.

Laodicea has sufficient communication tools to reach the entire the world with the gospel, but is largely ineffective. The Laodicea Church is compromised; its members have bought into another religion. This religion sets our priorities and demands our loyalty. This is an infrequently recognized religion, called Secularism. The Laodicea Church believes it possible to passionately care about both God and money. In fact, a person is capable of loving only one or the other. Jesus said, *“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24)*

The End-Time Church

Christians identify with a denomination, such as Baptist or Lutheran, or claim a non-denominational status. God also categorizes believers as being a part of one of the seven churches of Revelation. Each of the seven churches is depicted as a gold lampstand, which illustrates the tremendous value of each church (Revelation 1:20). Each church is a recipient of care and attention; Jesus is present in the middle of these lampstands (Revelation 1:13).

Philadelphia has a bright future. Jesus promised it protection: *I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Revelation 3:10b)*. Since there will be no safe place on earth, Philadelphia will be raptured to heaven.

However, Sardis is warned that they are not ready for Christ’s return: *if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief (Revelation 3:3b)*. Neither is Laodicea; whom Jesus warned: *those whom I love, I reprove and discipline (Revelation 3:19a)*. The promise to protect Christians from participating in the end-times was not given to all believers, but only to the Philadelphia Church.

5

The Scroll

End-time events begin with a dramatic scene playing out in God's throne room. An ancient scroll that is perfectly sealed, with seven seals, must be opened. This scroll is a critical document; some have called it the deed to planet earth. This scroll has also been referred to as the redemptive plan of God. In practical terms, think of a rolled millenniums-old paper sealed with seven pieces of tape, whose adhesive has made removing the seven seals impossible, as the paper would be severely torn. This situation is similar to the seven seals on this most critical document.

At the beginning of this drama, John is transported to God's throne room to provide a first-hand account of the end-times. *After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven, and the first voice which I had heard, like the sound of a trumpet speaking with me, said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after these things."* (Revelation 4:1) From God's throne room John observed epic world events centuries ahead of time.

John sees God seated on a throne in heaven (Revelation 4:2). God is described in terms of the reflection and brilliance of precious stones (Revelation 4:3). *Around the throne were twenty-four thrones; and upon the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads.* (Revelation 4:4) The elders are dressed as Jesus had promised the seven churches, with white clothing like Sardis, and crowns like Smyrna.

Four living creatures surround the throne. *The first creature was like a lion, and the second creature like a calf, and the third creature had a face like that of a man, and the fourth creature was like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within* (Revelation 4:7-8a). These four living creatures appear to be an exalted order of angels (Ezekiel 1:5-25; Isaiah 6:1-4).

As the twenty-four elders lay their crowns before the throne, they demonstrate that the honor of wearing crowns belong to God alone: *the twenty-four elders will fall down before Him who sits on the throne, and will worship Him who lives forever and ever, and will cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created.* (Revelation 4:10-11)

Soon attention is focused on a scroll with writing on both sides that is sealed with seven seals. A mighty angel asks in a loud voice if anyone was worthy to break the seals and open the scroll. But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth responded. John records that at that moment he wept because it appeared that no one was worthy to open the scroll (Revelation 5:1-4).

One of the elders comforted John, telling him that the Lion of the tribe of Judah was worthy to open the seven seals. Expecting to see a Lion, John noted that he then saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing at the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He took possession of the scroll (Revelation 5:5-7). Now God's plan could move forward with the opening of the seven seals.

6

Seven Seals

The opening of the first four seals reveals four spiritual beings that are riding horses, commonly called the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. Their arrival on earth causes a massive spiritual shift. The world stage is being put in place for end time events.

Even at the start of the sixth seal, no visible harm has been inflicted on the earth (Revelation 7:3). Therefore, it is reasonable to interpret that the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse are released in the spiritual realm. It is also clear that the fifth seal does not bring any immediate harm to the earth (Revelation 6:9-11).

The impact of each horseman is foretold as each one of these spiritual forces is announced. This situation is similar to a chess match, where the outcome is already known. If the queen is to take out both bishops, then it could be stated that the queen has authority over the bishops as the queen is placed on the board. That is how these four horsemen should be viewed.

Four Horsemen

SEAL #1: *Then I saw when the Lamb broke one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures saying as with a voice of thunder, "Come." I looked, and behold, a white horse, and 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 Spirit of **CONQUEST** comes into the arena. With intensified power and authority, demonic forces go forth to expand the kingdom of darkness. Safety will be offered in an increasingly dangerous world, as the fight to control the heart and mind of every living person intensifies.

SEAL #2: *When He broke the second seal, I heard the second living creature saying, "Come." And another, a red horse, went out; and to him who sat on it, it was granted to take peace from the earth, and that men would slay one another; and a great sword was given to him. (Revelation 6:3-4)*

The Spirit of **WAR** rides a red horse. Jesus said about global conflict that *nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*. He then spoke about famine, which can be found at the third seal, *and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. (Matthew 24:7)*

SEAL #3: *When He broke the third seal, I heard the third living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, a black horse; and he who sat on it had a pair of scales in his hand. And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine." (Revelation 6:5-6)*

The Spirit of **FAMINE** results in devastating food shortages. A denarius was a common wage for a day's work, meaning that people will expend their entire income to obtain food (Matthew 20:2).

SEAL #4: *When the Lamb broke the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature saying, "Come." I looked, and behold, an ashen horse; and he who sat on it had the name Death; and Hades was following with him. Authority was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by the wild beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:7-8)*

The fourth angel is named **DEATH**. That Hades was following Death possibly refers to the unseen world that appears following a person's

death. The exact meaning of “Hades” is uncertain; the common understanding is that Hades is a place of torment. Another, older interpretation is that it contains two very different places. In addition to a place of torment for condemned persons, there also is a peaceful setting where God’s people reside (Luke 16:22-23). Some people see COVID-19 as being pestilence.

A Call for Justice

SEAL #5: *When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God, and because of the testimony which they had maintained; and they cried out with a loud voice, saying, “How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?” And there was given to each of them a white robe; and they were told that they should rest for a little while longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren who were to be killed even as they had been, would be completed also. (Revelation 6:9-11)*

The martyrs in heaven likely witnessed the four horsemen and understood that this signaled the onset of the end-times. The martyrs ask how long will it be until those who murdered them are judged. They are told to wait patiently because others were to be martyred as they had been (Exodus 29:12; Leviticus 4:7).

The Visible Seal

SEAL #6: *I looked when He broke the sixth seal, and there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth, as a fig tree casts its unripe figs when shaken by a great wind. The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6:12-14)*

As people look at the blood moon, they are seeing something much like how the earth appears to Christ; the earth is stained with innocent blood (Proverbs 6:17). At that time, the entire world, to include every mountain and island, shakes. This shaking is likely caused by asteroids slamming into the earth, one after another, similar to how *a fig tree casts its unripe figs upon the ground when shaken by a great wind*. As these objects streak out of the sky and pound the earth, it appears as if stars of the sky fell to the earth.

Jesus provided the best commentary for this sixth seal in the Olivet Discourse. Just a few days before his crucifixion, Jesus answered questions his disciples asked about the end-times. The setting was the Mount of Olives, overlooking the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus spoke about two signs that would appear in the sky, while answering this question: *“what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”* (Matthew 24:3b)

Jesus began by giving a partial answer to the first question: what will be the sign of Your coming? *For just as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west, so will the coming of the Son of Man be.* (Matthew 24:27) The return of the Son of Man will cover the entire sky, from the east all the way to the west. It is possible that Jesus will be orbiting the earth thousands of times per second, personally covering the entire sky over all the earth; this streaking across the sky would appear like lightening (Luke 17:24). Jesus provides a more complete description of this event in just a moment.

Jesus then answered the second question: what will be the sign of the end of the age? His answer was that *THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.* (Matthew 24:29b) This corresponds to events at the sixth seal: *the sun became black as sackcloth made of hair, and the whole moon became like blood; and the stars of the sky fell to the earth* (Revelation 6:12b-13a). Both narratives tell of profound changes to the sun, moon and stars.

Jesus had been responding to these questions in the order that they were asked, but that is not the order in which they occur. It is the sun being blotted out and the moon turning blood red that occurs first. So, He returned to describing the sign of the return of the Son of Man, to place His answer in chronological order. Remember the initial description was that it would be as lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west; that it would cover the entire sky.

And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:30) The corresponding verse at this sixth seal states: *The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up, and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.* (Revelation 6:14) Both are descriptions of an event that will cover the entire sky, all over the world.

Jesus foretold (Matthew 24:27-30)	John observed (Revelation 6:12-14)
Sign: End of the Age	
sun will be darkened,	sun became black
moon will not give its light,	moon became like blood
stars will fall from the sky,	stars of the sky fell to the earth,
Sign: Return of the Son of Man	
as the lightning comes from the east and flashes even to the west	The sky was split apart like a scroll when it is rolled up

As the sign of the Son of Man appears in the sky, angels rapture Christians from the earth. This is how the rapture is described: *And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET AND THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.* (Matthew 24:31) As Jesus flashes across the sky, appearing as lightning, angels accomplish this harvest. This lightning will likely

be accompanied with a thunderous noise; Christ's appearance will be *with power and great glory*.

The sign of the return of the Son of Man immediately follows the sign of the end of the age. When that initial sign occurs, it will be critically important that you know that very soon, the early rapture will occur. Jesus said once you become aware that day has arrived, *the one who is on the housetop and whose goods are in the house must not go down to take them out; and likewise the one who is in the field must not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever seeks to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night there will be two in one bed; one will be taken and the other will be left.* (Luke 17:31b-34)

When the initial sign, which is sign of the end of our age, appears in the sky the wrong priority would be to make sure your emergency supplies are in order. *But when these things begin to take place, straighten up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.*" (Luke 21:28) At the moment you become aware that the sign of the end of the age is occurring, focus only on your impending redemption – focus on Christ, and Christ alone. Remember the mistake Lot's wife made – and do not look back at the world you are about to leave. When Lot was called to leave Sodom, his departure took place within 24 hours.

Learn from another mistake made in Sodom. The two angels, appearing as men in the following story, sent Lot to warn his two sons-in-law. *Then the two men said to Lot, "Whom else have you here? A son-in-law, and your sons, and your daughters, and whomever you have in the city, bring them out of the place; for we are about to destroy this place, because their outcry has become so great before the Lord that the Lord has sent us to destroy it." Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law, who were to marry his daughters, and said, "Up, get out of this place, for the Lord will destroy the city." But he appeared to his sons-in-law to be jesting.* (Genesis 19:12-14)

The sign of the end of the age puts Christians on notice, that they are being called to immediately depart. It is at that moment that angels are being instructed to identify who will be selected for this early rapture.

Servants Identified

During the sixth seal, the earth has not yet been harmed: *And I saw another angel ... and he cried out with a loud voice to the four angels to whom it was granted to harm the earth and the sea,* (Revelation 7:2) This is a fifth angel, and he is about to give instructions to the four angels (horsemen) from the first four seals, concerning when they will bring destruction upon the earth. *“Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees until we have sealed the bond-servants of our God on their foreheads.”* (Revelation 7:3)

Those who receive this seal are identified as being *the bond-servants* of our God. Three distinct categories of believers are found in Revelation: servants, saints, and those who fear God. ... *the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name* (Revelation 11:18b). Here servants are being referred to as prophets. Peter foretold that God’s servants would prophesy: *EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT and they shall prophesy.* (Acts 2:18)

Servants of Christ exist in every nation, tribe, people and tongue. Because of the focus on Israel in Revelation, details are given about its impact on Israel; this seal will be placed on the foreheads of 144,000 Israeli believers. *And I heard the number of those who were sealed, one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel* (Revelation 7:4). These Israelis are never again seen on earth but are later seen on Mount Zion, which is an expression that means “heaven” (Hebrews 12:22; Revelation 14:1).

Next these bond-servants are seen following their rapture into heaven. John observed, *After these things I looked, and behold, a*

great multitude which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands; (Revelation 7:9). The palm branches indicate this is a Palm Sunday type of celebration, a celebration of deliverance.

A question is asked about the identity of those who suddenly appeared in heaven: *“These who are clothed in the white robes, who are they, and where have they come from?”* (Revelation 7:13b) The answer is that *“These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.* (Revelation 7:14b) The answer clearly states that this multitude was drawn out of the great tribulation; they were just raptured from earth. That more than just the 144,000 Israeli believers were raptured is evident from the number being a great multitude which *no one could count*.

Wrong Interpretation

Popular interpreters of Bible prophecy often teach that those arriving in heaven were martyred, and deny that a rapture occurs at the sixth seal. But other places in Revelation, martyrs are clearly identified, given special recognition. To not have mentioned that all those participating in that gathering were martyrs would have been remarkably inconsistent (Revelation 6:9; 20:4).

The sole purpose for placing a seal on the servants of God is for protection. Yet the most common interpretation is that those sealed become gifted evangelists; supposedly 144,000 supernaturally empowered evangelists come from this moment. However this sealing appears to be very similar to a previous one, when selected believers received a mark on the forehead.

At that time the LORD gave an angel these instructions *“Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the*

abominations which are being committed in its midst.” But to the others He said in my hearing, “Go through the city after him and strike; do not let your eye have pity and do not spare. Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark (Ezekiel 9:4b-6a).

Transition

SEAL #7: *When the Lamb broke the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (Revelation 8:1-2)*

After Jesus broke open the seventh seal on the scroll, this document can be opened and put into effect. The seven trumpets that soon follow will result in a scorching of the earth. For such reasons, there is silence in heaven, but only for a moment.

7

Seven Trumpets

Soon the objects falling toward earth will be even more frightening. Jesus compared the fire that came down to destroy Sodom to what will occur at the onset of the seven trumpets. Immediately after Lot left Sodom, fire rained down. Jesus said that once countless believers exit earth through an early rapture, fire will once again rain down from heaven.

It was the same as happened in the days of Lot: they were eating, they were drinking, they were buying, they were selling, they were planting, they were building; but on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just the same on the day that the Son of Man is revealed. (Luke 17:28-30) [Remember, the sixth seal revealed the Son of Man in the sky]

TRUMPET #1: *The first sounded, and there came hail and fire, mixed with blood, and they were thrown to the earth; and a third of the earth was burned up, and a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. (Revelation 8:7)*

With this initial trumpet, a third of the earth will be burned. These flames will almost certainly damage food supplies, which would trigger the widespread famine mentioned at the third seal (Revelation 6:5-6).

TRUMPET #2: *The second angel sounded, and something like a great mountain burning with fire was thrown into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, and a third of the creatures which were in the sea and had life, died; and a third of the ships were destroyed. (Revelation 8:8-9)*

In addition to burning a third of the earth, flames will also be landing in the ocean. Jesus described the churning of the oceans saying there would be *perplexity at the roaring of the sea and the waves* (Luke 21:25b).

TRUMPET #3: *The third angel sounded, and a great star fell from heaven, burning like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of waters. The name of the star is called Wormwood; and a third of the waters became wormwood, and many men died from the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:10-11)*

This event contaminates the world's most essential resource, but exactly what contaminates such a large amount of water is open to speculation. The star falling to earth could contain a toxin never-before seen on earth, or it could be something that already exists.

A situation that some may find interesting is that the Greek word *apsinthos* (wormwood) translates as both *polyn* (полин) and *chernobyl'* (чорнобиль) in the Ukrainian language. The Chernobyl nuclear power plant accident, which occurred in the Ukraine, resulted in a massive amount of radioactive discharge. Chernobyl has since become synonymous with nuclear contamination.

Like the New Testament, botanical terminology also utilizes the Greek language. Because of their star-like flowers, wormwood plants are in the *Asteraceae* (asterisk, or star) family, and the *Artemisia* genus. In the original Greek, an *asteros* (star) falls on the rivers and springs. *Polyn* refers to the entire *Artemisia* genus. *Artemisia absinthium* (chernobyl) is a specific *Artemisia* species, and therefore is a type of *polyn*.

The Ukrainian Bible (UKR) translates the first part of Revelation 8:11: And the name of the star is polyn ... (А ймення зорі тій Полин ...).

TRUMPET #4: *The fourth angel sounded, and a third of the sun and a third of the moon and a third of the stars were struck, so that a third of them would be darkened and the day would not shine for a third of it, and the night in the same way. (Revelation 8:12)*

It is possible the objects hurled at the earth will result in widespread volcanic activity, darkening the atmosphere. Smoke billowing out from the heart of the earth is seen during the next trumpet.

TRUMPET #5: *Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them. (Revelation 9:1-6)*

Smoke rises from an immensely deep pit, and an incalculable number of locusts come out of that smoke. Locusts are known for destroying crops, but these will sting like scorpions. They were sent to torment everyone who does not have the seal of God on their foreheads, in other words to torment every person who refused to accept a covenant relationship with God. For a period lasting five months those suffering will seek to die, but will be unable. This will be a foretaste of hell where people will be in such agony, they will want their existence to end but will have no way to stop the suffering.

TRUMPET #6: *Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, "Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates." And the four angels, who had been prepared for the hour and day and month and year, were released, so that they would kill a third of mankind. The number of the armies of the horsemen was two hundred million; I heard the number of them. (Revelation 9:13-16)*

Four angels who are bound at the Euphrates River will be released to kill a third of mankind. That these four angels are bound at the Euphrates points to Iraq, the nation through which most of this river flows. This river also travels past the ruins of the ancient city of Babylon. The army of these four angels is huge, two hundred million in size; it would appear that what is being described is not a human army.

8

The Last Trumpet

The seventh trumpet introduces the seven bowls of God's wrath. But much more occurs at this last trumpet. At this point Jesus begins to reign as king over the earth. This subject is being discussed as this trumpet is sounded. *Then the seventh angel sounded; and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever."* (Revelation 11:15)

Soon the twenty-four elders surrounding God's throne are speaking about how the Lord God has begun to reign over the earth. These elders fall on their faces before God and worship Him *saying, "We give You thanks, O Lord God, the Almighty, who are and who were, because You have taken Your great power and have begun to reign."* (Revelation 11:17)

There is a brief reference to the coming wrath of God, which will soon be seen, during events titled the seven bowls of God's wrath. They make the observation that the nations were enraged, and in response God's wrath came (Revelation 11:18). But a more detailed depiction of this being a transition to the coming wrath of God is shown as the scene changes, and the authentic ark of the covenant comes into view inside the heavenly temple. This personal residence of God will be the control center for the outpouring of the seven bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 11:19).

Paul wrote that a massive harvest of God’s people will occur at this last trumpet. This harvest will be a complete rapture of the church, accompanied by the resurrection of those belonging to Christ. *Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.* (1 Corinthians 15:51-53)

This harvest ensures the entire church is removed from earth prior to the outpouring of God’s wrath, which occurs during the seven bowls of God’s wrath (1 Thessalonians 1:10; 5:9). There is no rapture for Israel; this nation is to remain on earth during the seven bowls of God’s wrath. Ezekiel wrote of a time when the Lord would reign over Israel; it was to occur during a time in which God’s wrath would be poured out upon the earth (Ezekiel 20:33-34).

Rapture – and Resurrection

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17a) The phrase “and remain” is also translated “and are left” (NIV) and “who are left” (ESV). This refers to the believers who were “left behind” during the early rapture of the Philadelphia Church, which occurs at the sixth seal.

The corresponding passage in Revelation has been largely disregarded, interpreted as having only symbolic meaning. But these verses actually describe a second rapture, a complete rapture of the church, plus the resurrection of those belonging to Christ.

Then I looked, and behold, a white cloud, and sitting on the cloud was one like a son of man, having a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. And another angel came out of the temple, crying out with a loud voice to Him who sat on the cloud, "Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe." Then He who sat on the cloud swung His sickle over the earth, and the earth was reaped. (Revelation 14: 14-16)

God resides in this temple; so, when an angel comes out of this temple with a message, it is from the Father. That message is for the Son, the one *sitting on the cloud*. The message is that it is time to bring home His bride, which is the church. That the term "bride" is used to describe the body of believers known as the church illustrates their intimate, covenant relationship with God.

There is an important detail about Christ's coming for the church that Jesus said even He does not know. That detail is the timing of His coming for the church. Jesus said, "*But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Matthew 24:36)* So the Father, who resides in the temple, sends out an angel to tell Jesus that it is time to bring home his bride, which is the church. We can even read the words of this message: "*Put in your sickle and reap, for the hour to reap has come, because the harvest of the earth is ripe.*" (Revelation 14:15b)

Jesus swings a sickle over the earth, and the rapture of Christians who were "left behind" during the initial rapture, along with those who obtained faith during the end-times, occurs. This rapture removes every last member of the church from earth.

Remember that the early rapture was a partial rapture; only the Philadelphia Church was promised to be spared from the impact of the end-times. Jesus promised those believers: *Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour*

of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth. (Revelation 3:10) God commands us to endure patiently; we are to demonstrate *perseverance*.

Israel Harvested

John then observed another harvest, that *the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.* (Revelation 14:19b) Scripture identifies where these grapes came from: *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel* (Isaiah 5:7a).

An angel accomplishes this second harvest and it continues until Christ returns. Paul foretold that the entire nation of Israel would turn to Christ. He wrote: *a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved* (Romans 11:25b-26a). Israel would be saved as a nation only after the very last gentile who is to be saved, obtains faith in Christ.

Ezekiel foretold that God would rule over Israel during a time of God's wrath. *"As I live," declares the Lord God, "surely with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out, I shall be king over you. I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out;* (Ezekiel 20:33-34).

It is difficult to accept that Israel is harvested in accordance with God's wrath. But it is widely accepted that Israel remains on earth during the outpouring of God's wrath, during the seven bowls of God's wrath.

9

Israel

Scripture foretold the past two thousand years of Israeli history. Ezekiel wrote about Israel's exile from its homeland, which occurred in 70 AD with the Roman destruction of Israel. He also foretold the persecution of Jews while in exile at the hands of enemies, to include suffering in concentration camps. Ezekiel quoted God as saying: *The nations will know that the house of Israel went into exile for their iniquity because they acted treacherously against Me, and I hid My face from them; so I gave them into the hand of their adversaries, and all of them fell by the sword. According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions I dealt with them, and I hid My face from them.*”” (Ezekiel 39:23-24)

Jewish people returned from exile and Israel was reestablished May 14, 1948. God foretold of a time when he would no longer hide His face from the people of Israel. God will reveal himself to the Israeli people, and Israel will at some future time accept Jesus as their redeemer. Concerning the establishment and purpose of modern Israel (referred to as “them” and “they” below), Ezekiel quoted God as saying: *When I bring them back from the peoples and gather them from the lands of their enemies, then I shall be sanctified through them in the sight of the many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD their God because I made them go into exile among the*

nations, and then gathered them again to their own land; and I will leave none of them there any longer. I will not hide My face from them any longer, for I will have poured out My Spirit on the house of Israel," declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 39:27-29)

Zechariah wrote about the moment Israel will accept a crucified Messiah, the one whose hands and feet were "pierced" with nails on the cross. *"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)*

Initial Peace

The short-term protection of Israel comes about through a seven-year treaty with Antichrist, referred to as "he" in the following verse. *And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week (Daniel 9:27a)*; a week being a seven-year period. This refers to an agreement (covenant) that initiates the seven-year end-time period. Antichrist will be the leader of a unified Europe, a reestablished Roman Empire.

Israel is an Associated State of the European Union; Antichrist could offer Israel full membership. Such membership would commit the military forces of the European Union for the protection of Israel. While the exact terms concerning what Antichrist might promise Israel are unknown, European Union membership is a possibility, and serves as example of the type of meaningful protection Antichrist will promise Israel.

The three and a half years of protection Israel receives at the start of the end-times corresponds with the time Israel remains in unbelief concerning Christ. Scripture cites this 42-month delay five times.

Israel's Time of Unbelief

	3 ½ years - 1260 days	3 ½ years - time, times and half a time*	3 ½ years - in the middle of the "seven"
Daniel 9:27			X
Daniel 12:6-7		X	
Revelation 11:3	X		
Revelation 12:6	X		
Revelation 12:13-14		X	

* time, times and half a time = (1 + 2 + ½) years = 3 ½ years

Nothing could be fulfilled concerning Israel until the initial three and a half years are completed. At that time Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah, and become a spiritually reborn nation.

Two Witnesses

God will send two witnesses to Israel during the initial 42 months. These are the first authentic prophets in Israel since the first century. *And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for twelve hundred and sixty days, clothed in sackcloth." These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. And if anyone wants to harm them, fire flows out of their mouth and devours their enemies; so if anyone wants to harm them, he must be killed in this way.* (Revelation 11:3-5) These witnesses will be able to shut up the sky so that it will not rain, just as Elijah did when confronting King Ahab (1 Kings 17:1). They also will have power to turn the waters into blood, just as Moses did before Pharaoh (Exodus 7:20).

After 42 months, God withdraws protection from the two witnesses, and they are executed. *When they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up out of the abyss will make war with them, and overcome them and kill them. And their dead bodies will lie in the*

street of the great city which mystically is called Sodom and Egypt, where also their Lord was crucified. (Revelation 11:7-8) The place where these witnesses are murdered is the same city where the Lord was crucified. Jerusalem is referred to as being corrupt, like Sodom and Egypt.

The funeral celebration is appalling. *Those from the peoples and tribes and tongues and nations will look at their dead bodies for three and a half days, and will not permit their dead bodies to be laid in a tomb. And those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and celebrate; and they will send gifts to one another, because these two prophets tormented those who dwell on the earth.* (Revelation 11:9-10) Through various technologies people from all over the world will gaze upon these two corpses; the contempt will be so great that they are refused a proper burial. People celebrate by sending gifts to each other. Just as people celebrate Christmas by exchanging gifts, people will celebrate this apparent end to Christianity using the same tradition.

However, their lives are restored and then they are raptured. *But after the three and a half days, the breath of life from God came into them, and they stood on their feet; and great fear fell upon those who were watching them. And they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, "Come up here." Then they went up into heaven in the cloud, and their enemies watched them.* (Revelation 11:11-12)

At this point, Israel will accept Jesus as Messiah. *And in that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell; seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.* (Revelation 11:13)

A Third Temple

The Temple Mount in Jerusalem will be a critical end-time setting (Appendix A). This location is where the ancient Israeli temple stood for centuries; it is where countless lambs were sacrificed. Because

Islam controls the Temple Mount, the idea that an Israeli temple could be rebuilt at this site is considered unlikely; yet there is evidence that Israel might be able to rebuild its temple. Studies suggest that the Islamic Dome of the Rock, located at the Temple Mount, could be on a location other than the site of the original Israeli temples. That situation would allow Israel to erect a temple on the correct site, without destroying any Islamic shrines.

In Revelation, God surveys the Temple Mount, an action that demonstrates he is reclaiming ownership. John is given *a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, "Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it. Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.* (Revelation 11:1b-2) The courtyard area of the Temple Mount remaining under non-Israeli control indicates the Islamic structures will remain intact.

Broken Promises

Israel is the woman in the following story, which depicts how God protects Israel from the Antichrist during the first half of the final seven years: *Then the woman fled into the wilderness where she had a place prepared by God, so that there she would be nourished for one thousand two hundred and sixty days.* (Revelation 12:6)

The story continues with the dragon, also called the serpent, being Satan; the male child that Israel gave birth to is Jesus: *And when the dragon saw that he was thrown down to the earth, he persecuted the woman who gave birth to the male child.* (Revelation 12:13) An application to the end-time story on earth is then stated: *But the two wings of the great eagle were given to the woman, so that she could fly into the wilderness to her place, where she was nourished for a time and times and half a time, from the presence of the serpent.* (Revelation 12:14)

Antichrist will establish an agreement with Israel for a seven-year period. It is possible that this treaty will allow the temple to be rebuilt, possibly in exchange for Israel allowing an independent State of Palestine. It is widely believed that these seven years are the same seven years that comprise the final end times prophesied by Daniel (Appendix B). At the rebuilt temple, the sacrifice of lambs for the atonement of sins will return as a cornerstone of the Jewish faith. But in the middle of those seven years, Antichrist will break that agreement and stop the Jewish practice of sacrifice and offering (Daniel 9:27a).

Antichrist will enter the temple and claim to be God. Paul wrote about Antichrist: *who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God.* (2 Thessalonians 2:4) Daniel wrote about Antichrist: *“Then the king will do as he pleases, and he will exalt and magnify himself above every god and will speak monstrous things against the God of gods* (Daniel 11:36a). Israel will respond to Antichrist with a resounding rejection; from that moment forward Israel will be viciously persecuted.

The violent harvest of Israel is depicted; enemy soldiers act as war criminals. *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished* (Zechariah 14:2a). Then Jesus returns to earth to finish the battle on Israel’s behalf: *Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.* (Zechariah 14:3)

10

Two Beasts

A contemporary version of the Roman Empire, led by the Antichrist, will be forefront on the world stage during the end-times. Daniel foresaw this Roman Empire hundreds of years before the it was established.

Four Great Empires

Major Empire	Chapter 2	Identification
Babylonia	Head of Gold	Daniel 2:38
Medo-Persia	Chest and Arms of Silver	Daniel 8:20
Greece	Belly and Thighs of Bronze	Daniel 8:21
Rome	Legs of Iron; Feet of Clay	Daniel 9:26 ← Rome in 70 AD

Daniel identified Rome as the final great empire: *the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary* (Daniel 9:26b) This refers to events that occurred in 70 AD. The *people* were soldiers from across the Roman Empire, the *city* was Jerusalem, and the *sanctuary* was its temple; *the prince who is to come* is the Antichrist.

Beast out of the Sea

Satan, depicted as a dragon, calls a beast out of the sea; this beast is the Roman Empire, with the Antichrist in charge. *And the dragon*

stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names. (Revelation 13:1)

The Roman Empire remained in existence long after the so-called Fall of Rome in 476 AD, but in much different forms. For example, the Eastern Roman Empire did not fall until 1453. The Holy Roman Empire was an alliance of western European nations in power from 800 to 1806 AD. That the beast *was, and is not, and is about to come* refers to the tendency of the Roman Empire to wax and wane over the centuries (Revelation 17:8b).

Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six. (Revelation 13:18)

A situation that some may find interesting, is that the unification of Europe began with three groups of nations, consisting of six nations in each group. Six nations signed the Treaty of Rome, which founded the European Economic Community in 1957. After six additional nations joined this European Community, those 12 nations became the original members of the European Union. These 12 nations of the European Union then joined six European Free Trade Association nations to form the European Economic Area.

Rome is also the location of the unfaithful church, depicted as an adulterous woman named Babylon. This woman is geographically collocated (sits) in the empire's capital city. *Here is the mind which has wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits, (Revelation 17:9).* Other translations refer to "seven hills" – which would be the correct way to view this scripture; no city in the world was built on seven mountains. Romulus and Remus founded Rome on seven hills. Even with the seven hills of Rome being common knowledge, spiritual mysteries take discernment. A mind with wisdom is needed, because seeing Rome as the preeminent

city for evil and deception requires unlocking one of the greatest delusions in history.

The ancient Roman Empire is widely believed to be a great civilization. History depicts the nations and tribes they conquered—as barbarian. Yet Rome boasts of an ancient coliseum where slave gladiators fought and died at the whims of the crowd. Roman pride in this coliseum would be analogous to Germans being proud of Dachau, which is a World War II prison camp where millions of people were executed. Rome brought slavery, crucifixions, and the corrupt government that murdered Jesus.

Antichrist

The beast out of the sea is comprised of both the Antichrist and the Roman Empire. Antichrist will eventually abandon Europe, and turn his attention to Jerusalem; this will occur at the 42-month point, the mid-point of the final seven years. Therefore the authority, or life span, of this beast is limited to the initial forty-two months of the end-times. *There was given to him a mouth speaking arrogant words and blasphemies, and authority to act for forty-two months was given to him.* (Revelation 13:5)

The support the dragon (Satan) provides this beast is extraordinary. *And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.* (Revelation 13:2b) However, remember that Satan first offered this kingdom to Jesus. *Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory; and he said to Him, “All these things I will give You, if You fall down and worship me.”* (Matthew 4:8-9)

Beast out of the Earth

Then I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb and he spoke as a dragon. (Revelation 13:11) To those who are deceived this beast will appear harmless, like a

lamb. Yet this beast spoke like a dragon; spoke with the authority of Satan. This beast will require everyone to submit to the Antichrist. Concerning this false prophet: *He exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence. And he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast* (Revelation 13:12a). Just as the beast out of the sea (Europe) follows the dragon (Satan), this beast out of the earth will follow the Antichrist.

The false prophet is normally interpreted as being a religious leader; yet no scripture requires him to be religious. Any person who says, "God chose me to lead you to safety" then leads people to destruction, is a false prophet. Like the European beast, the beast out of the earth could be a political leader and his subordinate nations.

Deception

Satan devotes considerable effort toward causing people to believe deceptions. Scripture states that the beast and false prophet *deceived those who had received the mark of the beast* (Revelation 19:20b). The false prophet will be a master of deception. *He performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men.* (Revelation 13:13)

The false prophet will have the power to insist that everyone must accept the Antichrist, or suffer consequences. The false prophet will force everyone, *the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark* (Revelation 13:16b-17a).

But believers are not to follow the deception. *If anyone has an ear, let him hear. If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed. Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints.* (Revelation 13:9-10)

11

Seven Bowls

and the seven angels who had the seven plagues came out of the temple, clothed in linen, clean and bright, and girded around their chests with golden sashes. Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever. (Revelation 15:6-7)

The headquarters for the seven bowls of wrath is the authentic temple in heaven. Seven angels leave the temple wearing golden sashes, symbolic of royal and priestly functions. It is apparent that God's wrath is holy: *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power (Revelation 15:8a).*

BOWL #1: *So the first angel went and poured out his bowl on the earth; and it became a loathsome and malignant sore on the people who had the mark of the beast and who worshiped his image. (Revelation 16:2)*

This plague could be anthrax, which causes boils on both people and animals. Israel is spared these sores because only people having the mark of the beast are afflicted. This event is similar to the plague of boils Moses brought against Egypt. *So they took soot from a kiln, and stood before Pharaoh; and Moses threw it toward the sky, and it became boils breaking out with sores on man and beast. (Exodus 9:10)*

BOWL #2: *The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became blood like that of a dead man; and every living thing in the sea died. (Revelation 16:3)*

There is a similarity to another plague that God delivered through Moses. *Thus says the Lord, "By this you shall know that I am the Lord: behold, I will strike the water that is in the Nile with the staff that is in my hand, and it will be turned to blood. (Exodus 7:17)*

A third of the sea had become blood with the second trumpet; now at this second bowl the entire sea is turned to blood (Revelation 8:8-9). The third trumpet polluted a third of the rivers and springs of waters; the third bowl will turn rivers and springs worldwide into blood (Revelation 8:10-11).

BOWL #3: *Then the third angel poured out his bowl into the rivers and the springs of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters saying, "Righteous are You, who are and who were, O Holy One, because You judged these things; for they poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and You have given them blood to drink. They deserve it." And I heard the altar saying, "Yes, O Lord God, the Almighty, true and righteous are Your judgments. (Revelation 16:4-7)*

The martyrs under the altar are satisfied with this judgment. Remember the martyrs had cried out at the fifth seal: *they cried out with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, will You refrain from judging and avenging our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Revelation 6:10b)* Martyrs respond with approval upon hearing that this judgement was in response to their being killed.

BOWL #4: *The fourth angel poured out his bowl upon the sun, and it was given to it to scorch men with fire. Men were scorched with fierce heat; and they blasphemed the name of God who has the power over these plagues, and they did not repent so as to give Him glory. (Revelation 16:8-9)*

The sun will scorch people with intense heat; it is likely that natural protections in the atmosphere will have been destroyed. People respond by cursing God. With hardened hearts these enemies of God are incapable of repenting. This type of hardening occurred in ancient Egypt—when the LORD hardened Pharaoh’s heart (Exodus 10:27).

BOWL #5: *Then the fifth angel poured out his bowl on the throne of the beast, and his kingdom became darkened; and they gnawed their tongues because of pain, and they blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores; and they did not repent of their deeds.* (Revelation 16:10-11)

Moses delivered a similar judgment against Egypt: *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward the sky, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even a darkness which may be felt.”* (Exodus 10:21)

BOWL #6: *The sixth angel poured out his bowl on the great river, the Euphrates; and its water was dried up, so that the way would be prepared for the kings from the east.* (Revelation 16:12)

The flow of water on the Euphrates River is stopped, opening the way for the armies belonging to kings from the east. The destination of these armies is the valley of Har-Magedon (Armageddon) in northern Israel (Revelation 16:16). It would not take a supernatural event for the Euphrates River to become dry. Turkey has a dam that can stop the flow of the Euphrates; the Ataturk Dam dried this river while filling a large reservoir in 1990. Since then draught and water mismanagement have at times markedly reduced the flow of the Euphrates.

Armageddon is derived from the Mount of Megiddo, which is an archaeological site where the remains of ancient cities over the millenniums created a large mound; excavations have unearthed 26 layers of ruins. An immense portion of the valley of Armageddon, more commonly called the Jezreel Valley, is in view from Megiddo. This valley is also the historical place in Israel for massive armies to

gather; it has been the site of numerous battles for the control of Israel.

Upon arrival these armies will attempt to destroy Jesus as he returns to earth. It will be an extra planetary event of unfathomable proportions. The battle of Har-Magedon is the final battle of this Age (Zechariah 14:2-9; Revelation 19:11-21).

BOWL #7: *Then the seventh angel poured out his bowl upon the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple from the throne, saying, "It is done." And there were flashes of lightning and sounds and peals of thunder; and there was a great earthquake, such as there had not been since man came to be upon the earth, so great an earthquake was it, and so mighty. The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And huge hailstones, about one hundred pounds each, came down from heaven upon men; and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, because its plague was extremely severe. (Revelation 16:17-21)*

The final judgment features the destruction of Rome. God gives this city of the false king, which is the Antichrist, and the false church, with traditions that originated in ancient Babylon, the fierceness of his wrath. But the destruction is not limited to just Rome, as cities all over the world are destroyed. The geography of the world changes as mountains and islands disappear, and what remains is pelted with hailstones weighing a hundred pounds.

12

Babylon

The Roman Empire integrated the religious practices of conquered nations into its own religion. For example, the title of Pontifex Maximus (supreme pontiff, pope) was given to the leader of ancient Roman religion centuries before Christ. In many other ways the emperor Constantine merged the Babylonian and Christian religions and made the resulting Roman Church preeminent. Declaring himself the Pontifex Maximus, Constantine claimed authority over the universal church. This situation could have been corrected over the centuries, but instead the Catechism of the Catholic Church continues to regard its pagan traditions as being coequal with scripture in authority.

Revelation depicts a Roman Church that shares in the corruption of the Roman Empire. It depicts this Church (woman) and Empire (beast) as entwined. *The woman whom you saw is the great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth.*" (Revelation 17:18) Yet few people connect the corruption of the Roman Church with the Roman Empire, this connection basically remains a hidden secret. *And the angel said to me, "Why do you wonder? I will tell you the mystery of the woman and of the beast that carries her, which has the seven heads and the ten horns.* (Revelation 17:7) Rome is a mystery with two components. The first is a woman who is steeped in adultery (Roman Church) and the other is a malicious beast (Roman Empire). While one seeks dominance in religion, the other seeks world conquest.

Because religious practices from Babylon were incorporated into the Roman Church, it is referred to as Babylon. The relationship Babylon has with world leaders is based on adultery—a shared disloyalty to God. With Babylon *the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality* (Revelation 18:3b). Babylon commits adultery against God by being faithful to the kings, the leaders of this world, but not to the king of heaven. An example of the close relationship between world leaders and the Roman Church is the funeral of Pope John Paul II. This event is considered the largest gathering of statesmen in history; it included four kings, five queens, and at least seventy presidents and prime ministers.

Countless people, even many believers, continue to think highly of the Roman Church. Instead of widespread condemnation for the many thousands of priests who have molested children, the inhabitants of the earth are intoxicated with her religion and traditions. This is a church *with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her immorality.*” (Revelation 17:2)

Idolatry

Babylon is dressed like a shameless prostitute; she is clothed in purple and scarlet garments and covered with expensive jewelry. However, what really offends God is kept inside a gold cup. *The woman was clothed in purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls, having in her hand a gold cup full of abominations and of the unclean things of her immorality,* (Revelation 17:4). Central to the adulterous behavior of the Roman Church is the veneration (worship) of what is being held inside a gold cup.

Catholic sacraments are the supposed ability of priests to perform miracles. For example, priests are supposedly able to transform bread into the body of Christ. Catholics call this transformation transubstantiation. Catholic doctrine says through transubstantiation,

its chalice contains the literal Body of Christ—and therefore this bread is worshiped as being God. Catholics venerate this bread; they kneel before this bread as if it were God (Exodus 20:4).

The Wrong Rock

The position of Pontifex Maximus, thought by many to have started with Peter, actually began hundreds of years before Christ. Julius Caesar became Pontifex Maximus in 63 BC. Caesar Augustus became Pontifex in 12 BC, and held that position at the time of Christ.

The idea that there should be a Christian Pontiff (Pope) resulted from the misinterpretation of a single scripture. Jesus said, *I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.* (Matthew 16:18) However, the “rock” upon which the true church was built was Jesus, not Peter (Isaiah 26:4).

Peter identified Jesus as the primary rock, the cornerstone of the church.

For this is contained in Scripture:

“BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”
(1 Peter 2:6)

God sends a message to people in this false church; many are authentic believers who have been deceived.

*I heard another voice from heaven, saying,
“Come out of her, my people,
so that you will not participate in her sins
and receive of her plagues;
for her sins have piled up as high as heaven,
and God has remembered her iniquities.* (Revelation 18:4-5)

13

Second Coming

First-century Israelis longed for a redeemer who would destroy the Roman Empire. They turned against Jesus when his salvation provided spiritual deliverance from sin, instead of military deliverance from Rome. However, Jesus will destroy world empires and deliver Israel at his second coming. Christ returns to earth riding a white horse as enemy soldiers are overrunning Jerusalem. As Christ returns the battle shifts from a war against Israel to a war against God. *And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies assembled to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army.* (Revelation 19:19)

From the valley of Armageddon, the nations will attempt to destroy Jesus as he returns. *And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.* (Revelation 19:11-14)

Zechariah foretold that Israel will be on the brink of defeat when Jesus returns. *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not*

be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. (Zechariah 14:2-4)

Jesus does not need to do anything more than speak and his enemies die. He spoke the world into existence, and his words have calmed the storm (John 1:1-3; Mark 4:39). Jesus has authority over everything that has been created (Matthew 28:18). *From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations (Revelation 19:15a). And the rest were killed with the sword which came from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse (Revelation 19:21a). Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8a).*

A wedding celebration occurs when a man and woman become one flesh (Mark 10:8). The future holds a spectacular celebration of those who share an incorruptible, eternal flesh. This feast is called the wedding supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). Jesus spoke of this feast at the last supper; it will be the consummate Passover celebration. *When the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* (Luke 22:14-16)

14

Future Ages

Extraordinary events set the stage just prior to the Millennium. Satan will be thrown into the Abyss for a thousand years. *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years;* (Revelation 20:1-2). With Satan bound sin will be greatly reduced, but not completely eliminated. Sin does not always require a deception or enticement from Satan, but can result from flaws in human nature (James 1:14-15; 1 John 2:16).

John then describes the family of God in heaven. *Then I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was given to them.* (Revelation 20:4a) Believers will be given the authority to judge (1 Corinthians 6:2-3). *And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God,* (Revelation 20:4b). In the end-time story there are references to martyrs, they are to be given special recognition.

Israelis who were martyred while awaiting Christ's return will be resurrected, bringing to life all of God's people: *those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark on their forehead and on their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:4c) Martyrs not belonging to Israel were resurrected from the dead at the last trumpet; at that point the time of salvation being offered to gentiles

ended; only Israelis could obtain salvation after that point. (Romans 11:25-26)

Inserted is a reference to the fate of the damned, which is a break in the story. *The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.* (Revelation 20:5a). That the rest of the dead are not resurrected until the thousand years are ended—refers to the final and largest harvest, which resurrects persons condemned to the lake of fire.

Then the story continues with the good fortune of believers. The “first resurrection” is the resurrection of God’s people, which occurs during six distinct harvests. Those who take part in the first resurrection will reign with Christ during the Millennium. *This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.* (Revelation 20:5b-6)

The first resurrection is for believers and is comprised of six separate harvests. The seventh harvest is a resurrection of the condemned.

	Harvest	Impacts
The First Resurrection	1. Rapture	Philadelphia Church
	2. Rapture	Two Witnesses
	3. Resurrection	Asleep in Christ
	4. Rapture	Left Behind Saints, Tribulation Saints
	5. God’s Wrath	Israeli Survivors
	6. Israeli Resurrection	Israeli Martyrs
The Second Death	7. Great White Throne	The Damned

The Millennium

God restores the earth after the end-time environmental disasters, making it an awesome place to live. Jesus will reign on earth as King.

His people will reign in subordinate roles. People who are born during this time will enjoy a long life, living to be hundreds of years old; there will be meaningful work and great prosperity (Isaiah 65:17-21). The Millennium ends with Satan being released to once again to lead the enemies of God into battle. However, the attempted assault is confronted before even a single skirmish occurs, as fire from heaven destroys those who assemble to attack God's people (Revelation 20:7-9).

Eternal Destiny

The final harvest follows the Millennium. This harvest resurrects people destined for the lake of fire and brings them before Jesus' throne. *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.* (Revelation 20:11-12)

These unfortunate people will stand in total despair before the great white throne of Jesus Christ. Even after being resurrected, this pathetic group is still described as "the dead". Decayed bodies are resurrected in no better condition than at the time of their death. The condemned will have bodies that are constantly dying, but unable to die. Jesus said that the lake of fire is a place *where THEIR WORM DOES NOT DIE, AND THE FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED.* (Mark 9:48) The condemned are also tormented with brimstone, which is a burning sulfur (Revelation 21:8). Organic sulfur is an odor associated with rotten eggs, and sulfur dioxide is a suffocating odor.

The final heaven will be a garden city where God dwells with his people. The tree of life seen the Garden of Eden, will be in this Garden of Jerusalem (Genesis 2:9; Revelation 22:2). *And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as*

a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away."
(Revelation 21:2-4)

APPENDIX

A: Temple Mount

The Israelis erected a tent in the wilderness soon after Moses led Israel out of Egyptian slavery (Exodus 40:1-3). They placed the Ark of the Covenant, which was God's dwelling place on earth, inside that tent. Centuries later Israel moved the ark into a magnificent temple on the Temple Mount. While building this first temple was an initiative of King David, it was King Solomon who oversaw its construction (2 Samuel 7:1-2; 1 Kings 6:1). This project employed a labor force of 180,000 men and required seven years to complete (1 Kings 5:13-15; 1 Kings 6:38).

King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, to include the Temple Mount, and the Israeli people were taken captive in 586 BC (Jeremiah 39:1). Three years later Darius the Mede overthrew the Babylonians and imposed the Medo-Persia Empire (Daniel 5:30-31). Later Cyrus, King of Persia, released a large number of Israelis and instructed those returning to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1:1-3). In 515 BC, the temple was rebuilt; this second building on the Temple Mount became known as the second temple (Ezra 6:15).

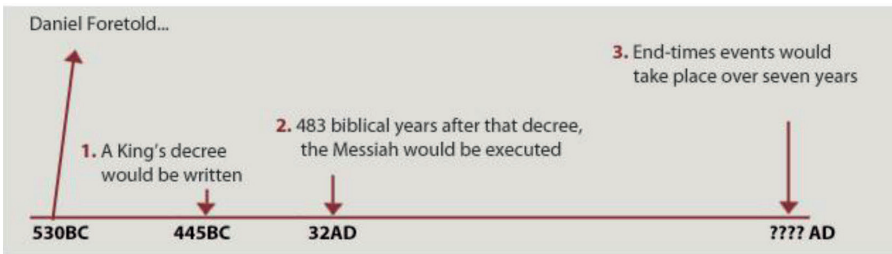
Joseph and Mary dedicated Jesus at this second temple (Luke 2:27). This also is where Jesus' searching parents found him teaching as a young man (Luke 2:41-50). Jesus forcefully cleared profiteering merchants from this temple (John 2:13-16). Jesus and Apostles preached at the temple (John 2:13-16; Acts 3:1).

Because Israel rejected its Messiah, Jesus foretold this temple would be destroyed (Matthew 24:1-2). This occurred when Israel fell to the Roman Army in 70 AD. With the Islamic capture of Jerusalem centuries later, the Dome of the Rock shrine and the Al Aqsa Mosque were built on the Temple Mount. The most visible building on the Temple Mount today is the Dome of the Rock, which is built over a "sacred" rock.

Islam understands that on God's holy mountain, this Temple Mount, that a rock should be honored. Unfortunately, Islam is blinded to the authentic Rock—Jesus himself (Isaiah 26:4).

B: Seven Years

God limited the time allotted to end-time events to seven years. These seven years are part of a larger 490-year timeline that the prophet Daniel described—in just four verses. In the following graph, events (1) and (2) occurred exactly as Daniel foretold in 530 BC.



Daniel 9:24-27	Interpretation
<p>“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place. (Daniel 9:24)</p>	<p>These “weeks” are actually groups of seven years, similar to a decade being a group of ten years. This verse established a 490-year timeline for Israel and the city of Jerusalem, to complete God’s plan for our Age. 70 x 7 years = 490 years</p>
<p>So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. (Daniel 9:25)</p>	<p>From the issuing of King Artaxerxes’ 445 BC decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem, until the Messiah comes to Jerusalem will be 483 years: (7 x 7 years) + (62 x 7 years) = 483 years.*</p>

	The initial 49 years is understood to be the time it took to rebuild Jerusalem.
<i>Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing</i> (Daniel 9:26a)	After the 483 years are completed, the Messiah will be executed.
the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. (Daniel 9:26b)	The people of the future Antichrist will destroy Jerusalem and the second temple; this was an army from the Roman Empire in 70 AD.
And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (Daniel 9:26c)	The end-times will come upon the world like a flood. Suffering will continue to the very end.
<i>And he will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”</i> (Daniel 9:27)	Antichrist will make a seven-year peace treaty with Israel. In the middle of the seven years, he will put an end to the Old Testament practice of sacrifice and offering (yet to be reestablished) at the (yet to be rebuilt) temple. At the temple, he will set up an altar to himself.

* Sir Robert Anderson calculated the dates as being from March 14, 445 BC to April 6, 32 AD. Other historians have come up with different dates. Complicating factors, such as the Jewish calendar not being 365 days per year, make exact calculations impossible. The point is that at the time the 483 years expired only one person claimed to be the Messiah—Jesus of Nazareth.

C: Partial Rapture

This is a response to an unfavorable assessment of the partial rapture. It was posted by a long-standing president of a nationally recognized seminary. The posting correctly states this author “is considered perhaps the world's foremost interpreter of biblical prophecy.”

Observation #1. “... the partial rapture teaching transfers both resurrection and translation from a work of grace to a work of reward for faithfulness.”

Belief in a partial rapture does not mean belief in a works-based eternal salvation, which is always by grace through faith. This is the most common misunderstanding.

Observation #2. “Opposition to the partial rapture point of view springs not only from particular texts but from the broad doctrine of the nature of salvation itself.”

Theologians often fail to separate the reward of an early rapture, from the critical doctrine of being eternally saved by grace, through faith. While both involve rescuing believers, there are obvious differences, and each should be considered separately.

Observation #3. “It is inconceivable if the church is formed by grace that it should be divided by works.”

No, this is not inconceivable. Rewards for works are scriptural and highly individualized. While eternal salvation is by grace, through faith. Any reward beyond salvation, to include participation in a rapture that protects only selected believers, will be specific to each individual.

The church is in many aspects, divided. Examples include denomination and cultural differences. The church is also divided in that while many

are still alive, many have passed into eternity. Accordingly, division in the church should be considered anything but – inconceivable.

Observation #4. “Those translated and those resurrected at the last trump of 1 Corinthians 15:52 are described as “we all” in 1 Corinthians 15:51.”

Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)

The phrase “we will all be changed.” is often used to prove the rapture is for all believers – for the entire church. But there are two end-time raptures, with only this second rapture being a complete rapture of the church.

Observation #5. “According to 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18, those resurrected are described as “the dead in Christ” (v. 16) and the “we” who are caught up are identified as those who “believe that Jesus died and rose again” (v. 14). The explicit teaching of Scripture points to the conclusion that the translation includes all living saints and the resurrection includes all the “dead in Christ.””

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17)

Again, the argument presented is valid if there is only one end-time rapture. These verses describe the second rapture, which is a complete rapture of the church.

The phrase “and remain” is translated “who are left” in thirteen other translations; this refers to the many Christians who are “left behind” after the early rapture. (ESV, ESVUK, NABRE, NET, NIV, NIVUK, NRSV, NRSVA, NRSVACE, NRSVCE, RSV, RSVCE, WEB)

CHARTS

Seven Seals	Description	Seen on earth?
Seal #1 (Revelation 6:1-2)	Angel on a white horse (Spirit of Conquest)	no
Seal #2 (Revelation 6:3-4)	Angel on a red horse (Spirit of War)	no
Seal #3 (Revelation 6:5-6)	Angel on a black horse (Spirit of Famine)	no
Seal #4 (Revelation 6:7-8)	Angel on a pale horse (Spirit of Death)	no
Seal #5 (Revelation 6:9-11)	Martyrs ask God to avenge their blood.	no
Seal #6 (Revelation 6:12-17)	The moon appears covered with blood; people panic.	yes
Early Rapture (Revelation 7)	Rapture of the Philadelphia Church	yes
Seal #7 (Revelation 8:1)	Preparation for seven trumpets	no

Seven Trumpets	Description
Trumpet #1 (Revelation 8:7)	A third of the earth is burned
Trumpet #2 (Revelation 8:8-9)	Fire thrown into the ocean
Trumpet #3 (Revelation 8:10-11)	Contamination of water – Chernobyl
Trumpet #4 (Revelation 8:12)	Darkness covers the earth.
Trumpet #5 (Revelation 9:1-11)	Locusts torture unbelievers for five months
Trumpet #6 (Revelation 9:13-19)	A third of mankind is killed.
Trumpet #7 (Revelation 11:15-19; & 14:14-20)	Preparation for seven bowls of wrath Complete rapture and resurrection of those belonging to Christ Israel harvested, but remains on earth, not raptured

Seven Bowls	Description
Bowl #1 - Land	Sores upon people with the mark of the beast
Bowl #2.- Sea	The sea turns to blood
Bowl #3 - Rivers	Rivers and springs turn into blood
Bowl #4 - Sun	Sun scorches people with intense heat
Bowl #5 - Throne of the beast	Kingdom of the beast is plunged into darkness
Bowl #6 - Euphrates River	River dries to allow armies to cross on march to Armageddon
Bowl #7 - Into the air	Massive earthquakes and hailstones; Rome is destroyed

“Keep Watch” Parable	Conclusion
<p>A man leaving on a journey entrusted his wealth to three servants. One servant buried the money instead of investing it. (Matthew 25:14-27)</p>	<p>Use your abilities and resources</p>
<p>The master placed one of his servants in charge. But this head servant mistreated the other servants. (Matthew 24:45-51)</p>	<p>Take relationships seriously</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How do you treat your spouse, children, and siblings? – How do you treat co-workers and those you supervise? – Are you physically or emotionally abusive?
<p>Ten virgins took lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. But the bridegroom was delayed well into the night. Only those who had taken a sufficient supply of oil were ready when the bridegroom arrived. (Matthew 25:1-13)</p>	<p>Maintain emergency supplies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are you expecting others to provide for you in an emergency?

