

**EVANGELICAL BIBLE COLLEGE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA**



**REDISCOVERING THE FAITH OF THEIR  
FATHER ABRAHAM**

**(The Arab Nations in the Latter Days)**

by

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**[BOOK 121]**

**Revised Easter 2021**

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## **WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?**

Professor Simon Greenleaf was one of the most eminent lawyers of all time. His "Laws of Evidence" for many years were accepted by all States in the United States as the standard methodology for evaluating cases. He was teaching law at a university in the United States when one of his students asked Professor Greenleaf if he would apply his "Laws of Evidence" to evaluate an historical figure. When Greenleaf agreed to the project he asked the student who was to be the subject of the review. The student replied that the person to be examined would be Jesus Christ. Professor Greenleaf agreed to undertake the examination of Jesus Christ and as a result, when he had finished the review, Simon Greenleaf personally accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.

Professor Greenleaf then sent an open letter to all jurists in the United States jurists saying in part "I personally have investigated one called Jesus Christ. I have found the evidence concerning him to be historically accurate. I have also discovered that Jesus Christ is more than a human being, he is either God or nothing and having examined the evidence it is impossible to conclude other than he is God. Having concluded that he is God I have accepted him as my personal Saviour. I urge all members of the legal profession to use the "Laws of Evidence" to investigate the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and if you find that he is wrong expose him as a faker but if not consider him as your Saviour and Lord"

## **HOW CAN I BE SAVED?**

### **Salvation is available for all members of the human race.**

Salvation is the most important undertaking in all of God's universe. The salvation of sinners is never on the basis of God's merely passing over or closing His eyes to sin. God saves sinners on a completely righteous basis consistent with the divine holiness of His character. This is called grace. It relies on God so man cannot work for salvation, neither can he deserve it. We need to realise that the creation of this vast unmeasured universe was far less an undertaking than the working out of God's plan to save sinners.

However the acceptance of God's salvation by the sinner is the most simple thing in all of life. One need not be rich, nor wise, nor educated. Age is no barrier nor the colour of one's skin. The reception of the enormous benefits of God's redemption is based upon the simplest of terms so that there is no one in all this wide universe who need be turned away.

### **How do I become a Christian?**

There is but one simple step divided into three parts. First of all I have to recognise that I am a sinner (Romans 3:23; 6:23; Ezekiel 18:4; John 5:24).

Secondly, realising that if I want a relationship with Almighty God who is perfect, and recognising that I am not perfect, I need to look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the only Saviour (I Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:6; John 3:16).

Thirdly, by the exercise of my own free will I personally receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour, believing that He died personally for me and that He is what He claims to be in an individual, personal and living way (John 1:12; 3:36; Acts 16:31; 4:12).

### **The results of Salvation**

The results of this are unbelievably wonderful:

My sins are taken away (John 1:29),

I possess eternal life now (I John 5:11,12),

I become a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17),

The Holy Spirit takes up His residence in my life (I Corinthians 6:19),

And I will never perish (John 10:28-30).

This truthfully is life's greatest transaction. This is the goal of all people; this is the ultimate of our existence. We invite and exhort any reader who has not become a Christian by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ to follow these simple instructions and be born again eternally into God's family (Matthew 11:28; John 1:12; Acts 4:12; 16:31).

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NOTE - We encourage you to freely copy and distribute these materials to your Pastor and friends. You only need written permission from EBCWA if you intend using the materials in publications for resale. We encourage wide distribution freely! Have your Bible open as you read this Manual, and look up each bold text verse quoted. Many verses will be quoted more than once and discussed a number of times – that is deliberate – we must sit with these texts and see them from several angles to get all that the Lord needs us to understand today. The days are short – be alert believer.

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- (b) Gulf States, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (Biblical name = Kedar)  
Habakkuk 3:1-7  
Matthew 24:44-46, and 25:31-46,  
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- (c) Jordan (Biblical names = Ammon, Moab, Edom)  
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On **11 September of 2020** the "**Abraham Accords**" were announced as having been agreed between UAE and Israel, laying the ground for the normalizing of relationships between the Arab and Israeli nations. Other Sunni Arab nations have joined the Accord and signed up since that month. The Abraham Accord is in the words of the USA State Department, "a declaration of peace, cooperation, and constructive diplomatic and friendly relations..."

This book, 121, written over ten years before this historic event had made God's policy clear, for it had expounded on the biblical position of the Israeli and Arab nations, and the Bible was always clear – they would come back together again in the "last days" before the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe God's Word, not our eyes, but in the Abraham Accord we see God's Word being fulfilled in front of our eyes against the expectation of all who doubted the promises of the Word of God.

As we face these last days before the Lord's Return, and as we await the imminent traumatic fulfilment of the prophetic words of **Ezekiel 38-39**, we give thanks that we see the Lord's Plan working out before our very eyes. The days are short before the end brethren – so let us work the work we are called to by the Lord while it is still called "today". **Hebrews 3:7-15.**

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## THE DESTINY OF THE PRESENTLY MOSLEM NATIONS TO THE EAST OF ISRAEL

(THEIR DESTINY IS TO FIND BLESSING IN SUPPORTING THOSE IN THE GREAT TRIBULATION PERIOD, WHO HAVE SEEN THAT JESUS (ISA) IS INDEED THEIR MESSIAH AND WHO BELIEVE THAT HIS RETURN IS IMMINENT.)

### SECTION 1      **Overview of the Topic**

The present Arab World to the North, East, and South of Israel could not have been spoken of as positive to Israel before September 2020, and many factions within them remain suicidally bent upon Israel's destruction. I have spoken to many people about this through the decades and always been told that in their expressed hatred of Israel they are "following company policy"; that is, the indoctrination of their school system and media is to hate Israel and her allies. Most intelligent Arabs know that there is something fatally flawed in this, as it has not done the Arab nations any good since 1948 to fight the Israelis. There has been no victory, and the hand of God is clear in this fact to them. Such things were not spoken aloud until recent days, or acknowledged apart from quiet and private conversations, but now, with relief many Arabs are embracing their Jewish brethren in Abraham, as they stand against the threats of Iran and the Shiite.

Daniel 9:26 and then Zechariah 12:10ff gives us the context for the major changes in present attitudes that we see occurring before our eyes now, and Ezekiel 38-39 may also provide an answer as to how things change from today's Middle East, with Iranian and Shiite hatred of Arab and Jew, to the days when the nations of Jordan, Saudi-Arabia, and the Gulf States and the Israeli people all work together, and later welcome back Y'Shua/Jesus/Isa at his Second Advent. These passages above are startling and yet inescapable – things have already shifted 180 degrees from where they were when this book was originally written before 2010. The Bible has always been clear, that the sons of Abraham (Arab and Jew) will join together to fight the last great evil empire in the Great Tribulation, and it will be a Western/Roman one! Daniels visions made it clear at the beginning of the first great persecuting Empire that the last would be Western.

Judgment is announced over most nations around Israel at some time in history, due to their rejection of the Plan of God regarding Israel, and their hatred of the Jewish people. These judgments are often historically time-specific, but are the only passages often quoted by Bible Commentators, making it appear that the Arabs are destined for judgment rather than blessing. There is however another group of passages that have hope in their midst; and they speak of the blessing upon the Arab people of these presently Moslem nations because they support the Israeli people in the "latter days", and work with them against the evils of the Western Anti-Christ.

The first thing we realise when we look at the prophetic words about this great and last "man of sin", the Anti-Christ, is that his political power is based in the old Roman Empire, and that he centres his religious work on the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem. It appears to be already built when he appears, or perhaps he is a prime mover in establishing it. Possibly he gains world wide power and influence because of his bringing peace in the Middle East, and the temple sitting beside the two mosques is a visible sign of his great feat! Only at the time will people fully understand these things. Either way this man is one that centres all Arab and Jewish attention upon his person and actions. As we will see in this study, it appears that his idolatry at the start of the Great Tribulation provokes the last great spiritual revival for all the "Sons of Abraham" before the return of Jesus at his Second Advent.

All hell literally breaks lose at this point, 3 ½ years before Jesus' Second Advent, with a "crazy" action by the Anti-Christ, world ruler figure. Anti-Christ sets up an image of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem – requiring worship of himself - and that is idolatry – a belief system hated by Moslems and Jews alike. It is this lunatic act by the Anti-Christ which opens the door in the midst of the Tribulation period, that begins the three and one half year Great Tribulation period. All the greatest judgments upon the earth begin at or around that point. **Revelation Chapter 8 and following.** Once again, I note, those at the time will be able to count down the days, but our timing sequences are guess work at best.

Daniel is the first one to whom this truth is partially revealed. He sees the ultimate satanic "man of sin" who unleashes the greatest attack upon Israel and godly people worldwide and he receives the first instructions for those who then see the truth about him. He is the first to give specific instructions to the people who suddenly see this man's true nature, and Jesus himself will pick this up and repeat it in Matthew 24.

### Daniel 7:8, 20-27, 8:9-12, 11:36-45.

It is revealed to Daniel that the Jews of those terrible days will find refuge in Ammon, Moab and Edom (Modern Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Negev, and Sinai). Daniel 11:41-45. He also sees that there will be a godly remnant from these Arab nations that assist the Jewish refugees and keep them safe from the power of the Anti-Christ. By being kind to believers in the One True God at that time the Arabs of the nations around Israel will be blessed and receive their entry into the Lord's Millennial Kingdom. Psalms 102:5-6, Matt 3:7-10, 25:34-46.

Zechariah, the young prophet of the Exile's return, had been taught by Daniel, and he is given more prophetic words about these Latter days/End Times for Israel and the surrounding nations. **Zechariah 12:10, 13:1-9, 14:1ff.**

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Some earlier prophets had also seen, that even though each of these ancient Arab states was judged due to their treatment of Jews at various times (especially in the days of Nebuchadnezzar), they are all blessed in the end. Some prophets had revealed to them from the Lord, that these nations would later have a last opportunity to show goodness to Israel, and that would lead to redemption for their people in the End Times. The Bible is clear, the sons of Abraham will form the last great alliance against evil in the last days, and many Arab people will enter glory because of their bravery at that time. We are habituated by the fall of the Berlin Wall and other things into thinking that the West is the “godly” group and the Moslem Arab nations are the “dodgy” group! The Bible is very clear that this is **not correct at all**, and we must be corrected by Scripture. The Roman Empire originated West is the inheritor of the mantle of Nebuchadnezzar, and so is the seat of the final world dictator, just as Nebuchadnezzar was the first!

Jesus gave very specific instructions, running parallel to Daniel and Zechariah to help all believers in the “end times”. The believers who see the Anti-Christ’s image set up in the temple are to flee to the mountains in the very places identified earlier by Daniel, and they will be saved there by helpful Arab believers in the one true God, just as the Jewish Church was in 67 AD when they fell Jerusalem. Anti-Christ’s Idolatry makes the Jewish and Arab world see with 100% clarity that this man is indeed satanic, and that Jesus/Y’Shua/Isa is indeed the Son of God who will be returning in 3 ½ years to judge the unbelieving world! Jesus (Y’Shua to the Jewish world, Isa to the Arab world) will unite all believers amongst Arabs and Jews throughout the Middle East to oppose the Anti-Christ’s rulership.

The final great battle before the Second Advent (the so called “Armageddon Campaign”) is not just against Israel, it is against the Arab peoples as well, exactly as the earlier assault of Iran and her allies is against Israel and the Sunni Arab World. The Bible is clear that all the sons of Abraham are attacked by this “man of sin” and they are all delivered by Jesus return. The earlier attack described in Ezekiel 38-39 is the final “scene setter” before the Tribulation Period, and it is at the end of this time period that the “Armageddon Campaign” is launched by Satan’s people. God delivers the “Sons of Abraham” firstly from Iran and her Allies, and then later also, as the final campaign of evil ends with Jesus’ return.

At these two turning points in human history, all Anti-Semitism is challenged by the truth of God’s deliverance of the “Sons of Abraham”, and many from amongst the Arab peoples support their Jewish relatives through Abraham. The Arab world’s hatred of idolatry makes the behaviour of Anti-Christ in the last days even more inexplicable, but we do have precedents for this in Adolf Hitler and Antiochus Epiphanes; both of whom did things based upon their supreme arrogance, and doomed to fail. Satan will give the Anti-Christ more power this time than ever before, and the idol/image he sets up will even be animated, **Revelation 13:15-18**, but it is a doomed plot that Satan’s arrogance hatches against God’s Plan. It is Satan’s arrogance that defeats him and his people every time, and like all who believe they are perfect, he does not learn from history! **Ezekiel 28:1-19**. The earlier defeat of Iran and her allies is described in the same way by the prophet – they come in satanic confidence and arrogance against the Middle East and they are judged and die there.

Hear the words of Jesus clearly in **Matthew 24:4-31**. This passage is very clear indeed, and will certainly be so to people of that latter day.

As Daniel was told however, **Daniel 12:8-13**, even though he has seen the events prophetically, and recorded what he has seen, he will not have full understanding of it; for it will only be the people of these Last Days that will be able to weave all these passage together and fully understand them. Only then will they see the actual events and have the key to understand all the words of the various prophets. It will be crucial in those dark days for believers to have a good reading knowledge of the prophets, for only then will they spot the key facts and apply them for their own and others safety.

Let us be warned by these verses – we mustn’t be dogmatic ourselves at this time before the Iranian attack, let alone the revelation of the Anti-Christ! Toay we are all simply guessing at possible sequences of events, and must remain humble in our assertions; only those at the time will fully know these things. The lives of believers at that time will depend upon this knowledge. Our job today is to suggest the things that we see emerge from the Scriptures and be humble in our assertions. Our job is to sow the seed that will germinate in that day and emphasize the need for the passages included in this book to be studied and re-studied in those dark days.

There are some details that we cannot fit into any neat sequence of events we draw up, and the words of warning to Daniel need to be remembered by us now. We must speak what we see in the Scriptures, but do so with humility, not arrogant certainty regarding the time sequences, for the warning to Daniel applies to us. The major event that is prophesied by **Ezekiel in chapters 38-39** is one case in point where this humility principle needs to be applied.

**Ezekiel 38-39** (Refer Page 160ff below) describes an invasion of Israel that is initially successful and kills many people, but which ends with a massive counter strike leading to the deaths of almost all the invading army. The dead take over seven months to bury, and even then there are body parts popping up years later. The equipment of the enemy army is available for fuel, and is used as such for the next seven years in Israel. The description of the events and aftermath do not obviously tie into any description of the Tribulation period, nor do they naturally fit at the end of the Millennium, as then space-time ends, no-one is burning fuel! The passage has not been fulfilled at any other time in history to date!

This invasion features an alliance of Persia/Iran-Old South Soviet republics-Turkey and Ethiopia, and/or Libya/Somalia. The West, the Arab Gulf States, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia appear to oppose the invasion supporting Israel. This event may be the “beginning of sorrows” spoken of by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 24. It may also open the door for the

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building of the temple on the Temple Mount, alongside the mosques, and with Arab support. The nations that attack Israel may also threaten the other sons of Abraham and attack them! My suspicion is that Ezekiel 38-39 refers to the last play of Shiite Iran against the Sunni Arabs and Israel, and the defeat of this evil alliance is so thorough, but the carnage beforehand so significant, that Sunni Arab-Israeli Enmity is over, for they have stood together against Iran. We will only know when it occurs, but it will occur well before the Tribulation begins, and appears to set the stage for it. The Abraham Accord of September 2020 opens the door for the formal military alliance against Iran that Ezekiel describes.

This prophecy is a good example of the principle behind **Daniel 12:8-13**. It may occur at/around the start of the Tribulation period, although it is baffling if this is the case, as to why it is not referred to by John in Revelation. It most certainly is **not** the "Gog-Magog" rebellion of **Revelation 20:7-10**, as this rebellion is crushed by the fire of God and then time itself ends. This future yet event will be a key one in setting the stage for the later arrival of the Anti-Christ.

## **SECTION 2**      **God's Prophetic Words relating to the Arab Nations around Israel.**

Significant other Prophecies that have reference to the various Arab nations are as follows:

**Saudi Arabia** (Biblical names = Dedan, Midian, Arabia)

**Isaiah 11:11-17**: This is a prophecy that may have reference at the time of the collapse of Mystery/New Babylon – which I would then take to be a parallel reference to **Jeremiah 51:63-64**, and **Revelation 18:1ff**. Ancient Babylon did not "fall" it decayed, but Mystery/New Babylon (not required to be on the same site) will fall catastrophically in the last days of the Great Tribulation period.

**Isaiah 60:1-10**: This also appears to be a reference to events at the end of the Great Tribulation period. Both these prophecies appear to link into Ezekiel 27-28. Arabia is clearly involved in the events of Ezekiel 38-39 fighting with Israel.

**Ezekiel 27:21, 28:1-19**: The "Prince of Tyre" is clearly a portrait of Satan, and the Anti-Christ's activity at the time of the Great Tribulation is clearly indicated as part of these prophetic words. Both Arabia and the Gulf States are seen to oppose him and their lands do not appear to be under his direct control at any point. The seed to their later opposition to the Anti-Christ's power base may begin in their opposition to the invasion of Israel described in **Ezekiel 38-39**, which clearly is also opposed by the nations later at the centre of Anti-Christ's rulership (Old Roman Empire people).

**Isaiah 42:10-12**: This also appears to be a reference to the same time period, at the end of the Great Tribulation period, and indicates that many from this great Arab nation will welcome back the Lord Jesus (Isa to the Arab world) at his Second Advent. This indicates their salvation through this period and their saving of many of God's Gentile and Israeli people from the evils of Anti-Christ's people.

**Gulf States**, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates (Biblical name = Kedar)

**Habakkuk 3:1-7**: These places are blessed, as are all the sons of Abraham, as they support and protect believers who are being persecuted by the satanically inspired enemies of God. They inherit the blessing of Abraham, by reflecting the faith of Abraham and standing with their relatives in that faith. **Matthew 24:44-46, and 25:31-46**, also refer to this. The Gulf States are blessed at the Lord Jesus return and the great airport at Dubai may be a major staging post for the Jewish people's return, as a vast highway now exists from Dubai towards Jerusalem. **Isaiah 60:1-10, especially verse 8** appears to refer to the arrival of vast numbers by air.

**Jordan** (Biblical names = Ammon, Moab, Edom)

Because these three ancient nations rejoiced over the terrible judgments visited upon Israel 605-586 BC they were themselves judged by Nebuchadnezzar.

**Jeremiah 49:1ff, Ezekiel 21:20-32, 25:2-14.** They rejoiced over Israel's misery under the Babylonians, and so they would suffer a very similar fate under the same people a few years later.

**Jeremiah 27:1-11**: They would believe that they could escape judgment, but their prophets would be false, and they would all suffer, just as Israel had suffered.

The peoples of this land had a mixed destiny at the time of the Babylonian Captivity; those who mocked Israel and abused them were judged by God by means of the Babylonians. Those who helped the fleeing Israelites were blessed because of their kindness. **Jeremiah 40:11-12**

The Moabites had a kinship bond to the house of David, for Ruth was a Moabitess. Their kindness in the days of the Babylonian Invasion would prefigure their destiny in future days. This is also the case with each of the Arab nations to the East of Israel; they are all the sons of Abraham, and may be blessed if they live like him, in faith and righteousness towards God's servants. **John 8:37-44, Romans 4:1-16.**

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Pride, arrogance, and idolatry had destroyed them in the past – **Isaiah 16:6, Jeremiah 48:26, 42, Amos 8:1-14**. God hates idolatry and all who support Anti-Christ's use of it are judged with him. **Revelation 19:11ff**

At the end the Lord God will judge all nations that have been cruel towards Israel and believers generally. **Jeremiah 25:17ff**. There is however a restoration of those of these lands who support and assist the refugees from Israel in the "latter days" of the Great Tribulation period. **Jeremiah 48:47**. They learn from their past finally, and support the Lord's people who seek refuge amongst them.

**Daniel 11:41-45**: Jordan will escape the direct rule of the Anti-Christ in the Great Tribulation period. It becomes the refuge of many Jews who flee the land to escape the Anti-Christ.

**Amos 7:7-9**: The plumb line is laid across all the nations, and they are judged according to righteousness; those who have behaved righteously towards the refugees who stood against the Anti-Christ are saved by Jesus' Second Advent.

**Psalms 60:5-12**: Deliverance of people in the last days is according to the effort they put in to assist the refugees from Anti-Christ. If they gave assistance to them they are saved by the Lord and blessed; if they worked against God's people they are judged by the Lord and do not enter the Millennial Kingdom.

**Isaiah 63:1-6, Amos 9:8-15, Matthew 25:31-46, Revelation 19:11ff**

The Great Tribulation ends with the Lord's Second Advent, and he deals with the enemy in and around old Moab and Edom before arriving at Jerusalem. Those believers who are hiding there are rescued first and then Jesus arrives at Jerusalem to deliver the believers holding out around there.

## **SECTION 3 Summary of Key Texts Relating to Events of the "Latter Days"**

a. **"Flee to the Mountains"**. The Lord's instructions to believers of the Tribulation period, when Anti-Christ sets up his statue in the Temple in Jerusalem

Daniel 9:26  
Zechariah 12:10, 13:1-9, 14:1ff  
Matthew 24:9-18

b. **The "Man of Sin"** The Anti-Christ (Western Political Leader of the future Tribulation Period) fore-seen

Daniel 7:8, 20-27  
Daniel 8:9-12  
Daniel 11:36-45  
2 Thessalonians 2:1-10  
Revelation 13:1-8

c. **Satan is Behind the Anti-Christ**

Ezekiel 28:1-19  
Matthew 24:4-31  
Daniel 12:8-13 Daniel is told that these things relate to far later days than his own.

d. **The Blessing to the Arab World** (when they help the Believing Refugees of that day fleeing Anti-Christ)

Psalms 60:5-12,  
Psalms 102:5-6  
Matthew 3:7-10  
Matthew 25:31-46

e. **Specific Arab Nations to be Blessed**

Isaiah 11:11-17, 16:6  
Isaiah 42:10-12  
Isaiah 60:1-10  
Isaiah 63:1-6  
Jeremiah 25:17ff  
Jeremiah 27:1-11  
Jeremiah 48:26, 42, 47  
Jeremiah 49:1  
Ezekiel 21:20-32  
Ezekiel 25:2-14  
Ezekiel 27:21  
Ezekiel 28:1-19  
Habakkuk 3:1-7  
Amos 7:7-9



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Amos 8:1-14  
Amos 9:8-15

- f. The End Comes – Y'Shua/Jesus/Isa Returns in Power to Rule the Earth  
Revelation 19:11ff plus many texts above.

## **SECTION 4      How the Story Begins – With Abraham – the “Father of Faith” for all believers**

### **a. ABRAHAM – Our Father – (In and Through our Faith where we stand as he stood)**

Abraham is father genetically of the majority of the Arabs and the Jews, having given birth to Ishmael, Isaac, Zimran, Jokshan, Medan, Midian, Ishbak, and Shuah. All the Arab and Jewish inhabitants of the lands of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and the other Arabic Gulf States, Jordan, and parts of Syria believe they trace their lineage back to Abraham. His descendents have been truly blessed by association with their godly forefather. The certainty of blessing for these peoples is however tied to a spiritual principle that the Apostle Paul spells out in **Galatians 3:7**.

“Know you therefore, that those who are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham”.

Biology brings blessing by association with this man who received great and unique promises from God, but sharing his spiritual faith brings the greater spiritual blessings in time and eternity.

1. SCRIPTURE Genesis 11:26 - 25:10; Acts 7:2-8, Galatians 3:5-18, Hebrews 11:8-19.

#### 2. BIOGRAPHY

A descendant of Shem and son of Terah, who was born in Ur of the Chaldees about 2030 BC. Known as Abram (father of high and windy places) he was renamed Abraham (father of many nations) (Genesis 17:5) prior to the birth of Isaac. Known as a friend of God (2 Chronicles 20:7) he left Ur at the command of God (Genesis 12:1). He was told to leave his kindred, but he took with him his father Terah and his nephew Lot. He settled for a while in Haran (the dried up place) until his father died (Genesis 11:32). Entering the promised land he graciously allowed his nephew Lot to have the choicest grazing land for his cattle (Genesis 13:8-11) and was instrumental in releasing Lot from the spoils of the kings who attacked Sodom (Genesis 14). Abraham's faith was tested by worry in Genesis 15 and he took his future into his own hands with the birth of Ishmael through Hagar the maidservant (Genesis 16). After both Abraham and Sarah were past the age of child-bearing, Abraham was told he would have a son Isaac (laughter) (Genesis 18:10-15). Isaac was born (Genesis 21:2) and grew up to his adolescence. Abraham was told to sacrifice his miracle child Isaac (Genesis 22:2). Isaac bore the wood up Mt Moriah and was about to be killed when Abraham's faith was confirmed by the provision of the ram in a thicket (Genesis 22:10-13). Abraham died at the age of 175 (Genesis 25:7), after fathering several other sons to Keturah, and was buried in Mamre (Genesis 25:9), which is modern Hebron.

#### 3. EVALUATION

Abraham's faith is seen in many areas of his life:

- a) He left the wealth, religion, political stability, and security of Ur of the Chaldees (Genesis 11:32).
- b) He went to a new and wild frontier land (Genesis 12:1-3).
- c) His first act was to build an altar (Genesis 12:8).
- d) He trusted God for provision (Genesis 13:8,9,18).
- e) Abraham pursued Lot and rescued him even though he had only 318 men under arms (Genesis 14:14). He saw that one man with God is superior to thousands with evil guiding them.
- f) Abraham used faith to resist fear and doubt (Genesis 15:5-6).
- g) He had faith that provision would be made for Isaac (Genesis 22:8).
- h) He recognised that God had provided (Jehovah Jireh) (Genesis 22:14).
- i) He had faith that a bride would be miraculously provided for Isaac from his own people (Genesis 24:3,4).

#### 4. PRINCIPLES

- a) The whole process of the genuine believer's life starts and depends on faith (Romans 3:28).
- b) It takes faith to become a missionary (Genesis 12:4; Hebrews 11:8).
- c) Abraham's faith caused him to put God first (Genesis 12:8; Hebrews 11:10).
- d) Faith in God is reflected in a gracious attitude (Galatians 5:23).
- e) Faith provides courage in time of danger, especially in relation to war (Psalm 18:39).
- f) Knowledge of the Scriptures, doctrines and the principles applied by faith are a cure for worry (Genesis 15:6; Psalm 43:5).
- g) Even in hopeless situations, God provides. Faith seeks and causes comfort in those who are in great difficulty (Psalm 18:6).
- h) Faith looks to God as the great provider for His children (Matthew 6:26).
- i) Faith is the only acceptable form of relationship between man and God as it is the only form of perception which has no human merit (Romans 3:27).
- j) Faith gives confidence in one's future and the future of one's family (Deuteronomy 5:10).
- k) With faith everything is possible (Matthew 17:20).

## b. Abraham's Descendants Play Out A Deadly Drama in The "Last Days" leading into the Tribulation Period

In this study we will explore the passages from the Holy Scriptures that cast light upon the destiny of Abraham's descendants, as they walk by faith in increasingly dark times. Our focus is especially upon the fate of the Arab and Jewish descendants of Abraham in the last seven years of this present age of world history, when the Christian Church is gone, and the time called "Jacob's Trouble" begins. Jeremiah 30:7. This time of tribulation for any who come to faith in God, ends with three and a half years of what is called the "Great Tribulation" period. This is a time when Satan does his worst against Israel and any individual and nation who worships the one true God. He declares war upon the Jewish people, just as the satanically inspired Antiochus Epiphanes and Hitler have done before, and in doing that he declares war upon all who believe in the one true God and hate idolatry. He declares war upon Arab and Jew together.

The Anti-Christ's rise begins well with a steady rise of influence and power. The Bible is very clear about certain events, but others will only be clear when events give the clues to enable the text to be understood. What is clear, is that after many years of Middle Eastern conflict and uncertainty the Anti-Christ brings about a firm peace treaty that promises to secure peace and prosperity for the Middle East. The Bible prophecies that this is however a sham and a deception, and when the Anti-Christ breaks his treaty with both Arab and Jew by setting up his idol in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, his pretence at being the peace maker is exposed. His ultimately suicidal act in demanding self worship will produce a unity of purpose amongst the believing descendants of Abraham to protect each other in these last dark days before the Second Advent of Jesus (Isa to the Arab world, Y'Shua to the Jewish world).

We will examine the words of the great prophetic voices from the Revelation of God's Prophetic teaching contained in the Bible, beginning with the inspired words of Moses about Abraham's life and the promises of God made directly to him. We will then explore the other prophetic voices about Abraham's Faith recorded in later prophets of Israel, and by the earliest apostles of the Christian Church.

We are asking the question, "What is it to have faith like Abraham had?" We are seeking an understanding of this man and his faith, for he is the mentor that believers need in all ages, but especially in the terrible last days before Jesus' Second Advent. In these days after the "Abraham Accord" of September 2020, we certainly want to understand this, for we need to challenge all our Jewish and Arab brethren to look to Abraham as their mentor, and Jesus as their Saviour.

## c. Prophetic Words About Abraham from Moses' Records in Genesis

### (i) GENESIS 12:1-3

**1. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: 2 And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: 3 And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."**

### REFLECTION

We are not told how the Lord God spoke into Abram's life. God speaks in different ways at different times to different people, meeting the need of each person in the best way to secure that person's understanding and obedience. Hebrews 1:1-2, 2 Peter 1:20-22.

*"Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.*

*2 Peter 2: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."*

God speaks into Abram's life, and orders him to move from all he has known, and go into the unknown. He is to leave all the security he has known, and to separate from the social, commercial, political, and religious life that he has grown up with and head into a wild and frontier land. The direction is apparently quite specific, as verse 7 makes it clear he has arrived at the place the Lord told him to go.

Moses is careful in his work with the clay tablets that he has received with this detail upon them, and records simply what is there, likely word for word in this case. Abram was told more than he records on the tablets, and from the context we can tell at times that both Abraham and Moses had more information, but selected only the key points to record. These men were moved by the Spirit of the one true God, and so recorded only what was of importance for later generations; giving enough information to provide evidence for us to have their faith. If they had told all that occurred the world would not be big enough to hold the libraries of the faith and works of these great believers. John 20:30-31, 21:25.

*"John 20:30. And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life*

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*through his name. Chapter 21:25: And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen”*

Economy of words was the norm from the days of the Akkadian writing upon clay tablets until papyrus becomes more freely available, and even then no words were wasted in correspondence. Clay was used to record material right up until the fourth century of our own era, with broken pottery often used for letters and lists in the Roman period. With this in mind, we will see that unbelieving liberal attacks upon the Biblical record are often arguments from silence in the text, and as such are illegitimate; it betrays a lack of understanding on the part of the critic. The minimum of material was recorded, and so we must be careful and cautious in our deductions and extrapolations from what we have before us.

Let us look closely at the commands and promises here.

1. Get out of your country.
2. Leave your father's house.
3. Separate from your extended family.
4. Go to a land that I will show you.

If Abram is obedient to these four commands then, the Lord promises four things.

1. I will make of you a great nation
2. I will greatly bless you, and exult your name.
3. I will curse/judge those who curse you.
4. All the peoples of the earth will be blessed “in you”.

Abram is told bluntly and directly, “get out of your country”. It is an equivalent command to “Flee!” From the study of earlier chapters in Genesis of the culture and religion of his people, we can see that paganism was strongly entrenched. We could even go as far as to say it appears that Ur was “Satan’s stronghold” at this time. 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, Revelation 2:13. Abram’s land was prosperous and strong, but was corrupt in its wealth, and deceptive in its religion. It was the place of prosperity, tranquillity and also of distraction, and had he stayed there, there would have been no banner of truth unfurled, no light to the world. **Acts 7:1-4, and Hebrews 11:8-10** both quote the Genesis passage before us and praise Abram’s faith for stepping way beyond what others would have done at this time in history, where cultural expectation demanded that you stay with your own people, and worship only as your ancestors had done.

The Biblical record, from the beginning to the end, demands that for all who wish to serve the one true God, that our “country”, to which we owe allegiance, is to be heaven, not any place with a flag down here upon the earth. We may love our physical country, but our love for our land is to be tempered by our love for the Lord God, and our desire to serve Him and do his work. We are called, like Abram, to at times leave aside loyalty to our nation state, and love the Lord and his work alone, and leave all that in the natural man we value, and hold to and serve spiritual realities alone. Psalms 45:10-11, Luke 14:26-33, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

*“Psalms 45:10. Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;*

*11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.*

**Luke 14:26.** *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.*

*27 And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple*

**2 Corinthians 6:14.** *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

*15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?*

*16 And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Ch 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”*

To leave your father’s house was a thing unheard of in Abraham’s day and age. At this time most people grew up, lived, and died within twenty five kilometres from their place of birth. Unless catastrophe led to their enslavement, or they were merchants, people did not leave their home village and travel anywhere. They stayed within the bonds of family and kinship. To leave your father, and take authority over your own destiny, rather than accept his was a revolutionary concept that would have set fear in the hearts of all rulers and priests.

Abram needed to leave Ur, but to head in a different direction than his father was to rebel against the very order, stability and structure of the City State of his day. To leave his father’s religion, and adopt a new one was a thing unheard of. God was asking Abram to move beyond a point that no man had dared cross for years. Godly men and woman had kept true monotheism alive through all the years since the flood, but each generation had declined, and by Abram’s day there were few who stood where the Lord had ordered Adam and later Noah to stand. Genesis 3:14-23, 4:25-26, 8:20-9:17.

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Abram's extended family will go along with him, but they will stay in the great trading city of Haran. Abram will leave them, his extended family, behind in Haran, although he will return there, for although they are not as committed to following the Lord as he is, they are still monotheists and hold the ways of Seth and the other earlier saints and prophets. Abram will not have his children marry pagans, but only those who hold to the truths maintained by the godly line from Adam. 2 Corinthians 6:14ff (above).

Abram does know with absolute certainty where he is going, for he heads north rather than south, east or west, but the time frame of the revelation he received as to the exact final destination is hidden from us. It may be he found the direction as Paul was to two thousand years later at Troas, by dreams, or visions. Acts 16:6-12. Abram had to listen to God, and heed the direction received. He had to listen and pray daily as we do. He delayed in Haran, but he did not return to Ur. There was delay, but it was not fatal. God is gracious to us and knows our weaknesses, and does not push us too far or fast for our faith. God strengthens us through genuine faith based upon facts, never fantasy. He never over-extends us. Psalms 103:14. Let us remember the holy Character of God, and his grace and mercy towards man.

***"Psalms 103:10-17. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.***

*11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.*

*12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.*

*13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

*14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.*

*15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.*

*16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.*

*17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."*

The promises accompanying obedience are significant ones, but are further out than Abram's life will see. He is challenged to see beyond the confines of his own life, even though that is a long and prosperous one. Abram does not live to see the fullness of the promises, but he sees the first phase come through again and again. Notice this carefully, for the Lord has made promises that apply to all true believers, some of which we will see working out in daily life, but others will only be seen fully when we stand with the Lord in heaven itself and look back at time.

We are challenged by Abram to have what we can call "the eternal life perspective", and not judge things according to time alone, by in accordance with eternal values. What we see is to be modified always by what God tells us we will see later! Paul captures this when speaking of the Lord Jesus resurrection and it's significance for a Christian's perspective on the things of this life and the eternal realities that he call us to focus upon. 1 Corinthians 15:16-23, Galatians 3:13-14.

**1 Corinthians 15:16-23** *"For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised:*

*17 And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.*

*18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.*

*19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.*

*20 But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.*

*21 For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead.*

*22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

*23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming."*

**Galatians 3:13** *"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*

*14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."*

Abram will have prosperity, although it will be of a different sort than he would have had in Ur, and he will have a name that brings respect amongst those he walks amongst, although that too will be different than he would have had in Ur. In Ur he would have been great, powerful, rich, and comfortable but eventually he would have disappeared from history as the others from that once great city did. In his day his neighbours would have thought he had made the wrong choice and yet he is eternally blessed, and was blessed in time also. Just like Abram, we all select our source and type of fame and prosperity by the choices of life path we make in this life. Our choices make us either like Abram, or like those he left behind in Ur, and later in Haran!

Pause and ask yourself right now, by your choices, have you selected out company that is godly and focused upon eternal things? Do you have friends who honour God and praise your name for godly reasons? Do you have spiritual prosperity, so people praise God for you? This is the reputation Abram had, and this is the reputation we need to seek or desire. It is the praise of good men and women we need to be seeking, not the approval of those who are doomed for the Lake of Fire! We are not here to be the wealthiest people in the cemetery. Hear the words of Jesus on this.

***"Matthew 25:31-46. When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:***

*32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:*

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33 *And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.*

34 *Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:*

35 *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:*

36 *Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

37 *Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?*

38 *When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?*

39 *Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?*

40 *And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

41 *Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:*

42 *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:*

43 *I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.*

44 *Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?*

45 *Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*

46 *And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."*

There is blessing by association for all who associate closely with believers who are walking in the plan of God for their life. God blesses those who walk close with Him, and those close to them share in that blessing. Many businesses are blessed by having believers in the one true God within them, and the pagans who run them are baffled when they fall into trouble and disaster after getting rid of the true believers. In the last days to assist and support genuine believers against the Anti-Christ will mean you also are a genuine believer in the one true God – for only such people will express such evidence of saving faith. James 2:12-26.

All who walk close to God will receive the blessing of his presence with them and all that this brings into their life, and those around them. Blessing is a fruit of the Holy Spirit's presence in a life, so if a person's life is not a blessing to others, then the only deduction is that they are not walking close to God, for where God is there is blessing to others.

Abraham will also be under the special care and protection of God, and we also have this great privilege. None will harm him as he walks God's path, and all who oppose him will be in effect opposing God. Those who curse him will have their curse rebound upon themselves, and they will be dealt with directly by God. The later promises of **Romans 8:28-39** will apply to Abraham, just as it applies to all believers who walk the path God has called them to. When we walk with the Lord and are sold out to Him and his purpose for our life, it becomes his responsibility to lead, protect and comfort us, and he always will do these things. We are in God's hands today and none can touch us without His express permission.

We leave our case in the Lord's hands when hated, cursed, or opposed, for we are the Lord's servants and so the matter is between the Lord, our master, and those who interfere with one on his business! It is a serious matter for a person to stand against the Lord's servant, for they directly oppose the Lord's business. Let us see our place this clearly, and relax as we serve the Lord, for none can oppose us without coming directly into conflict with God. We leave ourselves totally in the Lord's hands, and simply serve as we are called to and let the Lord deal with opposition.

Abraham's life will be a blessing to all people who love the Lord through the centuries. For the last four thousand years men and women have stood and praised his name for the good things he teaches us about the Lord God our Saviour. Abraham's obedience opens the door for the blessing of generations of obedient believers. We also can have a part of this sort of blessing into the future.

We are called to serve the Lord in such a way as to bring honour and glory to his holy name, and as we do that our witness grows in its impact amongst man, and so others praise God for us and the work we have done. Many believers are praised before God long after their death because of the spiritual legacy they have left behind that encourages each new generation that comes along.

This is God's plan for each of us; that we might be a blessing in our own generation and that then the memory of us continues to bring joy and praise to God's holy name down the years after our death. Had Abram stayed in Ur, and not gone down the path of worship of the one true God, he would have had a great funeral from his town's people, and would have been honoured by them as one of their great citizens, but his tomb would be as forgotten as all the others of Ur.

Abraham's tomb is not forgotten even today, and his spiritual legacy is celebrated before God around the world by all who love God. In his day he must have seemed to be walking away from fame and renown, yet in obedience to God he was walking in the path of greatest fame and renown, and he was a blessing to all nations, world wide.

Truly God's holy will for our lives opens the doors of blessing for us and others. Let us walk, as Abram did, in the place of greatest impact, and greatest blessing. If we simply love this present life, then we will lose everything we value, but if we

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love the Lord our God and serve him with all our heart, then we have the best that this life can give, and we have the joy of life eternal. Note the words of Jesus. Matthew 10:39-42, 16:24-28.

*“Matthew 10:39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*

*40 He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.*

*41 He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.*

*42 And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.*

**Chapter 16: 24** *Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*

*25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.*

*26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

*27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”*

Refer also to the following parallel Gospel/Injeel passages. Mark 8:35-36, 9:41, Luke 9:24-25, 17:33, John 12:23-26.

We are to value the walk with God to which we are called ahead of all the physical details of our life. Jesus challenges us to see eternal realities well ahead of any temporal, and very temporary success. He challenges us to be a blessing to the nations by our obedience, rather than a self centred blessing to ourselves, by our devotion to the wealth this present world can give. This is a direct call to be like father Abram/Abraham; he mentors this mental-spiritual attitude.

Satan distracts us if he can into short sighted goal setting, and self centred decision making: God seeks us to lift up our heads and see the Plan of God for our lives, and the Second Coming of Jesus, and so set our hearts on things above. Satan magnifies self, but the Lord calls us to serve others in Jesus name. Real fame and eternal prosperity comes to those who lose themselves in the service of others in Jesus name. In the last days we face now satanic deception will be at an all time high level, but those who live and act as Abraham will be safe and come through the worst the enemy can throw at them.

Satan does pay his people well, but only for a short time, however God's rewards are both now and forever. The choice is **WORLDLINESS** or **SPIRITUALITY**. (Refer to the Bible Topic Book – BTB) Let us choose eternal life above the temptations of time, and serve with all our hearts, like our father in faith Abraham, and so we will find the greatest rewards that man can know, and the greatest joy that man can know, now and forever.

### (ii) GENESIS 14:17-24

**17** And the king of Sodom went out to meet Abram after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. **18** And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. **19** And he blessed him, and said, **Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:** **20** And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. **21** And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. **22** And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the **LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,** **23** That I will not take from a thread even to a shoe latchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: **24** Save only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men which went with me, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion.

The army of Abram had rescued Lot and all his goods, plus all the goods and survivors amongst the people of the cities captured by Chedorlaomer. There has been therefore a great victory, and the pile of loot is significant. The king of Sodom comes out of hiding and makes a request of Abram. As a defeated king, under the rules of warfare of the ancient world, he has no right to ask anything, and by so doing God allows this man to give Abram a faith and character test. It is this sort of test that believers face throughout world history and we need to be like our father Abraham.

The Lord however sends Melchizedek, the king of Salem, with bread and wine, as the priest of the Most High God, to bless and prepare Abraham before the king of Sodom has his chance to tempt him. The testing area is the one that has been the problem area for Abram and Lot; the area of wealth. With this victory Abram has just potentially become the richest man in his world, but he will walk away from most of it, using only what the Lord leads him to hold, and leaving himself in the Lord's hands for his future. Hebrews 7:1-25 describes the character and role of Melchizedek.

This is a wonderful and accurate picture of the sort of thing that will happen in your own life many times; when evil men are used by the Lord to tempt, and when good men are brought to you to encourage you in the test. God provides all things for our growth and development in spiritual maturity. Each test we have in life is tailor made for our own spiritual growth, for each of us need different things to develop our faith and strength.

This section reminds us to have our spiritual armour on daily, and walk prayerfully before the Lord, for all that happens is from the Lord for a purpose, and God's purpose is always good. Abram walks carefully through each day and so he is

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ready for the testing and answers the slimy pagan king of Sodom well, because he has won the victory over lust for wealth well and truly by this time in his life.

In verse seventeen the king of Sodom and the kings who escaped the battle are together and they come and meet Abram as he returns. They meet him in the hill country close by the city of Jerusalem. They would have approached him as a great conqueror, and paid homage to him. They will let the king of Sodom do the talking for them all, but they seek the restoration of their power through the people's return to them. They know they cannot ask for the wealth, but they will get some of that back also in grace from Abram. These men wait back to see what Abram will be like. They hesitate before approaching him and watch his interactions with the king of Salem, whose nation state has not fallen before the invader.

In verse eighteen the king of Salem, the mysterious Melchizedek, walks onto the page of history and says, "Blest be Abram of the Most High God which has delivered his enemies into his hands". The victory is the Lord's and this man honours Abram as the Lord's man. Abraham received this honour and gave a tithe of all he had to this priest-king in thanks to God. The booty is still altogether at this point; none has been divided up, and Abram, as the leader, has the right to divide the spoil. This first fruits gift to the Lord is Abram's evidence of victory over lust for wealth that had so dominated his life until this point. This prepares Abraham for the test from the king of Sodom, who speaks up later on.

We must be careful at this point, because many commentators start to speak of Melchizedek as a type of Jesus, and while the writer of Hebrews may indicate that, we don't want to make application before we get the significance of this man as a historic figure. Melchizedek is not a mythical "type", but a real figure in history, as the priest king of Salem. He is God's man at the correct time providing spiritual food for Abram/Abraham (I will use both his names alternately).

When you have won a great spiritual battle you are psychologically relaxed, and can be vulnerable to a sudden test, and very subject to failure. You can win a great battle over giants, and stumble over the pieces of straw on the road. Always remember that it is the Lord God who has won through you, and not you yourself. Let us be careful of not believing our own publicity, and be sure to keep our heads safe from arrogance and pride. Keep trusting in the Lord God who has given the victory and keep your focus upon living fellowship with Jesus. Keep your spiritual armour on, and walk in the Spirit as you rejoice in the victories that come from God. That way, you will maintain the benefits of each victory.

Abram is a good picture of that here. He stays focused, and does not let his victory go to his head, because he praises God for it, not himself. The food Abram receives is a beautiful spiritual picture of the body and blood of Jesus (like a Communion Table meal). It reminds him of what God has done, and what God will do for Abram. Abram is being reminded of spiritual realities; that all he has is like this gift, a gift from God. The tithe is his thanks offering to recognize publicly before all, that what Melchizedek says is true; he is blessed by God and has a major part to play in God's Plan.

Notice the blessing that this priest-king gives. Two blessings – firstly, you are blessed by doing what God says has to be done, and secondly, you are blessed from the results of doing what God required, because God's power ensures it is accomplished. You and I are still blessed by being reminded by another believer that we are walking with the Lord, and isn't God wonderful. God's grace and mercy are subjects for praise and these two men remind us of that fact. Praise is a major encouragement for us as we walk with God through dark days, and that is going to be a significant aspect of daily life for all believers in the last days. These men are mentors from the past for future dark days – trust and obey the Lord alone, and seek to find and celebrate the path of your own destiny, which is only in the plan of God for you.

### THE TEST FOR ABRAHAM

The king of Sodom now approaches. He has just seen Abram give away 10% of everything he has captured to the king of Salem as a thanks offering, so he is hopeful that he can get his people back at least, and start to rebuild his city. He says, "Give me the people and you take the spoil". Now in the ancient world the winner took all. Abraham is the winner. Everything is his. This man has no right to ask anything, but will ask with deception in his request.

The king of Sodom is nobody now, with Abram officially being the king of Sodom, as he is the victor over the king who defeated Sodom. The King of Sodom is trying to divert the focus from God to Abraham, with the deception in the middle of his words, that he has actually given Abraham the spoils. "I made Abraham rich", he is going to say, rather than the Lord being recognized as the source of Abraham's riches.

This is a spiritual issue, not just one of wealth and power. Abram replies to the king of Sodom that he has worshipped the true God, and that this relationship with God alone makes a person significant, and that the king of Sodom as a defeated, but persistent pagan, is a nobody. Abram is in effect saying, "I take nothing from losers, because I don't want any man to take credit for making me anything that God has made me!" He goes to the extreme and says, "I will not even take a shoelace from you".

Abraham would never take the smallest gift from an unbeliever, lest that thing hindered the gospel message to that person, nor will he give the enemy opportunity to boast over him in any way. This evil man needs salvation, and he doesn't want that, but Abram doesn't take advantage of that fact, he keeps the door of truth open for this evil man. He does not let wealth get in the way of his possible salvation through facing the truth later. God alone, the true God, can save Sodom in the future, not their restored wealth and people, nor their old useless god statues that are also in the pile

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of loot. This king will not be able to say when he faces God as his judge that Abram did anything to hinder his acceptance of the truth. Abram challenges him to face the truth, but he is determined to remain pagan. This man should have bowed before Abram and accepted him as his king, and the one true God as his only Lord.

Corrupt people without salvation will simply make the place corrupt again. Indeed within a few years of this event the Lord must send angels to destroy the whole place. This invasion by Chedorlaomer was in effect God's last warning to the corrupt people of the plain. They have been saved by a believer in the one true God, and so should accept his worship as their own, but they will return to their old gods; the very ones who let them down last time! The next action of judgment will be total destruction. Moses will reveal the principle behind God's judgment of all nations in the "Five Cycles Of National Discipline", as he records them in Deuteronomy 26ff, and Leviticus 26.

There is an important principle here. No believer should take anything from an unbeliever if a spiritual issue is involved. This is because the free grace of salvation is critical. If we accept things from unbelievers our witness goes down significantly and they miss out because they may think that God's approval comes from human good works. It is too easy for the unbeliever to misinterpret any gift. Our job is to give them the truth, not anything else.

Notice in verse 24, that Abram doesn't expect his men to follow his lead, nor does he place any limits on his allies taking what they want from the loot. He doesn't impose his mature standards on young believers. The men who fought with him are entitled to their share as payment for the time away from their flocks and herds, and Abram ensures they take whatever they feel is right, without any judgment from himself on their share taken. A mature believer does not impose high mature standards upon the weak or young that will crush their growth. Our job is to set an example, but not demand others follow it, until God equips and empowers them to be able to do so.

### PRINCIPLES FROM ABRAHAM'S LIFE HERE:

1. Be ready for testing to come after great victories are won. When testing comes do not accuse God of being unfair, because every thing that occurs is part of His plan for our growth. Always be asking what the Lord is doing with situations, and learn from them before they pass into history. Abram walks close to the Lord God now and he is safe in the test.
2. Abram's area of weakness in his Old Sin Nature is his lust for wealth. It has led to the fall out with Lot, but he has well and truly solved it now, and is ready to speak with Lot again. It is of interest that no interactions with Lot are recorded by Moses from the tablets. Sadly it appears that there was no hope of anything being achieved with Lot. He is still a believer, but he has not seen that the immorality of Sodom will mean death to his family.

He is not ready to admit he was wrong in his dispute with Abram, and make the changes that will save himself and his family. Lot stays on the path that will lead to total disgrace. Like the king of his chosen city he is not ready to learn from the grace of God in saving him this time. They will rebuild the corrupt city worse than it was before.

3. Worship protects Abram from the lies of the king of Sodom. Worship will be protective against all attempts of evil to distract us from truth. Let us join in the praise of God, and so keep ourselves from the lies of the enemy. Lust is defeated by love for God and worship that focuses upon his grace, mercy, and His Holy Plan for our life. We have things in their right place when we have God's Will at the centre of our life.

### (iii) GENESIS CHAPTER 15

#### INTRODUCTION

As we have seen above, Abram, while he reaches a very high standard for himself, did not set a similar standard for the younger believers who were with him. Abram divides the loot between his men and his allies, the rest goes back with the people who have survived captivity and they return to their cities as free people, due to the grace of God and the maturity of Abram. At the end of Genesis 14 sadly Lot returns to Sodom, even though he should have got the message and stayed with Abram. He has lost most of his goods and people, and yet he doesn't want to admit he was wrong and he continues to live in the spiritually dangerous place. Sadly carnal believers often fail to learn from lessons that God gives them. Even though he proves himself a determined fool here Abram will continue to pray for Lot.

Remember, that once you have won a great victory, or have been used by the Lord in a mighty way, that is the time when you need to continue your alertness, for an even bigger, but far more subtle test may come. Abram gave the people back to the king of Sodom, and the others with him. It is an interesting thing about human psychology that those who you assisted most, can often hate the fact that they have needed your help, and hate you most. The king of Sodom is now angry with Abram, as he has failed to bribe or manipulate him in any way. He hates Abraham and hates God!

Abram is however quite relaxed about the threats from the pagan kings, but he has a secret worry and the Lord will address this with him here. Relevant promises and commands in the New Testament are - 1 Peter 5:5-9, 1 John 4:18-19.  
*"1 Peter 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.  
6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:*



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7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

**1 John 4: 18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

19 We love him, because he first loved us.”

If you are a believer in the true God, then you are God's, and not your own, so you can leave your problems in the Lord's hands, and he will deliver you. It is God's responsibility to look after you, for you are his. You can relax in God's hands. 1 Corinthians 6:20, 7:23, 1 Peter 1:18-19. God taught Abram significant doctrinal principles through these years around this time. As a result of the experiences God walks Abram through he believes that God can protect him from both the king of Sodom and from Chedorlaomer, if he ever chooses to come back and fight again.

## (iv) GENESIS 15:1-6

**“1 After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. 2 And Abram said, LORD God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? 3 And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. 4 And, behold, the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. 5 And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. 6 And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”**

### ABRAM'S PROBLEM

Abram, like us all, has a very human area of weakness, in his case the lack of a personal family and heir. He has defeated the temptations surrounding wealth, but this concern is deeper within him. He suggests to the Lord that Eleazer of Damascus is his heir, and the unspoken feeling here is that he has run out of time for the Lord's promise of his having a family coming through. He is in effect blaming God for not giving him a son. Abram is worried about who is going to succeed him. Worry is actually a very serious sin, and one that he needs to address, and the Lord is there to assist him. 1 John 4:18-19. Worry is telling God we don't trust Him and we need to worry to solve things – it is dumb!

Note verse one closely. Abram receives the direct guidance from the Lord in a dream. This is one of the ways the Lord speaks to believers through the ages. Dreams may deal with all sorts of things, mostly they are reflections of the concerns of the mind and have symbols that help us see what our inner computer is trying to work out, but at times the Lord has uses them for those who need a direct word in a special time. Numbers 12:6-8. This particular text makes it clear that Moses is a special case, as he received the words of God directly. This is important to note, for what happens to Abram and Moses is not the normal thing; these were very special men before the Lord.

These men had a special role and great responsibilities. Be very suspicious of those hearing many divine words, for even the greatest of these men had few of these experiences. The words of the Lord never return to him void, and that means anyone having any direct words from the Lord will be very active in the Lord's work, and what they do will be very important, even unique. If this is not the case, you can be sure God is not speaking to that person – they are fakes, and probably equally dangerous in relationship to Abraham's importance. Isaiah 55:11, James 2:14-20.

**Isaiah 55:11** “So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”

The first encouragement the Lord gives Abram is regarding fear. Fear and faith are incompatible; one will squeeze out the other over a short time frame. Abram is told not to be fearful about the lack of answer to the promise of God regarding his Son. Abram is challenged to have faith in the character of God, and eliminate the fear that presently rules his heart. Psalms 27:1, Isaiah 35:3-4, 41:9-14, 43:1-7, 10-12, 44:6-8, 51:9-12.

As believers in the Lord we are urged to get our spiritual armour on each and every day. Ephesians 6:10-17. The early Christian apostle Paul takes his inspiration, not from the Roman soldier beside him in his room, although he draws on his appearance. The image of God being like armour is actually one of the Old Testament's strongest pictures of God's protective care over the believer. Deuteronomy 33:27-29, Psalms 3:3, 5:12, 18:1-3, 91:1-4, 119:114, Proverbs 30:5-6. Refer to these texts, and note particularly the verse from Proverbs; every word from God is a shield, behind which we can shelter under attack. God is the best source of protection and power for all we need as believers, and we need to know his Word and get down behind it daily and seek refuge from any fear that assails us. It is this instruction that believers in dark days need to follow, for when the path darkens with evil it is vital that we turn up the light of the Word.

Abram is also told that he is to look to God for his reward, not to any military actions he may fight. It is easy to look for great wealth quickly, through a “windfall”, a “sweet deal”, a Legacy, or a lottery. Such desires lead to further sins, as lust

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for wealth may quickly get hold and eat away at the soul. Abram is to look to the Lord alone for his great reward. The Lord promises not just any reward, or even a great one, but an “exceeding great reward”. Psalms 16:5-9, 142:5, Proverbs 11:18, 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, Hebrews 13:5-6, Revelation 21:3-6.

Read these verses, reflect upon the promises here, and praise God for them, for they are all ours when we walk through this life as Abraham did! This is the life we are all called to live – a life like Abraham.

**Psalms 16: 5** *“The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.  
6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.  
7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.  
8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.  
9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.”*

**Psalms 142:5** *“I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.”*

**Proverbs 11:18** *“The wicked worketh a deceitful work: but to him that soweth righteousness shall be a sure reward.  
19 As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death.  
20 They that are of a froward heart are abomination to the LORD: but such as are upright in their way are his delight”.*

Where do we want our blessing? What sort of blessing do we want? Many are clear that they want it “here and now”, yet such things do not outlast time. By their fruit you will know their character and destiny. (Matthew 7:13). God’s plan for us is to give us rewards that last forever. While he gets many blessings in time, it is eternal rewards that Abram receives in greatest abundance, and he is still receiving these blessings even now.

Every person entering heaven blesses Abraham as their father in faith. As the verses from the Psalms make clear, we will always have enough to achieve the goals the Lord has for us here on earth, and as we see Abram was not short of goods to do the work to which he was called. We are to claim these promises, regarding these things, for they are for us, as they were for Abraham and David. What God calls us to do, He will always provide enough to accomplish.

Many today grapple with the challenge that childlessness brings in their culture, just as Abram and Sarai do. In many cultures to be without a male heir is great disgrace and it destroys the family’s happiness and stability itself. For believers this ought not to be the case where ever they live on the earth, for our destiny is heavenly, and whether we have physical descendants or spiritual children we are blessed. Elijah, Elisha, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Paul had no physical children, yet they are not alone and never were, for “God was their portion/reward”. Each of these men rejoiced in their spiritual children, and millions look to these men because of their faith example and will greet them as “fathers in faith” in heaven.

Many children were a blessing in an agricultural economy, for it meant many hands to the plough, or the sheep fold. Children are referred to as “arrows in the quiver”, and safety in old age was assured with plenty of strong, well armed sons around. Psalms 127:1-5. Even today I have heard people refer to their family’s children as a “quiver full of bright and shining arrows”. Many have children as security for their old age, yet unless the children are led to the Lord and hold the truths of Bible doctrine, they will be of no use whatsoever to the parent, and may bring great grief and evil. It is not physical progeny that guarantees anything except broken sleep in their childhood!

Abram is told to “look up” at the heavens, remember his destiny is heavenly, not just earthly, and then see that his children will be more numerous than the stars he can see. Our children should be a blessing and a joy, and they will be, if we first “look up”, and ensure that heavenly realities guide our planning and child rearing practices. Romans 9:6-8.

God said, “Abram look at the stars, you are going to have an heir from your own body, and the descendants of your sons will be as numerous as the stars”. Abram believed in the Lord’s word to him, and it was counted to him as righteousness. When you are worried, upset or anxious follow Abram and cast your cares on the Lord your God. 1 Peter 5:5-7. The answer to your worry may be a long time coming, but you can look to Him in the interim and know that God keeps his words. You can know that He cares for you, and you can remember the character of God, for God never changes.

Even though you do not know the specific answer to your problems at this point, you can accept the principle that you trust in the character of God, and rest upon his perfect character. It will be an experience as you will grow through application of the promises and character of God into your life problems, and as you meet testing with faith. If you have problems, Trust - Rest – Apply – Keep moving forward in faith, like your father and mentor in faith, Abram.

By the large numbers of stars God was also able to demonstrate that He is in control. Abraham, he says, face your choice, are you going to try and solve your own problem, or are you going to let the God who formed the galaxies do it for you? Will you believe God’s Word or not? God’s power has brought you thus far, and He is not going to let you down now. Worry is actually an insult to God. He thought about you, He provided for you. Is He going to leave you now? Of course not! If He loved you that much when you were a sinner how much more is He going to care for you now that you are His son, his friend? Note the apostles Paul and Peter’s logic in this. Romans 5:9-20, 1 Peter 1:7.

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To be childless as a man in Abram's age was to be called a eunuch, and despised by many. Daniel and his three friends were made eunuchs by the Babylonians as a part of their enslavement. The viewpoint of those who mock these men is corrected by Isaiah with words of comfort from the Lord.

**Isaiah 56:3-8.** *"3 Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.*

*4 For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;*

*5 Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*

*6 Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;*

*7 Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.*

*8 The Lord GOD, which gathereth the outcasts of Israel saith, Yet will I gather others to him, beside those that are gathered unto him."*

Abram's servant Eliezer was a good servant, and a man who could be trusted with all things, but he is not to be the heir of Abram. As his trusted and good servant Abram was entitled to call him "his son" as the writer of the proverb is later to identify, Proverbs 17:2, but he will not be his heir. Adoption of an heir was quite common in the ancient world, where a natural son did not live up to expectations. It is a reminder that physical descent does not guarantee good results in the child. Genetics involves the passing on of the good and the bad, and unless a child finds true faith in God, and is transformed by their living faith in Him, that child will bring grief later. It is faith that transforms sinful men and women, not our "birth right". Our status as "born again" sons and daughters of God by faith is more significant than our natural parentage.

Abram is challenged to see what is to come, as if it is now, and praise God for his great gifts, well before he receives them. It is this faith that will transform individuals and nations in the future day when Arab and Jewish sons of Abraham join together to oppose the Anti-Christ and wait patiently for the coming of Jesus.

**Hebrews 10:35** *"Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.*

*36 For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.*

*37 For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*

*38 Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

*39 But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

**Hebrews 11:1** *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

*2 For by it the elders obtained a good report."*

Let us all stand with Abram and praise God for his gifts right now, before we meet them face to face, for the reality of the things God will give is already sure. This is the challenge of Abraham's faith to all peoples; his descendants and those who would be like him from other nations. Let us be sure and claim the promises of God by faith now, and rejoice in the Lord for all his goodness to us at least three times; before, during, and after their reception! Abram praised God for his goodness at the time he received the promise of them. It is this that is credited to his account for righteousness.

To stand with Abram, we need to stand in the same place of faith, and that means we see the future, as if it has already occurred in the plan of God. This means, we praise God for what he will yet do, as if he has already done it, because we are so sure of the final result! Hebrews 11:1 above states this boldly! Let us walk in this daily expression of faith. This will be the great challenge to believers in the Great Tribulation period, as they cling to the reality of the Second Advent of Jesus, and wait patiently for the Lord to deliver them.

Those in the Great Tribulation period will be truly sons of Abraham as they rest in faith, believing God's Word ahead of the deception and lies of the Anti-Christ and his people. Fear is to be faced with the promises of God's Word. We are called to stand in the truth, and the truth is that the plan of God will work out in the lives of his saints. Let us knock fear out of our daily life with faith. Let us feed on the Word daily, rather than feeding fear within by our ignorance of the character and promises of God.

Children are a blessing only if they walk and live "in the Lord". They bring joy only as they walk with God. Let us ensure that heavenly realities alone guide our steps, and that we do not tie ourselves into thinking as pagans think. Let us see our destiny with Abram now, and live as he did, with the upward look to guide the earthly focus. Let us bring up our children with this mental attitude, for as the days darken towards the end those who do not live this way will surely be deceived and die in despair.

(v) **GENESIS 15:7-20**

**"7 And he said unto him, I am the LORD that brought thee out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give thee this land to inherit it. 8 And he said, LORD God, whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it? 9 And he said unto him, Take me an heifer of three years old, and a she goat of three years old, and a ram of three years old, and a turtledove,**

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and a young pigeon. 10 And he took unto him all these, and divided them in the midst, and laid each piece one against another: but the birds divided he not. 11 And when the fowls came down upon the carcases, Abram drove them away. 12 And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and, lo, an horror of great darkness fell upon him. 13 And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not their's, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; 14 And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance. 15 And thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age. 16 But in the fourth generation they shall come hither again: for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full. 17 And it came to pass, that, when the sun went down, and it was dark, behold a smoking furnace, and a burning lamp that passed between those pieces. 18 In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: 19 The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, 20 And the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites."

In **verse 7** God says to Abram that He is the Lord who brought him out of Ur of the Chaldeans. Abram wonders still how God will do the things he has promised. He says, with Thomas, "I believe but give me a sign so that I will know more". This is not sinful, for Abram is asking, as does Thomas, to have his faith built up. Mark 9:24, John 20:28. The way we build up our faith is to exercise it in action, and in worship. God combines action and worship for Abram. God tells Abraham to take a heifer, she goat, ram, pigeon and a turtle dove and bring them as sacrifices.

Notice the promise and its strength, and then see the strong action required of Abram to express his faith. James 2:14-26. God looks back and reminds Abram that it is he who has brought him through from Ur to Canaan. It is he that will continue to do the good work through him. He does not stand alone, but with the mighty God. What God has promised he will perform; what God starts, God finishes. It is this faith that will carry the Arab and Jewish believers of the last days as they await the return of Jesus.

There is a plan and it is working out in his power, never in ours. Philippians 1:3-8, Psalms 105:1ff. Abram is encouraged to remember and then focus forward again. He will receive the land, and the same certainty that he can look back with, he can look forward with. Note this! God is the creator of space and time itself, and as such stands beyond these categories of this temporary creation. To God the future is just as certain as the past is. Meditate upon this for a second and see that you stand in the place of stability and certainty. The sign that these things will be so, is the sign of the coming Saviour-King, and we today spin our year around Christmas and Easter, because they are the great sign of God to man. In the dark last days each believer in the one true God must face this issue squarely and stand with Abraham; the promises of God are more sure than the natural, demonic, and human disasters unfolding before them.

These animals here are the sacrificial animals that will later appear in Leviticus. The sacrifices speak of the then future final sacrifice for sin. Fellowship that had been lost needed to be restored. God is saying to Abraham - confess your sin. It is God's way of calling for Abram to confess, restore his faith fully, and openly and publicly confess his faith in the Lord God by acting out the sacrifices, and then watching over them for many hours until he sees what God wants him to see.

Abram is to "sit with" the sacrifices long enough to understand what God is doing for him. Worship is to be "sat with" long enough to enter into our being. We are not to rush through any service to the Lord, but reflect in all we do, and so hear from the Lord as we go along, rather than just play act at religion. God wants real relationship, and that means pausing long enough to listen to our Creator-Saviour. It means being ready to lay aside traditional interpretations and beliefs.

It is this "sitting with" the reality of sin and God's Plan for us that transforms the Jewish descendants of Abram finally, as they see that they have missed their Messiah when he came first, and this is a shock, as it is also to the Moslem Arabs as they face the fact that Isa is much more than they believed him to be. They must come to terms with nearly 2000 years of the consequences of missing the truth about his first advent. Zechariah 12:10ff. Read these words below and see why they must sit with their national sin, as Abram must sit with the reality of the promises of God being more powerful than the threats of evil men.

**"Zechariah 12:10** *And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*

*11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.  
12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;*

*13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;  
14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart."*

In summary the offerings that Abram prepared stand for the following things. The heifer - the sin offering - confession of sin. The ram or she goat - reconciliation and propitiation. The turtle dove and the pigeon speak of the perfect unity of God's provision. The birds are not divided we believe because they speak of the person of Jesus, who is perfectly God and Man and is undivided. We as Christians today believe that these sacrifices all spoke of Jesus' person and work for us all, and that realisation is what is central in the great religious shift that we will see described in the last days.

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Moses is faithful as he followed the same pattern God showed him for sacrifices on the mount of Horeb, and he must have been amazed and excited as he read the clay tablets from Abram and saw that he also did the same thing. Hebrews 8:5. In their obedience both men are blessed, and the later man looks back and learns more of the Plan of God. Zechariah looks with sadness to the generation that “remains” in the dark days of the Great Tribulation, and he sees that they must stand like Moses and Abraham, not as too many of their ancestors did, and oppose the truth when Jesus came first.

### THE MAKING OF A COVENANT

When men wanted to make a covenant in the ancient world they did what Abram was instructed to do. It was common practice in those days to walk between the divided animals to demonstrate a covenant. The offerings made on the altar were cut in half and placed so as to form an aisle down the middle. Those involved in the covenant often walked between the carcasses hand in hand together.

In this case it is seen that only God, in the form of a smoking oven and flaming torch, passed through between the pieces showing that it was an unconditional covenant; one based on the character of God alone. Abram is to be obedient to the instruction to offer sacrifice for his sin, a series of sacrifices that speaks of his sin and God's grace provision to meet his needs, and God's forgiveness. Once he has done what God demands he is to stand and wait for the Lord to act. Psalms 50:5, Jeremiah 34:17-20.

This is a blood covenant, and Christians believe speaks of the blood of Christ shed on the Cross. Abraham is being invited to see ahead in time and hear the Lord's words, “you can trust me because I am the one who is to come, the Saviour”. Abraham did what he was told, not fully understanding. The sacrifices spoke of forgiveness of sin and relationship with God. The answer of fear, worry and doubt is to be occupied with obeying God and His Word; to be in living relationship with Him. Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, John 19:20. We must get our eyes off our problems and on to the Lord our God. We stand secure only in the character and plan of God alone, not in any limited human strength we have.

### SATANIC COUNTER ATTACK

In **Verse 11** when the birds of prey, the raptors, came down on the carcasses, Abraham drove them away. The birds are vultures and speak here of evil. He keeps these birds off the sacrifice portraying on-going tenacious resistance and eventual victory from Satanic attack. He keeps his mind on the sacrifices and keeps his eye on them so that nothing is carried off by the enemy. It is vigilant determined resistance against evil that God is teaching him here.

Those who are ready for battle do not need often to fight, but to be unready is to be despised by the enemy, and eventually surprised, and so defeated. Vigilance and determination is called for regarding the enemy for he is “subtle”, a “liar” from the beginning, and seeks to destroy the life and very joy of the believer. He hates us! We need to really understand this and take daily action to walk in full spiritual armour at all times. James 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:8-11. Refer to the BTB study on SATAN – ADVERSARY, and also ANGELIC CONFLICT.

Having driven the birds away until nightfall, they go, and Abram falls into a deep sleep of physical and mental exhaustion. Abram now has a powerful nightmare that reflects his deep fears. When you are mentally exhausted this will quite often happen. It is called here, “an horror of great darkness”. Abram has dealt with his conscious sin of worry but this nightmare fear comes from deep in his soul and it needs to come out so that God can deal with that as well. The Lord is the healer of all our cares and fears, and he sifts the deep intents of our hearts. Hebrews 4:12.

Having faced the real issue, which is faith in God, we need to bring all thoughts into captivity to the person and plan of God. **2 Corinthians 10:1-6, Hebrews 4:7-16**. Both these passages are good ones to have any home study group read through and meditate upon as you examine this part of Genesis, as they form a good commentary on what is happening within Abram here.

### PROPHECY AS A CURE FOR WORRY

It is a dream that shocks, frightens, and hurts him, yet at its heart is a great promise from the Lord. Prophetic truth hurts! When God speaks directly there is warning, and there is fearful consequences for those who do not listen and obey. Beware of those who believe they are prophets and only say good things all the time. They are not prophets! Prophecy gives warning and hard truth!

God said to Abram, “Know of a surety thy seed will be a stranger in the land which is not theirs and will be there 400 years”. He also says that He will judge the nation whom they serve and afterwards they will come out with great substance. The nightmare is not only what is going to happen to his family but the Lord also shows him what is going to happen to Egypt. All these things are hundreds of years later, and God shows him this to emphasize to him that the plan is going to go a lot longer than his own life time.

Abram is again thinking, “Will God keep His promise?” It worries him when he sees what is coming. This is encouraging to us all, for we all have our doubts and concerns when we see what is coming in the plan, especially when we meditate upon the Great Tribulation and see just how few of mankind will emerge from it. It can look at times as if there is not

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much hope for man at all. It is not wrong to feel despair at times, for that is human, it is just sinful to stay there! God wants our despair brought to the centre of the Plan of God, and there we see that we are loved, provided for, and that the plan is bigger than our worries, our sins, or Satan's, or man's greatest evil. God says in effect to him, "Abram this is all going to happen, nevertheless my promise will last forever. In the long term I will work my purpose out."

We have to learn this lesson if we are to serve the Lord's people. In order to be a teacher you have to go through things which others are going through so that people can see that you are real, not just a play actor. James (James 3:1-2) says not to ask to be a teacher, as it is a trying existence, but if that is your genuine call, then relax and enjoy it, and serve the Lord in all things, and in all things learn how to serve him more. "To whom much is given, much is required!" Luke 12:48-59. A great deal is required of all those who lead others in truth; the first thing is total obedience to the truth they have received. Refer to the EBCWA Leadership Manual (Book 120) for a full discussion of the personal cost and serious training of godly leaders for the Lord's work.

Through the pain and pressure you will be able, with James and Abraham, to "count it all joy". You will not be looking at your problems but you will be looking at your God and Saviour, and his purposes in your life and the lives of those he has given you. By this you will see the big plan unfolding and will have a relaxed mental attitude. God has a plan for each and every life, and each and every event in the days of our lives. Although you may not know about your future at the moment the Creator does, and you are in his hands, not the "fates" or "good luck". God does not tell you everything at this point, for if you did know everything you would just worry about it more. The challenge through this life is to walk in faith and trust the one who called you to work things out through the path that he has chosen for you. It is about the character of God, and He is stable and securely good and righteous in all his dealings.

We are to trust him for all things and be humble and relaxed in his arms. Deuteronomy 33:27-29, Matthew 6:28-30, Luke 12:16-40, 14:7-11. These passages are excellent meditations for any group study, as they bring us to the feet of the Lord as we face pressure situations, whether we are leaders or followers, and remind us we are in the hands of the one who went to the Cross for us. We are beloved!

**Verse 13.** God strongly says, "Know for a surety" - be absolutely sure of my Word Abram. If I say it I will do it, says God. The descendants of Abram are going to go to Egypt and suffer, many are going to die miserably as slaves, but they are going to be able to claim these promises just as Abram did. It is this level of faith that is required of the sons of Abraham as they enter the Great Tribulation period after the Anti-Christ has set up his statue in the temple in Jerusalem.

Even before he has his son he has the promise of blessing and trouble for his son's people, and as the people in Egypt think upon these words, engraved upon the clay tablets, they can look at the body of Joseph and remember his faith and Abram's before him, and they can then give thanks for the deliverance that will come to them in the right time for the plan to be fulfilled. God calls upon us to be patient and faithfully obedient to his demands for us, because he is faithful and will deliver us and accomplish his purposes with and through us.

The Lord provides the promise of Abram's own death in peace, and the deliverance from Egypt together. This tells us that Abram is in prayer as he hears the words of the Lord to him, and is concerned for the deliverance of his people, even before his own blessing. His heart is upon those who come after him rather than just upon himself. He is close to the heart of his Lord, just as we are called to be. John 17:4-10. God promises Abram that he will go to his fathers in peace. He will die in peace and in a good age, and in the 4th generation after his descendants enter Egypt, they shall come out of Egypt and inherit the land of Canaan. Exodus 12:40-41, Psalms 105:23-38.

The reason for the delay in the inheritance of the land is that the Canaanites are not to be dispossessed at the time of Abram, for the Lord is waiting for them to repent and become believers themselves. They will have maximum time for that, so that they stand before Him without excuse for their persistence in evil; for as Moses notes, the iniquity of the Amorites was "not yet full". Genesis 15:16. There is also a judgment of Egypt tied in here with that of the Canaanites. The Lord is dealing with three people groups during the Exodus as we see in that study. He works upon his people Israel, upon Egypt and Canaan. God's plan covers all things and peoples.

The date of your death, and all others, and even how you die, is the prerogative of God, and God is precise and we can depend and rest within His Eternal Plan. God's sense of justice is seen here, and these evil Canaanites will not be judged and removed from the land until they have had maximum opportunity for repentance. Your life and your death are in His hands and you can relax as his child in his tender mercies, right through until you see Him face to face. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, Acts 7:55-56, 1 Corinthians 13:12, 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

You walk with Him in life and through death into eternity. There is a dying grace so that you will have comfort in dying. We have from God saving grace, living grace, surpassing grace, and finally dying grace. We are to walk with Him. You can only be a good pastor when you have watched people die, and walked with them through their last days, and thereby faced your own departure in peace and confidence in the one who died for you, and who has a plan for you. The Lord trains his leaders and will give you many opportunities to both suffer in Him, and walk with those who suffer and die in humility and love for the Lord. God will give you this opportunity so that you will be able to trust Him in life and death, and serve him in love and care for others in the midst of all things.

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Abram prophetically sees his people's suffering and his heart's concern is first for them, secondly for the manner of his own death. "Others" is the motto of pastoral leadership, and all who serve the Lord must learn that, or they will not be useful to the Lord. Remember, if you are not useful, you are pruned out of the vine! Relax and trust the Lord's training, and walk in the power and education of the Holy Spirit. He will carry you through. **John 15:1-5, Jude 24-25**. If you are walking with the Lord, you will go to be with the Lord in fellowship with him, just as you have lived, in joy and peace. Walk in the Spirit believer and there will be no fear of any thing that men can do to you! Once again we can see that it is this level of faith required in the darkest days in history leading up to and just before the Lord's Second Advent.

In the 4th generation the Israelites will come back into the Land. Sodom and Gomorrah are going to be wiped out shortly, as their iniquity had become full, but the rest of the Canaanites were not totally degenerate at that time. In history when a nation becomes degenerate God removes them, and so there are few with the genes of the Canaanites left today. Four generations of being negative towards God cause that group's removal from history. The exception is salvation. Exodus 20:5-6, Matthew 15:22ff.

By the fourth generation the Canaanites had become totally degenerate. This is why the Israelites under Joshua were told to kill all the Canaanites, not because God was vicious and angry, but because they were so infected with the consequences of their sinful evils that they needed to be destroyed. They had run out of time and would be judged; God will move against all people who persist in their rebellion against his righteousness. The final judgment in this phase of history comes through at the end of the Great Tribulation period. Our job is to warn of God's holy demands and warn that the Day of Judgment is coming for all mankind. John 16:8-11, Revelation 20:11-15.

In **verse 17** we are told that the same night of the sacrifices, the Lord made a covenant with Abram; the unconditional Abrahamic covenant, a promise of a designated area of land. God walked between the pieces in the form of two objects that moved between the row of sacrificial animals. Both the smoking pot, and the fiery furnace are seen in slightly different, and more dramatic form in Exodus, firstly to Moses, and then at the centre of the Israelite camp. These two objects speak of the visible presence of God with his people. Exodus 3:1-2, 13:21-22.

The Israelites will see the presence of God daily, as Abram sees it this one night, and they are challenged to walk close to God, yet the entire generation fails, except for Caleb and Joshua. Abram faces the question here from the Lord; is he going to believe the promise or not? No manifestation of the Lord will overwhelm a person's free will; they still face the faith challenge, and the greater the sign the more serious is the challenge. The Exodus Generation had many signs, and ignored them, and so they all died in the desert! Be very scared if the Lord sends you a sign, for it means much is demanded, and so let the fear of the Lord guide you into walking in the Spirit, and so be like Abram, Caleb and Joshua. To fail to move ahead with a direct sign is to be directly under judgment.

Abraham does not walk through the pieces with God. God walks through by Himself showing that it is an unconditional covenant. God will guarantee the covenant and bless Abraham unconditionally. The man does nothing except to accept the word of God and walk in faith that what God says he will do. Refer back to the BTB study on FAITH. Even if you do not get it quite right down here you will be with Him forever. We must surely live lives that glorify Him, and as we see more and more of the truth of this, so will our worship of the Lord God become deeper and more powerful. We should also want to be recipients of eternal rewards for great service to our Lord, not for any glory they will bring to ourselves, but to bring even more glory to Him who died for us and has led us through the paths of this life in joy, and brought us through with peace and spiritual prosperity of soul.

Abram had doubts but he dealt with them God's way. He confessed and trusted God's promises because he rested upon God's perfect character. He believed God's Word and recognized the source and solution to his worry. God's Word can be trusted because it rests upon the certainty and stability of God's perfect character and plan! God will continue to bless us, the question for each of us, is will we continue to obey his Word? To receive the blessing of the Lord God depends upon our continued obedience to his Word, for the place of blessing is the place where the Lord wants us. Let us ensure we do not rob ourselves of the Lord's blessing by our lack of follow through on his commands to us. We look backwards to gain strength, encouragement and confidence for the road ahead.

We do not live in the past, nor waste time speaking too long about it. Our focus is forward, for the past cannot be changed, but the future can be made blessed as we walk with God. Like Abram we are called to constant vigilance and as days darken that becomes more important. The enemy crouches at the door always. Our defence is our spiritual armour, but it is only good if it is well fastened on daily, and we walk in spiritual power. Worry is human, it only becomes sinful if we hold onto it, rather than passing it on to the Lord. We are the Lord's and that means all our worries are his also. Pass your worries over to the one who wants them and is able to deal with them in power.

We are called to live like kings not fools, for only a fool holds onto a problem that belongs to another. Suffering and major and very real worries, often will be part of training for service. When we face testing and suffering in the Lord's work, we are challenged to see it as the Lord's training ground, and to take it before him. There is purpose in all that comes to us. Let us see the Lord's purposes in all that happens. Your death is in the Lord's hands, as is every detail of your life. We are called to walk through this life and not slacken our pace as we walk out of it, for every step is ordered by the Lord. He walks with us through and out of this life. Let us see the Lord's presence in all the aspects and phases of this brief life of ours upon the earth. We are here for a very short time; so let us walk like Abraham, with our eyes upon the stars, not the tent canvas!

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## (vi) GENESIS 16:7-16

**“7 And the angel of the LORD found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands. 10 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of the LORD said unto her, Behold, thou art with child and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the LORD hath heard thy affliction. 12 And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. 13 And she called the name of the LORD that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered. 15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.”**

### THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

The Angel of the Lord (the pre-incarnate Jesus) finds Hagar by a spring in the very desert the Israelites were later walking through during the Exodus. This is what is called in theology a “Christophony”; an appearance of the Lord Jesus before his first advent. The Angel of Jehovah is the Lord Jesus himself. He finds Hagar by a fountain (gushing spring) of water in the wilderness on the way to Shur, which is on the way to Egypt. As Hagar is an Egyptian this means she is on her way home. She is running away, but running away never solved anything relating to the plan of God for a person. Notice that the Lord calls her “Hagar, Sarai's maid”. Jesus in His pre-incarnate form tells Hagar to return to Sarah and serve her.

Such an action under normal circumstances would have meant death, for that was the penalty for a captured slave who had run away and was recaptured. However behind this command is the promise of the Lord that He will be behind her. “Go back and trust me in your situation”, is what the Lord is saying here. Another way of putting this would be, “Be faithful and obedient, and you will be preserved”. Hagar is also promised that her descendants will be great, and she is told to call her son Ishmael, because the Lord has heard her affliction. Now she is told that he will be a “wild man”, but that means he will be a live one; Sarai will not kill her or the baby.

### LONG TERM RESULTS OF SIN

In **verses 7-8** it is clear that Hagar has been praying at the oasis and she receives the answer to her prayer in the person of the one to whom she prayed. The Lord finds her because she seeks his answers as to what she is to do. The Lord asks the questions of her that she has been asking of herself; “where have I been in these last years, and now, where am I going?” The Lord simply affirms that he has heard her prayer. The questions he asks her are the ones that challenge her to examine her own behaviours (“how have you come to this point?”), and also her own plans for the future (“where are you going?”)

To get back into the plan of God in our own lives, after straying away we need to address the same questions. How have we got to this particular point? We don't do archaeology on our sins, and stay there for the next few years analysing them, but we need to understand what we have done, so we can learn and not repeat this error ever again. There is no time for psychotherapy, and it is useless, as Viktor Frankl found in Auschwitz. We must simply identify and reject bad past habits of behaviours, and need to examine our forward motivation and re-commit to God's path forward for our life. Where are we going? Where do we want to go? The Lord wants us to commit to his path with all our heart and mind and prove by our actions we are honest in our words. Matthew 7:13-14.

Hagar is “Sarai's maid”. She has been part of a great plan since her birth, as we all are, and she is called to play her part, and not change anything until the Lord does. She is to take orders from the Lord her God and not seek her freedom or any other role until the Lord opens the door for her. This is a hard order, but this principle of status quo carries right through the scriptures and applies to us also. In whatever state we are called into the Lord's family we are to remain, until the Lord changes things.

**“Philippians 4: 4. Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.  
5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.  
6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.  
7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. . . .  
11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.  
12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.  
13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”**



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To superimpose our will over the Lord's is to place ourselves outside the plan and to get second best or God's judgment. Only through submission and obedience to the plan will we see the blessing the Lord God has for us. Once again we see the Lord's demand of us, that we bring every thought into captivity to his will, and seek no changes that are not reflections of his plan for us. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, 1 Peter 1:17-21.

**Verses 9-10.** Hagar receives an order and a promise that she will inherit through obedience. She is to return and submit to her part in the plan of God. She will serve as a slave for another fourteen, or more years. She will then be freed and her son will support and care for her, and she will be the mother of a vast nation amongst the Arab peoples. She receives a parallel promise to Abram. As a believer, she seeks an earthly heritage, and she receives one, but she is also blessed forever. The Lord has her submit for another decade or more so that she can have the chance to grow spiritually with Abram and learn from him. Sadly she fails to learn fully, and her petty jealousy of Sarah and the attitude of her son to Isaac, lead to her dismissal from the household. Hagar had every opportunity to be blessed both spiritually and physically, but she proves over time that she has eyes mainly for the physical. Be challenged by this woman though, for you will meet her in heaven, and many of her descendants will be mightily blessed as they stand with the other sons of Abraham against evil in the last days, and especially right at the end before the Lord's Second Advent.

**Verses 11-12.** She is told by the Angel of the Lord what to call her son. Ishmael is a good name; meaning "God will hear". Ishmael's descendants are some of the Arabs and they still dwell to the south and south east of the descendants of Isaac. Abram's sin has therefore had very significant historical repercussions. The Lord forgives us for our sins, just as Abram, Sarai, and Hagar, are all forgiven for this sin, but the result of the sin may go on and cause great suffering in the future. The great joy of the Word of God is that it tells us that many of the sons of Ishmael will also be blessed in the latter days as they meet Jesus, just as their mother Hagar did.

All Sin is adultery against the Holy Spirit and an insult against the Blood of Christ. David in the Psalms states, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned". Psalms 51:1-4. We always need to remember this principle; with every sin, we have insulted and hurt the one who went to the Cross for us. He knows our affliction and hears us in our pain. We do not have a high priest who does not know our suffering, for he endured more than we can ever experience. Psalms 22:24, Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9, 7:25, 10:10-14.

In **verses 13-14** Hagar recognized that God had seen her and heard her and directed her path through this life. When Moses is writing this some 500 years later he is actually travelling in the same wilderness and can point these places out. Hagar's descendants are out there watching the Israelites as they pass through the desert. Hagar is restored to fellowship with the Lord. She did not think that the Lord was listening to her at the spring, but finds that He is. "You have heard me and answered me", she says. Often we have to go to a low point before we come to the point where we understand that God hears, knows, sees and has a plan for us still. Psalms 3:3-4, 6:8-9, 28:6, 34:1-11.

Ishmael will live the life of the Bedouin he is the father of, and he will be a free spirit. He will be a herdsman and a leader of a wild bunch of men who will pillage others and take what they need. He will live a life without legal framework or too much moral constraint. Sadly he will never be a great believer; he will, as we will see later in Genesis 21, be carnal most of his life. Hagar it would appear will however see her son in heaven. The destiny of his people will be mixed through the centuries, with many believers amongst them, but the issue for them remains their attitude towards their relatives amongst the sons of Abraham. When they work with their brethren, both Arab and Jew, they prosper and are blessed, and are a blessing, but when they succumb to satanic deception and assault their brethren they are under God's judgment. It's our active and persistent choices that determine our blessing in time and eternity!

### ABRAHAM LEARNS TO TRUST GOD

**Verses 15-16.** Ishmael is born into Abram's household. Hagar had to tell Abram the name God had given him and testify her experience to him. Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. When we see him next he is 99 years old and impotent. There is therefore a 13 year gap in his life where he learns the lesson of trusting in God. Hagar teaches him this lesson of faith, and God's provision. Both Abram and Sarai learn that the Lord is to be trusted and they are to wait upon the Lord. They will both receive their new names in association with their new depth of faith. God will make them wait thirteen years before he speaks again. Their human viewpoint solution to their childlessness delays their blessing for thirteen years, but in God's mercy and grace they are not abandoned. He knows that we are dust! Psalm 103:14.

Abraham tried to do things his way but God always says, "You do it my way or not at all". As at 99 he is impotent he cannot be tempted again with any other woman, and having a natural child has become a total impossibility. We should learn from the errors of others, so that we can quickly adjust and be in conformity with the Lord's will. Abram now watched his young son grow up, and in his impotent state he learns to trust God.

Believe God's Word, hold to God's Word, be sanctified through the Word, grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ. 2 Peter 3:18. If you want God's blessing, then it is only received His way, and if you are serious about this, then bring every thought into captivity for Christ, and deal with your problems God's way.

Adopt an objective way of thinking and living; let God's Word guide your steps. Do not blame God for setbacks or pressure situations, rather seek the Lord's way through each and every problem you face. If you think Bible doctrine you will be objective and successful in this life, but if you look at things from the human viewpoint you will be subjective and

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so receive only what man can do for you. This is a lifelong and daily battle. Rely on your Heavenly Father who will not allow you to be tested too greatly. 1 Corinthians 10:13. God has a solution to all things, and it depends upon you and me walking in the Plan of God for us, and not following the lusts of the flesh. God's way is always the best way through every problem, and every problem has come to us in the plan of God for our life. Everything has happened to teach us something. Let us look for the Lord's solutions to the challenges of daily life, and walk in the power of God to deal with all things.

We are heard by God when we pray. He meets us in our distress and our prayers are answered. We need to bring every thought into captivity to the Plan of God for our life and bring every concern to the "Throne of Grace and mercy", for we are heard there. Hebrews 4:16. God is the "glory and the lifter of our head", but we must come to him often to live in this place of joy where we know that daily. Psalm 3:3, Isaiah 61:3.

We are part of the plan of God, and in every detail of our life the Lord wants our acceptance of the plan and our obedience to the part we are to play. Every change of direction we make needs to be prayer saturated, and guided by the Lord. Let us pray and move in the filling of the Holy Spirit of God only. We are each called to a different part to play in the great drama of the Redemption. Let us play our part well and not walk "according to the flesh", that is, according to the lusts of our Old Sin Nature. If God says "wait", we had better wait until the way of escape is opened up, or we will not get the best the Lord has for us. Let us move ahead only as the Lord directs and leads us.

### (vii) GENESIS CHAPTER 17 INTRODUCTION

In chapter 16 we saw the failure of Abraham and Sarah, but they accept their discipline and keep moving forward in faith, and with God's silence for thirteen years they must simply plod forward each and every day. In their faith walk now they rest in God's promise, and await his next affirmation of the promise, and the next step of obedience for them to grasp. To introduce this chapter, read through Romans 4:11-22, as this is a commentary on the passage before us.

We must remember consciously a fact about how God sees us, as against how we see ourselves. God sees us from the end of our life, rather than where we are, or where we have been, because, to God time sequence is not relevant; he is the author of time and is beyond its limits. We must consciously remember this, because it is not the normal, human thinking of creatures, who are trapped at this point in a space-time universe. God looks on us as we will be, not as we are. As a believer that is the first thing to recognize when we consider the promises of God.

In Genesis 17 Abram will receive a re-affirmation of the promise that he will be the father of many children, and the father, through them, of many nations. He believed against normal human sight, and even hope, that he would be the father of many nations. He was fully persuaded by the promise of God, because he saw that the one making it could see the future, as if it was present, and he knew that God was speaking a "prophetic word", describing what he was seeing from his perspective. Abram's challenge, like our own at all times in human history, is to see things from God's perspective, with certainty, rather than from man's perspective with doubts and fears. We only see the problem with our human sight, God sees the solution as if it is already here. That is the challenge of biblical faith – to see things this way.

This is the issue of faith for us, and why Christian faith is totally different from the faith people may have in the promises of people, or the "Laws of Nature". We often use physical and human analogies to illustrate the principle of faith, and we must, because we are trapped within space and time, and so we have to draw upon what we know to explain what we do not know. When we speak of God's promises however we face a completely different thing to anything within our universe, for God's Word to us is eternal security, and it is certainty touching time.

Abram breaks through in his understanding in this chapter of this essential difference between what God says and what men say. He sees a different quality to the promises of God than any promise received from a man. Both depend upon the character of the individual, so in that they are a little similar, but there is still no certainty in the promise of a man. A person may change, be affected by some outside thing, and so not keep their word, even though they intended and even desired to. God has no such character, or incident limitation.

But it is even more fundamental than that of course. God does not have to wonder how things will work out, for he sees all time events as if they have already happened, for he is the author of time. There is simply no doubt that God will not keep a promise, for, from his perspective it is as if it has already happened. There is no outside force that will change the final result of space and time, nor anything that will hinder the final wrapping up of this universe in ultimate victory for the one who made it, and all things in it. 2 Peter 3:10-18. Abram can look at the stars, and he has done this for fourteen years now since the mistake with Hagar, and he can reflect that it is the creator of the stars that has promised him these things. His destiny is as secure as the rest of the universe's destiny. There is a plan and he has a part in it.

Abram has walked quietly and humbly before the creator for these last years, and he has reflected on the fact that he, as a creature, does not have to "help" out the creator in any detail to ensure a promise of the creator is kept. God simply does not need our help. He was fully confident of the promise of God that he would have his own son, even though by the time the Lord speaks again, he was sexually dead. He was confident that God could accomplish what He had promised, because he had made the universe, so any little detail of our life is not beyond his power and ability. God's power is adequate for anything within this universe, and his timing is perfect. There is a Divine Plan and it will certainly

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work out. Abram could not wait fourteen years before this time, so he had the relationship that produced Ishmael, but he has now learned to wait, and he will receive the promise and enter into greater worship than ever before. The fruit of the Holy Spirit is worship, and whenever a person has learned from God, you will see the evidence in their life at home and their worship within the spiritual community.

### (viii) GENESIS 17:1-8

**1** And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. **2** And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. **3** And Abram fell on his face: and God talked with him, saying, **4** As for me, behold, my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations. **5** Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham; for a father of many nations have I made thee. **6** And I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee. **7** And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. **8** And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God.

Verses 1-2. God says to Abram, "Remember me, remember who I am". If I promise, then be absolutely sure, I will perform. I can keep my promises says God, and I will because my character depends upon it. Man's response is simply, God says, "Walk before me". Notice it is God who has made the covenant, and would make the new covenant between Him and Abraham. It was, as the earlier one had been, an unconditional covenant. Such covenants do not depend on the person; they depend upon God alone. God's command to illustrate faith, and apply it into daily life, is blunt and straight forward. **James 2:18-26**.

**Verse 1.** Let us begin this reflection at the end of the first verse. God wants an outcome in Abram's faith. "Walk with me and be perfect". The word means completely faithful, sincere, righteous, and true in devotion 100%. In our own strength we cannot fulfil this command, but with God we can, for this is a gift from God through the work of the indwelling presence of God with us – the inner power of God's Spirit. **2 Timothy 3:12-17**. This is a strange and difficult thing to comprehend, but as we are obedient to the Word, so we are aware of God's inner help and strength. It is this inner power that will carry believers through the great testing times to come in the Great Tribulation period, just as it brought Abraham and David and Paul through their dark and pressure filled days.

How does He make us perfect, thoroughly furnished or equipped, for his service? It is what the early apostles called our "Holy Spirit filled" application of the Word of God that makes us, through the God's work within, completely ready to serve him, and finally stand before Him. Often we will learn our greatest lessons through suffering as outlined in **1 Peter 1:3-9**. Read each of the three highlighted New Testament passages again now and reflect upon them as you go further into Genesis 17.

Moses records the age of Abram, and later, verse 17, of Sarai also. It is important to realize just how many years have passed between the chapters here, for Abram has waited a long time to learn the lesson of faith that will be tested here. It will be encouraging to us all as we see that he doesn't pass the test 100% either, but that his doubts do not stop the plan of God, and neither do ours. God is not limited by our lack of faith, but uses all the faith we have, even the smallest amount. **Matthew 13:31-32, 17:19-20**. Let us give thanks for God's mercy and keep getting up and walking again as Abram did. Failure does not stop blessing, for confession and renewed obedience restores us to our place again.

**Matthew 13:31** Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

**32** Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.

**Matthew 17:19** Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?

**20** And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you."

Refer to the BTB study on FAITH here and remind yourself that this is the way we are to walk through this life, by resting upon our faith in the character, plan and promises of God. God sees the heart of his children and if our devotion and love is pure for Him, he can make up any deficiencies we may have in faith and works. He seeks first our loving devotion. **Matthew 5:43-48**.

**Matthew 5:43** Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

**44** But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

**45** That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

**46** For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

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*47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?  
48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."*

In verse one also the Lord announces himself and draws attention to his character as "the Almighty God". God is able to do all things he has promised because of who he is, and his character is perfection, and what he says he will perform. We rest our faith upon the one who is not ever short of any power to accomplish what he has promised to us.

In **verses 2 to 5** Moses records that Abraham fell on his face and God talked with his servant. He was flat on his face rather than holding his hands up. In that position he is totally defenceless, totally expressing his devotion to the Lord of his life. This posture of prostration is that used by Moslems today, and was the common posture for worship in the entire ancient world. Matthew 17:1-8, Revelation 1:17.

Here we have a second restatement of the promise that Abram would become the father of many nations, and in testimony to the truth of that promise Abram is to change his name well in advance of the physical evidence that it will be fulfilled. Romans 4:11-14, Galatians 3:14-18, 22-29.

**Verse 5.** Abram now has a name change from Abram to Abraham. Only after 13 silent years where he was able to see that his solution was wrong, was God in grace going to do what He promised. He became with the name change the "father of multitudes" rather than "exalted father", the meaning of Abram.

God gave Abraham the new name before the name is true in fact. Remember, from God's viewpoint on time, it is already fact! We wait to see the plan work out, but God has already seen it complete before it began! This is why we can have faith in God, for he is the almighty God the creator, who is therefore able to be the deliverer and Saviour. Abram has his name changed to illustrate his faith and God's victory over his circumstances, and there are more amazing name changes to come in the future, to express faith, and the victory of the Lord over the things that men see in time. Isaiah 62:1-5, 11-12.

In Romans 4 it tells us that God causes the things that "are not" to become, because they are part of the plan, and with God all things in time are as present tense. The things that God has promised, they are certain. God is all knowing and knows the beginning from the end. You may be a student of theology but God sees you as you are going to be, He sees you now for what He is going to do with you.

Just like Abram we all also receive the command from the Lord, "Walk with Him and be perfect, let Him refine you". Examine for a moment all the "I wills" in the chapter before us. Notice these, because they remind us that it is God who is going to do the things promised here, and man is going to get the benefit. God is saying to Abraham that he is in God's hands and God will look after him. We are in a similar position as shown by Paul who said, "I am persuaded that He is able to keep those things that I have committed unto him against that day". Philippians 1:6, see also, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 18, 1 Peter 5:10-11, Jude 24-25.

### COVENANT AND CIRCUMCISION

The new name means more than the old one. Abram meant the "father of high and windy places", or exulted father. It meant the father of strong and mighty sons. Abraham means, "father of a multitude". It is a reflection directly upon the promise. God will make him exceedingly fruitful. When the Lord blesses it is with "more grace", never little grace. Our little faith is always met by God's "more grace". The Lord will bless abundantly. Let us look for the Lord's blessing and position ourselves in the place where it can be received; the place of obedience. John 10:10, 1 Thessalonians 4:1, James 3:17-18, 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5-7. We are to be passionate in our faith, for God is never hesitant in His love and grace.

The Abrahamic covenant is now restated. In verse 8 God refers to "your seed, which are the Israelites [ see Romans 4:11-18, 9:6-9], but not just to those of the physical line only, but to all who share Abraham's faith. Not all Israel are Israel in the true sense, as Paul will remind the Roman Jews. There are many people descended from Abraham physically, who are not true children of faith like their physical father Abraham. The entire scriptures back Paul's analysis, that it is being like Abraham that matters in the end, not carrying his genes. In the last days men and women need to be like him.

There are, for example, three types of Jews, racial Jews who have the genes of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, religious Jews who practice Judaism, and then regenerate (born-again believers in the one true God) Jews. It is this last category alone who are the only true Jews in God's sight, and with them the people of all nations who stand with Abraham in faith are entered into his blessings. Many will praise Abraham and share his spiritual legacy, while the majority of his physical descendants, (Jewish, Arab and Gentile), will be outside his promises, because they did not stand upon his spiritual, faith-rest foundation and worship the Lord God as he did.

Notice also that it is an eternal covenant; which means that it will last throughout time and into eternity the reality for all who are a part of this promise will be eternal. When we enter into this covenant, we are a part of something that has results that go on forever. Abraham is blessed forever, and all who share his faith, share his blessing forever also. When God gives, he truly gives above and beyond what we could ask or even think. 2 Corinthians 12:9, Ephesians 3:20-21. God gives above and beyond our deserts and his grace is sufficient for all our needs. We are to learn to rest upon his promises and rejoice in his deliverance in all things through the path we are called to in this present life.

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We are to stabilize ourselves upon the certainties associated with the character of God. God's character is absolutely stable and his words rest upon his nature and stability in his nature. God does not change; what has been promised will be performed. We reflect that every time we take the Communion emblems and say aloud, "until he comes", for in doing that we remember that this celebration is also a prophetic statement of faith; Jesus is coming again! He is coming to judge and rule as King over all! Entry into the plan of God is for time and eternity; what is changed here and now IN relationship with Jesus, is changed forever. We all have an eternal destiny with our father in faith Abraham.

## (ix) GENESIS CHAPTER 25

### INTRODUCTION

In this chapter we are introduced to a concept that we call today "Dying Grace" that is taught all through the scriptures. Dying Grace is the term used to describe the fact that the grace of God carries the believer right through life to our death, and through death, to our eternal life. If we are walking in obedience to the Lord our God through this life, we will leave this life in an honouring way to the Lord and even our death will be our witness. Psalms 68:20, 116:15, 2 Corinthians 5:6-8, 2 Timothy 4:6-8, Hebrews 11:13-16.

Abraham now dies having seen the promise to himself and to Isaac kept. God's promises are secure because the promises of God are based upon the Character of God. He had done what He said he would do. Abraham was given almost another 40 years of life after the death of Sarah. At her death he is 137 years old, and he dies at 175 years of age. Remember the oldest man, with birth dates recorded and proven in English history, is buried in Westminster Abbey. He was born in 1483, and died at age 152 years and nine months on 15 November 1635. His name was Thomas Parr and you can visit his grave there. He married first around 90 years of age and committed adultery at age 100, and punished himself for that for the rest of his life with a strict diet and hard work regime. He was nearly blind for the last ten years of his life as Isaac will be. Autopsy was written up by Dr Harvey, FRS, who discovered the detail of the circulation of the blood. Don't let anyone mock the great ages of the patriarchs.

Abraham is blessed by God in a wonderful way, the Lord providing another wonderful woman, Keturah - "the smoke of incense". Her name shows that her life was a beautiful aroma. She was one of those people like Paul's supporters while he is under arrest in Rome, who provided an improvement to his life just by being there. Colossians 4:7-14, 2 Timothy 1:16.

### THE NOAHIC COVENANT AND THE WIVES OF ABRAHAM

Abraham has a full sexual relationship with this lovely woman and has many fine sons from her in the last decades of his life. In this he fulfils the concept of being the father of many nations as he has had sons by three key women, Hagar the Hamite, Sarah the Shemite, and Keturah, who is believed by many to be a Japhethite (although her children become founders of many of the Arab tribes, like the sons of Ishmael); thus each of his wives may be descended from each of the three sons of Noah.

In Genesis 9:9-17, 25-27, we have the Noahic Covenant recorded, which has a type fulfillment in the wives of Abraham with the Hamitic Hagar being the servant of Sarah the Shemite, and the Japhetic Keturah being blessed "in the tents of Shem", and being enlarged with many sons in contrast with the offspring by Abraham of Ham and Shem. One of the possible descendants of this union of Abraham and Keturah, the Queen of Sheba, will come to visit Solomon 1500 years later.

The true blessing however comes through "the tents of Shem", ultimately this means through his descendent Jesus. It is also of interest that the great nations of Western history (of the sons of Japheth) have been the great nations of faith, but only as they enter the "tents of Shem" and worship the one true God. The West rose when faith was powerful in the great nations of Europe. The West is currently in moral decline because biblical faith is currently in decline, but Daniel's visions make clear, that the West will remain the political-military power broker until the end. Sadly that power base will be totally evil in the end, as they have walked away from the faith of Abraham. The powers that form the Anti-Christ's power base are the Western Nations; the nations that were spiritually great while they served the God of Abraham, but who have entered into apostasy under satanic deception, and then will persecute the people of God.

In verse 5 Abraham recognizes that it is in and through Isaac that the blessing will flow and so he gave all he had to Isaac. He however made provision for the sons of Keturah, and sent them away to prosper by their own hard work, but they were not looked after as the son of promise. They will find their true destiny and earthly/heavenly blessing as they express the faith of Abraham.

### THE DEATH OF ABRAHAM AND OLD AGE

Genesis 25:7 says that Abraham was 175 when he died at a "good old age" and went to be with his ancestors who had also died in faith. Old age is often today anything but "good". My old mother said many times in her last years, "this old age is no good", as she struggled to cope with tablets keeping her going, and often forgetting to take them. She rejoiced

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in the Lord but felt the multiple weaknesses of the body. Few are recorded as reaching these great ages, and there is debility in the end for most. Abraham and Moses are the only two divinely provided for exceptions.

Abraham did not need his heart tablets; he had been restored to full health and that meant he was active until the end, although he had physically slowed down by the time of the marriage of Isaac and wasn't taking long journeys any more. Old age does not allow you to hide anything, for your real character will come out as physical attractiveness drops away. When you are young you are able to do a lot of things, and hide a lot of negative things about yourself by your physical activity, but when you are old you have only got what is inside you, and this is why it can be a burden to those around some old people. Old age will either be a time of reaping good harvests from a life of service and love of the Lord, or it will be the harvest of the works of the Old Sin Nature.

By old age, if you have not dealt with patterns of sin, any root of bitterness will have gone very deep, and will then cause you a lot of trouble. Remember as you read these words, that you may become old and reliant on others someday. You need to address your own inner life now to prepare for old age. We are warned by all modern media to, "Prepare for old age", but what they mean is retirement funding and health plans, when the real joy of old age is found in the spiritual life of the believer. It is only the faith of Abraham that prepares us to face our old age and our eventual death.

The example of Abraham reminds us that the most important preparation for old age is our spiritual life, and enhancing that as we age, so that by the time we get beyond the grind of ten hour days at work, we are walking with the Lord closely indeed and death is simply seen as a closer walk. The presence of old people in a social situation betrays quite quickly the other's attitudes to life; many treat them as a nuisance or an embarrassment, as they themselves cannot cope with the idea of aging themselves; others who can sit with their own mortality, treat the elderly with respect and warmth.

Our challenge is to be worthy of respect as we age, and then we can leave our old age and our death firmly in the Lord's hands, just as we have lived our daily life, dependant on his power and plan. What we reap; that is what we have sown for many years! Let us sow wisely now by continuing our Bible study and application into daily life. Study the following verses in your home study group on the biblical doctrine of reaping and sowing. Job 4:7-11, Proverbs 22:8, Hosea 8:7, 10:12-13, 1 Corinthians 9:11, 2 Corinthians 9:6, Galatians 6:7-9, 5:15-26. Now read the Galatians passage first and the others in the reverse order, as then you will see the "sow-reap" principle of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, that Paul intends.

If you are going to serve Jesus in honesty and truth you have to think of your old age and how you want to leave this earth. As young people we often do not give this a thought, but this passage challenges us all to set our hearts and minds clear on this matter, before we advance in our spiritual service in our twenties or thirties! For those at the end of this age of time, as they face the traumatic events of the Tribulation period, they need to be very sure of these matters.

Abraham did not let problems, or the results of his inaction, or inattention, pile up in his life. He addressed the problems he had through application of God's Word to life and by confessing his sin. Remember the Word of the Lord. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me". Psalms 66:18. Remember, you are advised to use confession of sin for your sinful thoughts as well as your deeds. That way you win the battle for the mind, which is where our Old Sin Nature fights best. In the end with old people it is their thoughts, deep regrets, and the hidden sins of their past, which destroy their peace and life quality.

Abraham has been walking with the Lord through his life, and the Lord's blessing is on him in his death. The believer who is walking with the Lord is always "full in years" when they die; at whatever age the Lord calls us home, we are called to our eternal home and it is at the right time. Paul says that he had fought the good fight and finished the course and prepared himself for eternity. 2 Timothy 4:1-8. The New Testament view of Abraham's death is given in Hebrews 11:13-16, where in verse 16 it is seen that the mature believers of all ages desired a new country. Abraham, even while he was on earth saw the eternal reality and concentrated on it throughout his life, rather than be distracted by the wealth he gathered, which was going to be passed on to others.

If we look at life from an eternal viewpoint we will find our life choices and priorities will fall into their correct place. When we know where we are going eternally we have great confidence and the correct perspective on life. We can then truly do our job as unto the Lord. We can sing with Paul if we live with his mental attitude; a close walk in the Holy Spirit daily means we, just like Paul, will be able to rejoice in all things, right through until the end of our life.

You cannot talk yourself into this but it is something that the Holy Spirit can lead you into as you feed upon and apply the Word of Life daily. In life we are laying the groundwork for our death. Even Socrates said, "Call no man happy until he has died", reflecting Greek philosophical wisdom that recognized that it is only in old age that you see the true consequences of the choices of each person, and it is only as you watch him or her die that you know that person had no regrets about their choices. In old age our true self will reveal itself for all to see and in our death all who watch us will know we are happy with our choices.

We should consider each day as a day of grace, and review our life in the light of the fact that our time on earth is finite. Life is too short for sins or distracting activities of no eternal significance. There are far too many believers living for what people think of them; they are more interested in the New Years Honours list where the government rewards it's friends, than the Judgment Seat of Christ. Let us buy up the time we have for the Lord's service.

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Death is seen by Abraham as a positive event because he is a mature believer. It is a thing to look forward to because he knows where he is going. 2 Corinthians 5:1-10. The mature believer has no fear of death, because perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18. Refer to the EBCWA Commentary upon this passage of 2 Corinthians 5. We obtain that love and confidence by drawing close to God. If you were told tomorrow by your doctor that you have three years to live, would you change significant things in your life? Once you are dead you do not "rest in peace"; you are either with the Lord in heaven or in hell awaiting the lake of fire. Revelation 20:11-15. Let us speak the truth in love about these things to all who live carelessly.

Many picture death as the coming into harbour of the ship of the person's life, but the Bible has the opposite viewpoint. Life is the provisioning of a ship that is cast off onto the sea of eternity at death. Paul's ship for instance was full of doctrine and the fruit of its application into life through the years of toil and trouble the Lord allowed him to work through. The storms of life are but a few rain showers with the boat still tied up to the jetty. Sadly there are few well provisioned believer's "ships" ready for eternity. There are very few believers who study God's Word, even fewer who believe it, and fewer still who let the Word loose within them to transform their daily lives, and apply it into the fabric of their lives. When you look on each day as your last you have the right perspective, and only then will you be living as God intended us to live here. John 10:10, 6:63.

Abraham is to be buried with Sarah, and they will therefore be standing together in the resurrection. Isaac is living at La Hai Roi seeking the Lord daily, whilst Ishmael is still a wild "free spirit". However at the end of the chapter this next generation will face a challenge to apply doctrine into life, for Isaac's wife Rebecca has no children, but we will see that she leaves this in the Lord's hands using the principle behind Peter's words in 1 Peter 5:7.

### (x) GENESIS 25:1-11

**1 Then again Abraham took a wife, and her name was Keturah. 2 And she bare him Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. 3 And Jokshan begat Sheba, and Dedan. And the sons of Dedan were Asshurim, and Letushim, and Leummim. 4 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Epher, and Hanoch, and Abidah, and Eldaah. All these were the children of Keturah. 5 And Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. 6 But unto the sons of the concubines, which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts, and sent them away from Isaac his son, while he yet lived, eastward, unto the east country. 7 And these are the days of the years of Abraham's life which he lived, an hundred threescore and fifteen years. 8 Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. 9 And his sons Isaac and Ishmael buried him in the cave of Machpelah, in the field of Ephron the son of Zohar the Hittite, which is before Mamre; 10 The field which Abraham purchased of the sons of Heth: there was Abraham buried, and Sarah his wife. 11 And it came to pass after the death of Abraham, that God blessed his son Isaac; and Isaac dwelt by the well Lahairoi."**

Verse 1. Abraham is restored to full sexual health and function at 100 Years of age and he fathers many children through Keturah, although she is referred to as both wife and also linked to Hagar as a concubine by the scriptures. She is a second wife taken after the death of Sarah so marriage to her is legitimate, as in their day was the relationship with Hagar considered bone fide, yet her sons are not considered as sons of the Abrahamic promise. Although they are free born and will be sent away with wealth, while Ishmael is sent away with his freedom only, they are all considered secondary to Isaac. This situation creates some debate amongst biblical scholars, some of whom argue that Abraham has "other concubines" as well as Keturah, and that he was wrong in his old age in living as Solomon was to later.

From my own study of this passage and others, I believe that this is to jump to the wrong conclusion about Abraham and about the concept behind Moses and Jeremiah's reference to Keturah, and their joint usage of the word "concubines" to Keturah and Hagar. Refer to 1 Chronicles 1:28ff also. Keturah is clearly identified by Moses as a wife legitimately taken by Abraham. Death ends the marriage contract with Sarah and he is entitled to remarry and she is clearly God's provision, yet she is also referred to as a "concubine" by both writers of scripture.

The use of the term concubines at the end of the Genesis passage, at verse six, does not refer to other women and their sons, for all the sons of Abraham are carefully named by Moses. He was careful about these things and would not have omitted other names, any more than he would omit the names that are here even though they mean little to us now. The only possible reference to the term "concubines" can be to Hagar and Keturah. One was legitimately taken after the death of the wife, the other wrongly taken as a wife alongside Sarah. Remember, God makes no distinction between de-facto and legal wives; for sexual union creates marriage in God's sight. This is why sexual union with the wrong person is so bad for both people. It is adultery and a great sin against marriage and the family. Genesis 2:21-24, Matthew 19:3-12, 1 Corinthians 6:15-20.

If Keturah is also referred to as a concubine, what is being said by the two authors of scripture here? Now good people differ on their interpretation here and so I do not ask you to agree with my analysis, but simply and prayerfully reflect upon the facts and see what the Lord shows you. I believe that the use of this term reminds us strongly that God's plan is for each person to have one wife or husband, and that although re-marriage, after the death of a spouse, is allowed and even recommended, the second spouse and their children are secondary to the first, and have a different status. This is

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recognized by most people instinctively, and this is what causes such conflict in “blended” and second families through the ages. For most people today there is no spiritual significance in the birth order of their children, and the need is for parents to be discerning towards their children and encourage all in their spiritual growth. For Abraham this issue was however very significant spiritually, for the line of Isaac was the line of promise and most of the resources he had were to be put into the spiritual line to ensure Isaac prospered in his walk through life.

As we see later in Genesis Isaac possibly dissipates or misuses Abraham’s fortune quite quickly and is unable to pay the bride price for his son Jacob in the way Abraham does for him. As you get to that point you will see some important principles emerging from this. But at this point we need to see God’s attitude regarding the families of Abraham; his first wife is the “real” one for the future of mankind, bringing in the Messiah-Saviour, with his two other “wives” being secondary in status. Hence the term “concubine” is used for them, to reflect their secondary status, not their lack of acceptance by God. It would appear that both these women were believers, although many of their sons will not be, just as many from Jacob will not be also. 2 Chronicles 36:13-16.

Verses 2-4. Now I will not spend a great deal of time with the names of these men, although many commentators have. The reason for my reticence here is that all absolute assignment of these men to modern Arabian tribes is uncertain and owes more to traditional stories of origins from Islamic times than to actual facts from this early period. Abraham is literate, as is Moses, but these men listed here became sheiks of the desert and their traditions are almost exclusively oral from this time (2500 BC) until the early years of this era. I don’t know who they are, but the descendants of these men do have their traditions that they can rejoice in, and they are the people who will stand with the descendants of Jacob against the Anti-Christ in the last days.

From the names here however, and those also listed in 1 Chronicles 1, there are certain connections that can be made with modern Arab nations and tribes. The sons of Keturah intermarry with the Arabic groups of the central and southern Arabian Peninsula, as well as the land of Midian. The modern nations of Jordan and Saudi Arabia carry their and Ishmael’s genetic lines, as do the tribes of the Persian Gulf states. These people all share the general blessings of Abraham, as we can also, but only as they worship and practise faith as their ancestor Abraham did. Their future is blessed in and through Abraham’s legacy of biblical truth given to them. They will stand with Israel against the ultimate evil in the Tribulation Period, that is yet to break upon the world through the Anti-Christ, but will before then stand with Israelis as they oppose Iran and her allies, as foretold by Ezekiel 38-39.

Verses 5 - 6. Abraham gave all his remaining earthly goods to Isaac to ensure that the line of promise will prosper, and that all that he has built up will continue to be resources for Isaac to do the work that he has done for the Lord. Now this is after significant gifts of wealth to all the others, to ensure they were able to start out in life in the lands to the east. The biblical doctrine of separation is applied here, with Abraham recognizing that the sons of Keturah must be away from Isaac, so that they grow and prosper apart and so that Isaac’s witness and path is not affected by any cares towards these other boys and girls, or their demands upon him.

In the Middle East the senior member of the family is responsible for the finances and problem solving of the younger family members. By sending these sons formally away with gifts of wealth, Abraham frees Isaac of this distracting responsibility, just as his high payment for the burial cave freed him of the distractions associated with land ownership under the Hittites. Abraham understood the customs of others, and didn’t “respect” them and obey them, he made his choices on the basis of God’s Plan, and did what he could to get around pagan custom distractions.

The sons of Keturah were younger, (all in their twenties), and Isaac will, if he is the senior person in the family, be left as the responsible one for them all. He will be in danger of being the “sugar daddy”; the rich relative to whom they will all come for loans and with cares and concerns. Both any worry about these others, and their problems, will potentially distract Isaac and so Abraham wisely sends the other boys far away to find their path in life. Abraham thereby ends the extended family obligations, and also ends the family as such at this time. This is a drastic measure, but is needed for financial and judicial reasons, but it is not the end of the story. In coming days they will stand together against Iran and her allies, and in the latter days of the Tribulation Period, these people will stand with the other descendants of Abraham and oppose Satan’s last great man of sin.

Verses 7-8. Moses celebrates the life and times of Abraham and describes his death in a wonderful way. His own death will be marred by his loss of temper at a crucial time (Numbers 20:11) and so he will not be buried in the land, but he too will be gathered into the Lord’s company at a good old age. Deuteronomy chapter 34. Abraham has lived all his life; he has not lingered on in useless days. His life has been lived fully and his death comes peacefully surrounded by his family, with his life job done. So many of our contemporaries spend their time and money setting up a useless and pointless period of life called by the West “retirement”...biblically there is no such thing. Seek God’s path to the end.

The two key sons are there to bury him, although the sons of Keturah are not mentioned. This is a strange omission if they were there, and may indicate that all the boys have gone far to the East by this time, and that Keturah has died also by this time, for she drops out of the record here also. Ishmael is reunited with his brother for the burial of Abraham, and so must have been there at the end also, as days were not taken before burial in the ancient world, which was done often within twenty four hours. Both the sons of Abraham still care for the Burial site in Hebron, with a mosque and synagogue sharing a common wall.



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The Lord blesses Isaac after the death of his father, with peace between Ishmael and himself, and with prosperity. He continues to live close to the place where the Lord last appeared to Hagar, and it may be that Ishmael was also in the vicinity. He certainly gives Isaac a record of his sons and their doings, for Moses is able to record the details that Ishmael gave and add to that information the things he knows from later times. Ezra may also add in further details at this point, as it is he who puts the books of the Torah into their final form. Moses, as an Egyptian general, with access to Egyptian intelligence reports, was in a position to know where a lot of the tribal descendants of Ishmael were in his day, and Ezra had access to the records of the Babylonians and Persians who also fought with, and traded with these people.

Verses 9 – 11. Abraham is buried in the cave he had purchased for the burial of Sarah by his two sons and their extended families. Notice what is said, and what is not said here. The funeral is private, short, dignified, and the focus is upon the burial of the corpse of Abraham, with the body of Isaac's mother, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection, and the fact that they will all stand together there in their resurrected state. Matthew 22:32, 1 Corinthians 15:12-42, Philippians 3:10-11.

Isaac is so focused upon this that he will seek to be buried here also, and the teaching of his son will be done in such a way that Jacob will also want to be buried here, and even Joseph will leave instruction that he is not to be buried in Egypt but to be brought back to the land for burial. Genesis 33:19, 50:25, Exodus 13:19, Joshua 24:32. Burial for the Patriarchs was not like the pagans amongst whom they lived, and was the last testimony of their lives, just as it is our own. Marriage is a serious thing and not to be entered into lightly. Believers are to be very, very scared about entering into a marriage with the wrong person for them, for the Lord holds the contract sacred and so are we to. Second wives or husbands are not to feel inferior in God's sight today, where the marriage has been in the Lord. Keturah is blessed in life, and her sons are blessed throughout time as they stand in Abrahamic faith, and in the last days of our age they will be a great blessing to their cousins, descended from Sarah, for they will stand for God against the Iranians, and then later the Anti-Christ.

Nations prosper depending on their relationship to the blessing that comes through Abrahamic faith. There is blessing only in the tents of Shem for the other sons of Noah. We are to serve the line of promise and not abuse the other lines of Shem, descending from Ishmael and the sons of Keturah either. The West may be receiving judgment on both counts in our own days; for we have not stood by Israel, and we have exploited the Arab nations for their oil. God has blessed them all, but we have played politics, and sadly the West will become the enemies of all the sons of Abraham in the end. Pause and reflect upon this with the world's oil reserves, and be prayerful for the children of the believers Hagar and Keturah. Their story is about to see its greatest hour when they all stand together again as they did in Abraham's tent.

Life is the provisioning of the ship of our soul for its eternal voyage. Fear of death is a sign of lack of reality in our walk with the Lord in life. Let us be convicted of any slackness here and advance into our daily lives with spiritual focus every day. Keturah's children have not been a mighty source of conflict down the years for the children of Isaac and Jacob, and even today Jewish professional people work in the Gulf States with respect and in peace, serving the sheiks, who are their relatives through Keturah. She was a joy to Abraham but her legacy has not really proven its full potential to his modern Jewish descendants yet. It will prove its worth in the darkest days of world history, when all the sons of Abraham unite against the Anti-Christ and protect each other until Jesus comes to deliver them all. It is no accident that the "Abraham Accord" was signed first by the Emirates and Israel – the sons of Keturah and Sarah formally joining together again after 4000 years.

### (d) Later Prophetic Words About the Nature of the Faith of Abraham.

As we have seen, the key text from Moses is clear; "Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness". He saw the promises and prophetic words of God as more real than his present circumstances. It is this level of faith that his descendants, both Arab and Jew, will need to manifest to be delivered through the testing of the Great Tribulation period. They get the first opportunity to grasp Abrahamic Faith in the Iranian invasion as described in Ezekiel 38-39.

#### ROMANS CHAPTER 4

*"1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?"*

*2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.*

*3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.*

*4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.*

*5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*

*6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,*

*7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.*

*8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*

*9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*

*10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.*

*11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:*

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12 *And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.*

13 *For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.*

14 *For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:*

15 *Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.*

16 *Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,*

17 *(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*

18 *Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.*

19 *And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb:*

20 *He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;*

21 *And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.*

22 *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness."*

Abraham's salvation experience is recorded in Genesis 15.

At night, God showed His servant the stars and gave him a promise in **Genesis 15:5:-**

***"Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."***

How did Abraham respond?

**Genesis 15:6:-**

***"And he believed in the Lord, and He [the Lord] accounted it to him for righteousness."***

Simply stated, Abraham believed God, and God saved Abraham. Abraham took the promise of the Word of God at face value, and he rested in it. The Hebrew word translated "believed" means "to say amen." God gave a promise, and Abraham responded with "Amen!"—"I believe it!" It was this FAITH that was accounted to him for righteousness.

When Abraham believed God, he did the one thing that a creature can do without doing anything! Faith and belief in the one true God!! You see, FAITH is a non-meritorious work. God made the statement, the promise, and God undertook to fulfil it. Abraham believed in his heart that God told the truth, and stood in that assurance. There was no effort here until he expressed that faith in his daily life (refer below).

Abraham's faith was not some great meritorious series of actions, but an attitude of the heart. His heart was turned completely away from himself to God and to His promise. This left God free to fulfil that promise. Our verse says that **"Abraham believed God,....."** - but we have to be careful.

These Old Testament accounts are somewhat condensed versions of the full picture. They do not give us all the details. We have to fill them in from elsewhere in Scripture, and be guided by what other passages give us to fill out the entire picture. From other passages we know that God did not just say, **"Abraham, see the stars? So shall your seed be."** But we learn that God explained to Abraham what he meant by **"seed"**. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul tells us that God made it clear to Abraham that when God said, **"so shall your seed be"**, he was talking about Jesus, who would be the Seed of Abraham.

**Galatians 3:16:-**

***"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, "And to seeds," as of many, but as of one, "And to your Seed," who is Christ."***

God evidently explained to Abraham that there was One coming who would fulfil all the promises that Abraham would have a heavenly seed, as well as the earthly seed of his physical descendants.

In **Genesis 13:16** God had promised Abraham descendants would be as numerous as the DUST and in **Genesis 15:5**, as numerous as the STARS. The DUST pictures Abraham's natural posterity - those who are both Jews and Arabs by birth. The STARS depict his spiritual seed; - those who are justified by FAITH from all the peoples of the world who stand with Abraham as their father in faith. With regard to Abraham's spiritual descendants, God said his spiritual Seed would be Jesus, and then many others through faith in Him. It is through Jesus that all the promises to Abraham's seed would be fulfilled. That is why, on one occasion, when Jesus was talking to the Pharisees, they said to Him, *"Abraham is our father."*

**Jesus said to them in John 8:39 and John 8:56:-**

**39. "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham.**

**56. "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."**

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The Lord reminded these Jews that Abraham had looked forward to the day of the Messiah, and he had actually seen it by FAITH and was glad. Abraham's faith rested in the coming of the one in whom history would be completed, Jesus the one called "the Christ/Messiah". God evidently explained to Abraham, and Abraham understood by FAITH that the Seed of righteousness, Jesus, was coming and that He would remove the penalty and guilt of man's misbehaviour. He would rise again from the dead as a living Lord to give His life to men and women everywhere who placed their faith in Him, thus fulfilling the promise to Abraham. History would have its fulfilment in this "seed".

Abraham believed God. He believed God's promise about the Seed, and so he was justified, made righteous, and given the gift of eternal life forever with God. Interestingly enough, when James quotes this passage from **Genesis 15** he says in **James 2:23**:-

***"And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." And he was called the friend of God."***

Beloved, that surely is acceptance, isn't it? – To be called "the friend of God"?

Abraham became God's FRIEND -- not because he behaved so well, or because he was a godly man and obeyed God; he became the FRIEND of God because he believed God's promise about the Seed Who was to come, God stepping into history in more than a prophet; Jesus the Chosen One. Fifteen years later, the son of promise Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 years old. From this son came another son, from whom came twelve sons, from one of whom came the Seed, the One by whom all the families of the earth are blessed.

As Abraham believed in the Seed to COME, so we today believe in the Seed who CAME, died on a cross, was raised, and is coming again. He is the one who is more than presently Moslem or Jew believes him to be, but one in whom they will discover their hope and their King/Lord. Our faith must follow the faith of Abraham. His faith looked forward toward the one who defeats sin and death, and ours look back to this. The Bible tells us that this faith in the Word of God was considered the basis for Abraham's righteousness. In other words, because Abraham believed God, God saved his soul!

By way of introduction, and to really understand Paul's point in Romans 4:7-8, let's read the first 5 verses of Psalm 32.

### ***Psalm 32:1-5:-***

- 1. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.*
- 2. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile.*
- 3. When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.*
- 4. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah*
- 5. I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord," And You forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah*

David is clearly referring to his own personal experiences. He had been tormented by the guilt of his sins for some time, but he reflects upon the basis of his forgiveness, and it is the perfect CHARACTER OF GOD and the PLAN OF GOD. God is the Lord of Mercy; we are beneficiaries of his grace and his peace. All this is our inheritance when, and only when we walk in the faith of our father Abraham. Paul reflects upon this truth in his letter to the Galatians.

### ***Galatians 3:1-18:-***

*"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"*

- 2 This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
- 3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*
- 4 Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*
- 5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*
- 6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*
- 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*
- 8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*
- 9 So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*
- 10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*
- 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.*
- 12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*
- 13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:*
- 14 That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*
- 15 Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*
- 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

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*17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

*18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise."*

### (e) Abraham as an Illustration of Godly Faith and Works

#### (i) Galatians 3:6-18

##### Galatians 3 Verses 6 - 9

**" 6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. 7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. 8 And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations be blessed. 9 So then, they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham."**

Paul's master-stroke here is to go back in time before the Law was even given, to illustrate that God's plan existed before the Law came into being, and therefore will continue after the Mosaic Law has ceased to be relevant. No Judaizer or legalist would ever doubt the salvation or sanctification of Abraham, yet he did not have the Mosaic Law. Not only that, but he did not have the regular permanent indwelling Holy Spirit (John 8:56 cf John 14:17), yet still he grew spiritually after salvation. How much more then can we, after the fullness of God's revelation has been received, having now the Holy Spirit within for power, live as God would have us live without reference to the Mosaic Law.

**Verse 6.** Paul quotes Genesis 15:6 here from the LXX version of the Old Testament. From this text Paul will develop a long and sustained argument showing the God has not changed; that justification by faith has been his policy all along, and that the Law had a different job altogether.

The Law of Moses was given within the context of God's Grace-policy (justification by Faith), having a temporary function to prepare the way for the coming of the final sacrifice for sin. By establishing a clear standard of sin all men and women could see their unrighteousness as they looked into the Law, and then seek salvation through God's grace provisions (the Sacrificial System and Feasts, that all looked forward itself to what Jesus would do).

Abraham's life and his covenant relationship with God is a good illustration of the manner in which all men in all ages are saved; by God's grace, through faith. As one writer has said, "Confidence in God, come what may and resulting in obedience to God's revealed will, characterize Abraham's Life". Abraham is our mentor for living as God calls us to live.

Abraham in Genesis 15, believed God, and did what was required by faith and God established an unconditional covenant with him (Gen 5:17). Abraham simply said "Amen" to God; he believed and trusted in God's word. As the commentator Findlay perceptively points out: "The Legalist tries to make God believe in him - Abraham and Paul are content to believe in God." Let us choose our company and be like these great men, not like the legalists. Legalism may be defined as doing things to impress God with your devotion and seriousness, but it falls short of God's standards, and only the grace provision of the sacrificial system meets God's holy demands.

**Verse 7.** Whose son do you want to be, Paul asks? Will you be a Son of Abraham (by faith and grace), or a son of the Law? The sons of Abraham are those who like Abraham believe God and depend upon their faith in God to save them, not any works of righteousness that they have done. Faith is non-meritorious for it is not our faith which saves but God, it is the object of our faith which has the efficacy. It **does not follow** from this verse however that the Christian Church becomes as "sons of Abraham" by faith, the New Israel; for Abraham was father to the Jews, Arabs, and some Gentile nations. We share the blessing in Christ Jesus, as seed of the Seed, but we do not replace the other "sons".

As Paul was later to picture it (Rom 11:17), all of God's children are represented by the same olive tree, all are rooted and grounded in God, but the branches differ. The church is likened to wild branches grafted in after most of the natural branches (Israel) have been cut off, through their unfruitfulness (**Rom 11:17, 19 cf John 15:1,2,6**). Israel and the Arabs, as the "natural branches" can and will be grafted back in again, in vast numbers Paul prophecies (**Rom 11:23-27**). So the church and the natural sons of Abraham are two parts of the one whole, but are to be kept distinct in God's Plan. In the Tribulation Period it is Israel that is again centre stage in the Plan of God, and this is why the Arab sons of Abraham find their place in the Plan of God by their assistance to the Israelis who have accepted that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

It is important to note that in the first century of our era not all the Israelite branches were "cut off", for it was a predominantly Jewish church that remained the majority for a number of years after the resurrection of the Lord. Many Jews and Arabs were part of the early church and members of both families of Abraham have been followers of Jesus down the centuries, but in smaller numbers than the gentile nations. Forty years after the Cross and Resurrection Israel as a nation ceased to exist in the Roman invasion of the land. Israel as a nation was set aside for a time, but individual branches of Israel remain in the olive tree/grape vine, that is formed of all who stand, "in faith", and await the King's return. John 15 : 1-8, Matthew 21 : 33 - 41, Mark 12 : 1-9, Luke 20 : 9 - 18, Isaiah 5 : 1- 7.

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Jews of Paul's day, like today, make much of their relationship to Abraham, but implicit in this verse is the point that while racially one might be descended from Abraham there is no spiritual gain in that unless you too believe as Abraham believed. The Jews of the early Church that believed in Jesus became true "sons of Abraham", and so did the Arabs and Gentiles who also believed. In the latter days, the Jews, Arabs and other Gentiles who believe will all become sons of Abraham in the same way; by faith in God's Plan and in the person of the Saviour, Lord and King, Jesus.

**Verse 8.** Paul quotes again from Genesis (Gen 22:15-18). It is a composite, compressed quotation, also including Gen 12:3, 18:18. Paul notes that God preached the gospel to Abraham. The gospel (euaggelion = good news) was glad tidings of salvation. It was good news because it announced to Abraham (and through him to all men) that God's Policy was Grace; God would do the work, man would get the benefits by faith. By saying 'amen' to God, by believing and acting upon their belief in the promises of God, Man received blessing. This principle can be seen working out in the three Genesis passages.

In Gen 12:3, God announces the promise to Abram of blessing he is to leave Haran and go to the Lord, the place of blessing, for him. He believes God and goes out, Gen 12:4. In Gen 18:18 Abraham and Sarah have just received the promise of a son from the angels (Gen 18:10-15), Sarah had laughed but Abraham had believed it and rested upon God's promise in faith. In Gen 22:18 Abraham received the promise of blessing the third time, after he has passed the greatest faith test of his life, the offering of Isaac upon the altar (Gen 22:1-14). Abraham knew God and trusted him implicitly, he knew that even if Isaac died God had promised to bless the world through Isaac (his promised seed), so because God would always keep his word, he would have raised Isaac from the dead if necessary.

These three incidents are remarkable pre-figurings of the gospel message of Jesus, portraying as they do:

- a. Repentance (turning away from old life, beginning anew Gen 12:4ff),
- b. Faith-rest (trusting in God to save and not ones own works (Gen 18) depending/standing on the promises of God),
- c. The sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus prefigured, (Gen 22).

We are all justified, if at all, the same way as Abraham. This means, today as Christians, we recognize our need (repentance from sin), we place our faith in the completed work of Jesus upon the Cross for us, and trust Him, that he has paid the price and that we are acceptable in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:6 of 2:8,9). This is not "easy believism" but transforming faith; we have the faith, which, as long as it is in the right object, (Jesus), allows God to transform us, as he transformed Abraham,

**Verse 9.** As Abraham was saved by faith, so are we; as he was blessed by God in his faith so are we. God's gracious blessings are ready to be poured out upon all who will believe, and walk in faith. Abraham was "believing" God, and this faith was the doorway to blessing, so it is with us, Eph 1:3. God has no grand-children! If Abraham is our father by race it matters not, what matters is that we are like our father and believe like he did. This passage also reminds us that God has a plan and it is working out, but that, as creator of space and time, he knows all things simultaneously and there are no surprises to him. Refer to the BTB study THE CHARACTER OF GOD.

The challenge to us is to walk with God in harmony with his revealed word and be ready to follow him as we should, in obedience to what we understand about his plan. This side of eternity we cannot understand all of it, but what we do we must be obedient to. The call is to faith! The pastor that does not preach grace does not preach the counsel of God. If we are to use examples of Bible believers let us take Paul's lead here and use men like Abraham for our examples, as he sums up the things we must emulate.

The present pastoral role of church leadership is to give the believer the teachings of the Word that they might have something to believe in that is trustworthy in an unstable society. The daily challenge for all pastors/leaders and all believers of all time is to hear, believe, and obey the word as Abraham did. God will do the work in our lives; we are asked to believe and watch the Lord work, we are not called to work in our own strength, and then wait for the Lord to praise us! Every pastor is to get the message the right way around!

Paul reminds us in this section that God is not caught out by any event of time, for in eternity past he "foresaw" all that would occur as if it was in the present, for there is neither present, past, or future with God, only with us. God is the creator of this present "Space-Time" universe, but is beyond both categories of present existence for us. This is an important point for us to consider when we discuss the doctrines of Election and Foreknowledge, for there is strictly speaking no "foreknowledge" with God, for all events are spread before him in a way we cannot (as creatures of space and time) know this side of eternity. God is eternal, while we live temporarily in space and time!

Too many theologians argue about, what came first, God's foreknowledge or his election and will. Such a debate is what philosophers call a "category mistake". It treats the creator as a creature. With God there is no future or present; He sees all things as one! We cannot understand this **at all presently**, but that is for a good reason; we are creatures, not the creator. The key doctrine for man to understand is not found in the debate between Calvinism and Arminianism, but in the CHARACTER OF GOD – it is OMNISCIENCE here, not "Fore-knowledge".

Let us be characterized by obedience as creatures! Obedience means living as Abraham lived; hearing the words of the living God, and walking humbly in obedience to them. We have the indwelling Holy Spirit to assist us in every step of the way, and it is walking in the light of the Word, in the power of the Spirit that fulfills the definition of the "Christian life"

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today and will be the characteristic of all believers in the Great Tribulation period as they unite in God's power against the "man of sin".

### e. (ii) Galatians Chapter 3 VERSES 10 - 14

**"10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. 11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith. 12 And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them. 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree: 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the spirit through faith."**

**Verse 10.** As the late Dr J V McGee, of "Thru The Bible Radio", points out the key word here is "continueth". There may be days, if you are trying, when you do keep the law but you cannot keep it up always, and all it takes is one slip and you are condemned. The "curse" is simply the Jewish way of saying, "condemned"! The law can only therefore 'curse', for no-one can ever fulfill its total requirements. It cannot save, only condemn, for none can "continue" perfectly to obey it.

As the commentator W Hendriksen notes: "God gave his law in order that man, by nature a child of wrath, and thus lying under the curse (Gal 3:13), as definitely declared in Deuteronomy 27:26, John 3:36, and Ephesians 3:2, might be reminded not only of his unchanging obligation to live in perfect harmony with this law (Leviticus 19:2), but also his total inability to fulfill this obligation (Rom 7:24)."

To this could be added the Old Testament verdict on man, as given in, Psalm 14:1-3, Psalm 53:1-3, Psalm 5:9, 140:3, 9:7, Isa 59:7, and Psalm 36:1, all of which Paul quotes in Rom 3:10-18 which is his later expanded treatment of this same subject. Paul's use of Old Testament scripture is instructive here also, for it is all quoted as authoritative. He strongly states - God has spoken and nothing will change this revealed policy.

The verdict is clear; anyone trying to depend on keeping the law for their salvation is doomed to judgment, for they will always fall short of it at some point, and to fall short in any point is to remain under the curse. We must remember that the law (or more correctly the Torah) recognized within itself that no-one could keep all its provisions, and that is why there was a sacrificial system. To bring a sacrifice meant the worshipper was recognizing they had sinned, were repentant, and were trusting in God's grace through the sacrifice to forgive them and remove the curse that disobedience had brought. The laws of Moses prepared men for offering sacrifices in faith by and through conviction of sin.

Paul's point is going to be, that the Law had the purpose through this to prepare all people for the last sacrifice - the Lord Jesus Christ. It is in Him, who anyone who will be saved, must express their faith in, as previously they had expressed their faith in the lamb or other offering. Paul is strongly indicating that these legalists are distorting the very purpose of the law itself. It was designed to point to Christ, but the legalists have made it a thing in itself!

Paul is correct from the Jewish perspective, for the Law, Ordinances, and the Sacrifices were never separated by the early Rabbis; they were ONE system, one unified provision of God for Israel. Paul's strongest point to these Legalists/Judaizers, is that they distort Biblical Judaism; they make the Mosaic commandments something they were NEVER intended to be!

**Verse 11.** Having established from the law itself that its legalistic provisions can only condemn, and that faith then was expressed through the sacrificial system, Paul now moves to the period of the prophets to quote from Habakkuk 2:4 to illustrate that in all the period covered by the Law, the same principle that Abraham exemplified applied. The law might condemn to death, but the Just shall live by faith as they utilized God's provision for salvation.

Faith is God's way in all ages to come to him, (Hebrews 11:6). This verse has been distorted by Legalists but by placing it in this context with Abraham Paul ensures that its true meaning is seen. It may be also that Paul is accusing the legalists of violating the very Law itself, by declaring that God saves people differently according to their race, Jews one way and Gentiles one way. Paul makes it clear that God has made his policy clear; it is through grace, by faith, for all men.

**Verse 12.** Paul here answers the legalists appeal that faith and law be combined, but "you cannot combine them, they are contradictory". Leviticus 18:5 sets out the basic premise of the law; only perfect obedience enables one to live in the law, and since no-one has been able to do that, no-one has been or could be saved by the law, and the curse hangs over all men. The legal provisions of the law prepare men to see fully their need for God's gracious provision of a Saviour. Legalism without sacrifice is pride; it is the opposite of God's policy, for it is man saying, "I can do this without help". Such arrogance is not of God but of the father of pride, Satan himself. John 8: 44.

The modern Jewish believer in Jesus, David Stern, sums Paul's argument up from the Messianic Jewish perspective. "The heresy of legalism, when applied to the Torah, says that anyone who does these things, that is anyone who mechanically follows the rules for shabbat, kushrut, etc, will attain life through them, will be saved, will enter the kingdom of God, will obtain eternal life! No need to trust God, just obey the rules! The problem with this simplistic ladder to

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heaven is that legalism conveniently ignores the "rule" that trust must underlie all rule following which God finds acceptable. But trust necessarily converts mere rule following into something altogether different, in fact, into its opposite; genuine faithfulness to God. Therefore 'legalistic obedience to Torah commands' (that is 'works of law') is actually disobedience to the Torah." (Stern, 1992, p 546-547). Without trust (faith) it is impossible to please God! Hebrews 11: 6.

**Verse 13.** The Good News (Christian Gospel) is given here; the curse of the law, which all deserve, Jesus took upon himself. The passages referred to here are, Deuteronomy 27:26, 28:15-68. This refers to the punishment for violation of the law where the sinner after being stoned was to be hung up on a tree/stake for all to see their humiliation, and so fear the judgment of God. It was this total judgment that the Lord took upon himself when he went to the cross. Like the lamb of the sacrifice (John 1:29), sinless and without spot or blemish (Heb 9:14, 1 Pet 1:19), Jesus offered himself the just for the unjust (1 Pet 3:18), in order that all might be freed of the penalty of sin (1 John 2:2), and through faith in Him be born again to newness of life (John 3:3, 15,16,18,36). That which the Judaisers deserved to be, Jesus willingly accepted as the place for himself, in order that these very blasphemers might be saved.

**Verse 14.** Paul introduces here, by way of summary of his case so far, the two purposes of the redemptive work of Christ on the cross. Both purposes introduced by the Greek preposition 'hina' plus the subjunctive mood of the verb, which means 'in order that' (ie. purposive). The twin purposes are that:

- (1) All nations might receive the blessings (spiritual, soulish, and physical) that flow from relationships with God established through faith in Jesus, and
- (2) That all might receive the promised Holy Spirit the same way, that they might live by faith in the provisions and blessings of God's Grace.

The Lord's actions were the only way for blessing to be freely given to all who express faith in him. A new position with God, and fellowship with God occur only through faith in Jesus; through trusting him and being faithful to him, not by any legalistic system of works to impress him. God the Father is "impressed" only by the obedience of Jesus to the great plan of salvation; he alone is the sole celebrity of history! We enter this place of blessing and grace through our faith in Jesus person and work, not by any things we do to try to impress God.

Paul reminds us that we stand under/within/because of, the grace of God in his perfect provision of the perfect sacrifice for our sins. All are equal in his sight, either under sin or in saving relationship with Jesus. It is faith that makes the difference. As we were born again so we should go on in Him. The question is, are we going on as we have begun? Are we continuing to walk by faith in Jesus or have we started to become proud in our obedience to the laws of men or even fooled ourselves to the extent that we think we do not need confession of sin? Paul also challenges us here to remember the grace that saved us and to praise God for his so great salvation.

As Pastoral Leaders we are reminded that the theme of every biblical ministry is grace, and from that praise for God by word, deed and life of all the saints. We are saints because he was a sacrifice, and this should be the content of our praise daily. Legalism must be attacked in all its forms, for when men get away from grace they enter the enemies camp with pride and arrogance, and these two mental attitude sins will destroy any person's ministry and any church fellowship. Every believer should hear every week messages that tell them how to live for, and serve the Lord in the grace way that the cross opens for us. Legalistic systems must have no place in our churches, or our lives; only walking in the spirit in the light of the word of God.

He became a curse for us, the perfect and final sacrifice for sin that we might have a worthy object to express our faith in who would save us and enter us into relationship with God. Praise is required and is one of the key expressions of our daily obedience to him.

### e. (iii) Galatians 3:15 - 18

**"15 Brethren I speak after the manner of men. Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed no man disannulleth or addeth thereto. 16 Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, and to seeds, as of many, but as of one. And to thy seed, which is Christ. 17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. 18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise."**

In verses 15-18 Paul moves on to show two further points about justification by the faith that is "according to Abraham"; (1) the principle behind the Abrahamic covenant (faith) is 'fixed' and absolute for all ages, and (2) to emphasize that the object of that faith through all ages is Jesus the King or all kings and Lord of all lords. Paul does this by drawing an analogy to the rules current in his day about the making of a Greek will and testament.

**Verse 15.** Paul makes it clear that he is using a commonly understood analogy here to these people ("speak after the manner of men"). In the Greek cities to which he wrote, once a will was "confirmed" (GK: kuroo- validated, ratified by being passed through the city records office), it was final and binding on all parties. In the case of Abraham, who is in view here, as the type of saving faith, God made the covenant (diatheke), and Abraham (and by type all who believe like

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he believed, Verse 9), receive the benefits. No-one can change God's covenant for He alone made it, ratified it and acted upon it, so it is 100% reliable and eternal in its consequences. We must be clear as to its nature and then we can be sure that we are within its operation.

**Verse 16.** Paul has been accused of allegorizing here, even using a fallacious argument like so many of his Rabbinic contemporaries, however he is not here allegorizing but spiritualizing; he is looking at this verse (Gen 22:18) in the light of his gospel. Paul's point is seen clearly also by the older commentator Findlay, who notes, "Of the law and the promise the latter must be adjusted to the earlier dispensation, the law interpreted by the promise."

Paul's argument here is spiritually comprehensive of all revelation from Abraham; the law right down to his own day. Paul is drawing the principles coming from the blessing to Abraham right down to his own day and all days thereafter. The seed of Abraham, in common usage is all his descendants yet Paul is arguing that the true seed is the Messiah, and all who are "in him".

- (1) The promise was made to Abraham and to his seed (singular – or corporate – all who share in the area of faith).
- (2) The true seed of Abraham (the one fulfilling his purpose and the promises associated with his line) is the Lord Jesus – the descendant, yet the king.
- (3) The king represents, or stands for, his people, the Messiah stands for his servants.
- (4) All who believe in Jesus are entered into union with him.
- (5) Therefore the promise includes all those who are by faith in union with Jesus, but as we are in this place because of our position 'in fellowship with him', we are to give all glory to him.

As D Guthrie points out, "Paul was **not** basing a truth on a small point of grammar. He had a deep spiritual appreciation of the real nature of Abraham's covenant. It was pointing to its fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus. Grammar was but indirectly supporting a truth which had already dawned on the Apostle as the real essence of the promise." Once again grace is his theme, because he sees it within the very fabric of the total Torah itself, because the Torah comes within the bigger context of the total plan of God, and Grace is at the heart from beginning to end!

**Verse 17.** The Law came 430 years after the promise, it cannot annul what God said before, there must be therefore another explanation of what the purpose of the Law really is and this is the topic of the next section, verses 19-25. Paul is using direct and irrefutable logic here to defeat the legalists, who he argues rightly, have failed to look at God's revelation in the order in which it came. They have taken texts out of context, and created pretexts for things God did not intend.

**Verse 18.** God's promise holds good even if there had been no law ever given; the promise is permanent, the law does not change that one bit. Paul stresses here, "the once for-all-ness", of God's Grace, no later system of law can alter such a gift to man,"

As already Noted above, (Verse 16) the law must be interpreted in line with the determinative revelation of Grace, and when rightly interpreted it will be seen to be one more step in the path of the unfolding of greater Grace that comes through faith in Jesus. As Warren Wiersbe observes, when rightly interpreted, "the law is not contrary to the promise, they work together to bring sinners to the Saviour."

The promise of blessing through salvation comes by faith alone, by believing, not working or trying. Ironside puts it beautifully: "You cannot become a Christian by trying any more than you can become the Prince of Wales by trying. You are what you are by birth. You are what you are as a sinner by natural birth, and you become a child of God through second birth, through believing on the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessing of Abraham is yours when you receive it by faith."

As we have already identified, even in the days of Moses, 430 years after Abraham, and for all the days following, the faith principle remained operative. The 313 commandments of the legal provisions of the law having as their purpose simply the condemnation of the sinner, and opened the door to the Levitical sacrificial system(grace provision) through which the sinner was delivered by the blood of the innocent sacrifice.

In this section Paul has illustrated the doctrine of Justification by Faith with the example of Abraham. Demonstrating by this the permanent nature of the Faith covenant and the fatal flaw in the argument (and opposite nature) of those who would reduce the Law to just a list of rules. By ignoring the sacrificial system, they ignore the faith component of the very Torah they claim to uphold. Abraham's faith is compared to the present Christians as the object is stated to be the same – the person and work of Jesus. In the next section Paul, having shown the permanent nature of the Faith-promise, shows the temporary purpose of the legal provisions of the Mosaic Law within the context of God's Grace Plan.

Praise is once more required of us, is it not, when we consider our position through faith in Jesus? We have become, through Him, genuine inheritors of the promises of Abraham, blessed members of the eternal family of faith. We are reminded again that obedience to the legal provisions of the Mosaic Law will add nothing to what God has provided for us in Christ. We are challenged to accurately interpret the Scriptures and not remove the commandments from their context within the entire Mosaic system.



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This section is an important one for correcting our approach to the Scriptures. The legalists use texts out of their contexts, and so create pretexts for their false beliefs. Paul notes that the Abrahamic principles provide the context for the Mosaic Law and these two must be brought together with the words of Habakkuk. Seen in their contexts the Law does not violate either Abraham or Habakkuk, as grace and faith are at the heart of each. The legalist's problem is that they put the grace aspects of the Mosaic Law (the sacrificial system) outside their orbit.

We must teach our people that the Mosaic Law cannot be divided up and taken in the "bits" that suit. The commandments were within a cultural and racial context, and were meant to lead the convicted person to the priests who would offer the appropriate sacrifice. It was the person's faith in the sacrifice offered which saved the sinner by covering their sin until the Messiah/Saviour would come to perfectly and completely take it away. He has done this and all those who stand with Abraham have seen and believed this.

**(f) Final Words to the Church at Jerusalem about their need for Abrahamic faith to Deliver them from the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD**

**(i) HEBREWS 6 : 9 - 12**

**"But beloved we are persuaded of better things from you, the things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."**

This section covers the certainty of the Jerusalem believer's salvation and the desire of the author for them at the time of writing. There are three parts to this last section in Verses 9-12. Let us get a summary before we go ahead and analyse these verses.

1. The author is persuaded of their salvation and their past productivity, even if they have "lost the plot" more recently.
  - a. Knowing the justice and faithfulness of God.
  - b. Knowing of their past ministries towards the people of God.
2. His desire is that their diligence will continue toward full assurance of hope (confidence based on the truths of God's Word) to the end. Compare Hebrews 3:6,14. It is not sufficient to grow and be productive for a time, then to sit back and trust in past success. The believer's life is a race that requires patience and lifelong endurance, and they must keep on running the race. 2 Timothy 4:7, Hebrews 12:1
3. Instead of being sluggish (dull - apathy towards both study and application of the Word - Hebrews 5:11), he encourages them to imitate past heroes of the faith, as Abraham (Vs. 13-15), and other mature believers who made a difference in the Plan of God. He will take this up again in Chapter 11.

**Verse 9.** The author reminds them by his reference to them as "beloved", that they are under the loving care of their Saviour God. Even if we waste the time the Lord has given us we are still His and He loves us; He cannot love us less as his children than he loved us as unbelievers. In Chapter 12 he will explore this thought further. These people have not done much for years, except obscure the Gospel message and embarrass the Lord, yet they are still "Beloved" of their Father.

He tells us that he has no doubts about their salvation also in this verse. It is good that he does this for it stops the foolish speculation of the theologians, if only they would read the text more carefully!!! By using the perfect tense of the verb describing how "persuaded" he is of their spiritual status he underlines that he has no doubts at all about their salvation, and this must have re-assured the first hearers of the letter at this point. He has been very blunt about their error and disobedience, and many would have been brought to doubt their salvation by this point.

"We are persuaded", he strongly states, "of better things of you", than the things I have raised so far! He then mentions that the things he knows they have exist only in the lives of those who are saved. They accompany, are closely associated with, salvation. This is a crucial verse for interpretation of the chapter and the letter, for it tells us that he does not doubt their salvation, but believes they are in danger of discipline. Even though he has spoken harshly and strongly about their behaviour, they are his brethren in salvation, and they remain beloved of God. These verses will be great comfort for the Jewish and Arab believers during the Iranian invasion, and this in turn will provide encouragement in the Great Tribulation period, who will doubt their strength to survive the great evils unleashed against them by Satan's people, but who will be kept by the power of God, just as Abraham was kept through his faith.

**Verse 10.** They, like us, are not beloved because their acts have been "lovely", but in spite of their deeds the Lord loves them because of who He is! He reminds them of God's perfect character. God is righteous, He cannot be unrighteous, and on the basis of his perfect character he deals with them. God remembers their good deeds done in the power of the Holy Spirit, from their heart of love towards the Lord and their fellow saints. They have ministered in the past and they have kept on ministering to others through to the present. In the midst of their theological errors they have kept on demonstrating the "fruit of the Holy Spirit", and this proves their position as members of the Lord's family still.

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**Verse 11.** The writer's strongest desire is for them to keep on the path of spiritual life and service. He wants every one of them to focus on the goal of growth and service, and have lives that count for God. To reach the goal of spiritual maturity and enter the service that goes with it requires total commitment; real "diligence". The writer wants them to have lives without distraction; to be totally focused on their Christian service. Because of who God their Saviour is, they can have total confidence in their salvation, and that should give them the confidence to totally focus on the service the Lord requires of them.

**Verse 12.** Do not be slugs! Do not sit and idle by the hours and days, but get up and use your time for God! This was a favourite concept for the writer of Proverbs, calling on the people of his day to look to the ant and work, at least as hard as they could see ants work! Proverbs 6:6, 9, 10:26, 13:4, 20:4, 26:16. Slothfulness and laziness generally was considered a serious sin to the ancient Hebrews, for they saw it, quite correctly, as a wasting of the gift of time given by God to each person. They were most aware of the shortness of our human life and were most serious about not wasting it. In the last days of this age there will not be time to waste, and so the advice here is crucial – go for it!

We are tranquillised by modern media, by business, and social activity, and so we often sleep through the spiritual opportunities that we are here on the planet to fulfil. To be "slothful" is to be under divine discipline. Proverbs 12:24, 27, 15:19, 18:9, 19:24, 21:25, 22:13, 24:30, 26:13 -15, Matthew 25:14-46, Romans 12:11. In the darkest of days that will come upon the earth believers will not be able to do much except hide from their persecutors, but they will be able to download and study God's Word, and encourage each other. This will be their expression of faith in that dark day.

Patience is the virtue that the writer reminds them is needed to achieve their goals also. They need to persevere through the hard times of life or they will never be fit to be the soldiers of God in the real battles that need to be fought in the Invisible War against demonic satanic forces. To come through the days of time, and inherit the blessings of eternity may require that we walk through many dark valleys in this short life, but if we focus on the Lord and his Hope and hold the truth with patience we will inherit the rewards that await those who serve Him faithfully. This verse reminds us that there is a price to be paid at times, and those who walk with grit, determination and patience are the ones who win the crowns and other rewards the Lord has for those who love and serve him as he calls them to.

Even as disobedient children we are reminded of how God sees us, and we are still children and as such we are beloved. These people had not been doing the right things for years, but they are still beloved of God. This is a comfort to all who have faltered in their walk with God. Let all be encouraged by this but also warned, for these people would lose every physical thing they owned in the years to come; for they would have to flee their city Jerusalem and take refuge with others. The Lord was loving and patient with them but they were not obedient, and didn't sell up and flee the city when they could have with the profit from their property sales. They escaped, but with their lives and clothing and moveable personal effects only. Their delay in obedience was expensive. Just so with us, if we do not follow what the Lord tells us to do at the time of the order, then there will be a price to pay, even though we are still "beloved".

Matthew 7 reminds us that the Lord expects the "fruit of the Holy Spirit" to be in our lives. No fruit = no reality of faith! John also repeats this principle. "By this shall all men know you are my disciples, if you love one another!" John 13:35. Our Lord's words come back to us here. Even if a brother or sister is engaged in theological error, yet they have the fruit of the Spirit, they are still safe, and they are indeed our brethren, and our sole focus should be to do what the author here does, correct them and restore them to the fullness of the truth of God's Word. They proved their family connection by expressing the "family likeness" through love in their relationships with other believers. Love does cover a multitude of sins as far as the Lord is concerned, but the day of reckoning for the sins will eventually come if they are not dealt with! Proverbs 10:12, 1 Peter 4:8. Let us be real in our faith!

What is our desire for our fallen brethren? Galatians 6:1, reminds us that if we believe we are spiritual we ought to be the first to try to restore all who have fallen into sin and error. The writer sets us the example here of true spiritual maturity as he goes about a reasoned and thoughtful plan to win these people over to the truth and save them from the consequences of their errors. His sole desire is for them to grow and so serve their Lord as they ought. He wants them to be safe from the destruction that is coming, and he wants them to win spiritual rewards for all eternity. He thinks of their blessing and through writing this letter has clearly "sweated blood" for them trying to find the best way to put the truth in order that they might be delivered from their errors. This is the commitment the Lord requires of us all; we must be ready to put ourselves out for our brethren.

Diligence must accompany assurance/confidence, in the same way as works of faith accompany salvation early on in our Christian life. As young believers we express our newly found salvation with energetic witnessing and other acts of love, and as we mature these acts must continue, even if they are in different areas then. We are to keep on expressing our faith in action, and we are keep on having the mental attitude of the soldier and the farmer, true grit and determination, in the face of troubles, testing and trials. The Lord calls us to "grit it out" in the power of the Holy Spirit. How are we doing believer under the daily pressures of life? Do we tough it out, do we have the diligence and faith the Lord calls us to or have we become moaners?

As Leaders, how encouraging are we with those who fall into theological error? We see the writer of Hebrews doing the job here really well, for he has really laid out the error of these people to them, yet here he draws close and reminds them that they are "beloved", and that they have much more to do than they have done, but their track record should give

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them grounds for hope. He reminds them that they are secure, not on the basis of their works but only on the basis of God's perfect character.

God's perfect righteousness is their security not their erratic works for the saints. He got them to look unto the perfect character of the Holy God, and be corrected by that vision. How well do we measure up to the writer of Hebrews? Are we encouragers of the fallen in such a way that they are restored? We are to be assessed by our results, and the writer here achieved his goal; these people were restored to usefulness. Let us assess our ministries, and all our spiritual work this way!

How well do the saints under our ministry understand the importance of serving their brethren? Do they see that the love of the saints is the most important measure of their spiritual status? Matthew 7:13-23. Do they also see that grit and determination are indeed Christian virtues, and are necessary to please and serve the Lord in the pressures that the world will bring upon us? Do they hear that sloth is an evil? Do they see that faith, confidence and patience are the three virtues that matter above all others, for they lead to all others? If we cannot answer a strong "yes" to these questions then we may be off the mark in our work.

### f. (ii) HEBREWS 6: 13 - 20

**"For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself, saying, surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show to the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."**

The Faithfulness of God illustrated in the life of Abraham. Vs. 13-20. The stable eternal reality of Abrahamic Covenant, and Abraham's personal, lifelong reliance on God's faithfulness becomes a challenge to every believer to imitate; both in trusting God's character, as Abraham did, and in faithful service and obedience.

1. The promise is given. Verses. 13-14. Compare Genesis 12:1-3, 15:1-6
2. The patient endurance (faith-rest) of Abraham. Vs. 15. Compare Romans 4:13-25, Hebrews 11:8-12
3. The oath of God an end to dispute. Vs. 16-17. Divine essence the basis of every promise. 2 Peter 1:4
4. The two immutable things (God's promise and God's oath) provide a stable hope (elpis - assurance).
  - a. The assurance of God's word is a refuge of the soul.
  - b. The assurance of God's word is a secure and firm anchor of the soul.
  - c. This assurance of God's word is focused on our High Priest (Colossians 3:1-2) who has preceded us as the advance guard into heaven - there to continue a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, which we share. (1 Peter 2:9)

**Verse 13.** The writer uses the Jewish practise of oath making to back up all contractual agreements as his illustration of God's faithfulness. Remember, at this point in the chapter, the writer's point is not the obedience of the believer, but the faithfulness and dependability of God's holy character. Just as men are in the habit of doing, so God backed his promise to Abraham (the Abrahamic Covenant) with an oath. The oath was not taken in the name of any other person or thing, for nothing is more reliable than the character of God himself. The writer's point is clear; the most reliable thing in this temporary universe of change is the holy character of God. It is upon God's character that we live and move and have our being as believers, and **HE** alone is completely trustworthy and reliable. We may have been faithless but He always remains faithful! 2 Timothy 2:12, 13.

**Verse 14.** The double statements of this verse underline the faithfulness and loving mercy/blessing of the Lord. To Abraham he said, "blessing, I will bless you, multiplying I will multiply you". This is the Greek translation of the Hebrew infinitive absolute, indicating in the strongest way language was able to state, that God was determined to do this, that it would happen, and that the results were going to go on into eternity. We have eternal life, and eternal rewards, our very life as true believers in God is eternal and blessed beyond the minds of mankind. It is the eternal life perspective that we need when facing the tests of time. This was true of the Jews before Jesus, of the Christians presently, and will also be true of Jew, Arab and Gentiles in the future Great Tribulation period.

**Verse 15.** Now the writer moves from the dependability of God to the faith response of Abraham. This is always the correct order in teaching. First people must know how secure they are in God's loving character, then they can be challenged to obedience. Abraham had many difficult times, and was forced by them, as we are, to apply what he knew of God or else panic and fall apart. The writer invites us to go back into Genesis and see that as he faced the tests of time, Abraham applied the truth that he knew most times, and when he failed, he quickly dealt with his sin. Abraham is therefore the perfect person to point to for the Jerusalem Church in the crisis filled 60s of the first century, for he was no plaster saint, he was a real man with foibles and failures, but his greatness was seen in his recovery and restoration after every failure in a test to have faith in God again.

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The call of the writer is to the "patient endurance of Abraham". The writer uses the favourite word of Paul, (patiently endured = makrothumia = big souled) a military word that was used of the soldier who would always fill the gap in the line, whose tough patient endurance could be depended upon. It is this fruit of the Holy Spirit that is will be required by all believers through the dark days of the Great Tribulation period.

**Verse 16.** In a legal document the oath is meant to end all present and future disputes as to the meaning and purpose of the agreement. Men always swear their oath by a greater power to underline their commitment to the agreement, and to make clear to the other parties that they intend the agreement made to be totally binding, and the end of all strife that might have existed to that point. This is the nature of the Abrahamic Covenant; all generations are to rest upon its promises.

**Verse 17.** God was desiring, and willing, even more than men who make contracts, to underline the dependability of His promises. Believers are called here, "heirs of promise", making it clear to us that this is our nature as Christians, as God sees us. We are, "heirs of God's promises", at all points in our lives, the only question is, are we living as if this is true, or are we living at a lower level? God demonstrated the unchangeable nature of his character and faithfulness of His Word by both an oath and a direct promise. God pledged himself as security for the "deal" he makes with mankind. God puts his character on the line to win our salvation; if we follow his instructions and we do not receive what he promised, we have proved God a liar, and thereby he loses his good name! God will not lose his good name; He does not change, He remains faithful! Like Abraham we can rest upon the Word of God, as it is backed by the Character of God.

**Verse 18.** The writer adds evidence to evidence here, underlining the impossibility for God to ever be a liar on these matters. This is the strongest encouragement ever for us, for our God can be trusted totally. We come to God as those who seek refuge from a disaster we cannot face, and we must cling for our lives, for they are at stake! This matter of salvation is the most important of all things we face upon the earth. God's message to us is one of hope; of the total confidence we can have in his promises for they are backed by his holy character.

**Verse 19.** Our faith in God rests upon the bedrock of the character of the creator of the universe. Nothing can be more secure than the promises of God, for they rest upon His loving plan behind the very existence of the universe itself. God is the only place of refuge in the universe, for he alone has the plan that formed it, and knows the purpose and end of it all. He alone is our hope, all else is simply an uncertain place between the "big bang" that started the universe and the black holes that will end it (if we believe the astronomers, who are the only ones left if we reject God). As the days darken, the satanic doom merchants will use astronomical data to try to get people to trust the Anti-Christ, but the real data points to the Creator God alone as the only hope for mankind. God alone is the anchor of the soul in the storms of this created time-space universe. We do not rest upon things, and the temporary security they bring, but upon the character of the living Creator, Saviour, Deliverer, and our God.

This anchor of the soul is both sure and steadfast; it is safe given the external threats to our stability, and it is secure, within itself having the power to hold us if we cling to it. Once we see that our security rests upon the knowledge of and trust in the character of God we have "broken through" to knowledge of God and his plan that puts us ahead of most in the previous age. The Jewish believers were locked outside the Temple Veil, they saw very little of the workings of redemption, but by seeing this, we break through to a relationship with God, where He discloses to us the secrets of his heart! We enter behind the veil of the Temple, we enter the Holy of Holies, and there we meet with God. This comment is just made here, and the shock of it would have hit the first hearers of this letter hard, and the writer lest this sink in before he will go further with this thought later in the letter.

**Verse 20.** We do not enter behind the veil alone, for that would be too frightening, it would be to die! We follow our Lord Jesus, who tore the Veil in two, and who entered through into the Holy of Holies with the acceptable sacrifice for our sins. Matthew 27:51, Mark 15:38, Luke 23:45. The Lord is our fore-runner, the advanced scout of the army who ensures it is safe for the rest to follow, and he has done that very thing. The way is clear for us to follow, for the path is the one that he has cleared. He comes in the order of Melchizedek, and he is high priest forever in that order, ever able to intercede for us, as the Priest-King of the universe, and the creator God of the universe itself. The next chapter of Hebrews will explore this high priesthood further, and see just how marvellous is this position that we have through faith in Jesus, for he is above all things and people. Worship His Majesty! We can trust Him and His Holy Word. It is this assurance that breaks through for Jew and Arab in the last days.

### THE ANVIL - GOD'S WORD

Last eve I passed beside a blacksmith's door,  
And heard the anvil ring the vesper chime;  
Then, looking in, I saw upon the floor  
Old hammers, worn with beating years of time.

"How many anvils have you had," said I,  
"To wear and batter all these hammers so?"  
"Just one," said he, and then with twinkling eye,  
"The anvil wears the hammers out, you know."

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And so, thought I, the anvil of God's Word,  
For ages sceptic blows have beat upon;  
Yet, though the noise of falling blows was heard,  
The anvil is unharmed - the hammers gone.

Author Unknown

The story was told of an old Christian lady who had one son, for whom she saved up all her money to send to a seminary that he might serve the Lord. Sadly he went off to a liberal seminary where he lost the certainty of his faith. On one of his visits home he mocked his mother's faith in the doctrine of Eternal Security, saying, "Mother, you are not that significant, God would not lose anything if he lost you!" The old lady, knowing her scriptures, replied, "Son, he would lose more than me, he would lose his good name!" We cannot fall through God's fingers, for we have become members of his body; we have become the fingers! We are secure in Him. John 6:36-40.

We do not depend on the theologies of men, but on the character of the living God, who made all, and has a plan for all he has made. He has won the victory, we follow his battlefield glory and can enter with boldness into the spoils of that victory; for us that means we can know God and depend totally upon Him throughout our earth bound life, secure in the knowledge that we are with Him in blessedness forever and ever. The Lord has entered through the veil and is seated at the right hand of power, and so let us enter with confidence into our "heirship" and claim the promises that are ours through our Lord's work for us! This assurance is as true for believers now as it will be for those in the Great Tribulation period for then they see that Jesus indeed is far more than they previously believed him to be.

Do we look at the lives of the earliest believers as often as we should? The lives of the Patriarchs especially give us cause for confidence and celebration. They demonstrate the power and dependability of our Saviour God. As we know the stories of the great believers of the past so we gain more confidence in our own lives. Do we read the scriptures as often as we should, to gain this level of confidence? Many believers complain that they lack the faith of the fathers, but they are not prepared to be saturated in the Word of God as they were! Let us get serious about knowing the faith of the fathers, and let us imitate them in our study and application of the living Word of Truth.

Biblical teaching is telling people about the dependability of the character of their great God. Do we preach about theology proper as often as we ought? If people really know God, they will feel the solid rock beneath their feet and have confidence to face the pressures of time. The essence, or character of God is the foundation upon which all else is built. As we know Him we learn we can trust Him in all things. Once the knowledge of the character of God is well grounded in the Lord's people, we must move to the example of the early prophets and saints. This must be the subject of much of our regular advanced Bible teaching, for as we look at the lives of the early believers, of both Old and New Testaments, we see faith applied under pressure, and we see that life is not always a "bed of roses". The reality of living out faith in this world is facing pressure with faith and patience, completely trusting the power and plan of God to bring us through.

Leaders, ask yourself, do these people I teach have a sense of an anchor deep within their soul? Do they feel the rock beneath them after they have heard the Word taught? Do they sense the power of God in the midst of their pressures, or do I simply fire them up for a time? Our call is to stabilise the Lord's people upon His foundation, the bedrock of confidence resting upon his faithful character and victorious plan for mankind's redemption. Do they see themselves as, "the heirs of eternity", or do they see themselves, "on approval only"?

The security of the believer's salvation rests upon the stability of the base that faith is built. You build nothing on anxiety except neurosis! Believers are meant to be stable, strong, courageous, and confident, for we serve the risen Saviour, the king of Kings and Lord of Lords. Let us lead the Lord's people under our care, in praising His holy name for who he is and what he has done and what He will be to deliver us and bring in his kingdom. It is this level of stability that will be needed for all in the last days.

## f. (iii) HEBREWS CHAPTER 11:8-16

**8 "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out not knowing whither he went. 9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10 for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promise, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. 15 And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. 16 But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city."**

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## THE FAITH OF THE PATRIARCHS. HEBREWS 11 VERSES 8 -16

Abraham's faith is used here to illustrate the mature believer's response to the Will of God (vs. 8), their assurance in the Promise of God (vs 9), and confidence in the Power of God (vs 17-19). Abraham is extolled in Nehemiah 9:7 -8, as the example of faith to follow, and Paul mentions him in both Romans 4, and Galatians 3. He is "our father in the true faith". An important principle emerges here, in this section, and throughout the chapter. While over 70 years of Abraham's life is overviewed, there is no mention of his weaknesses, his failings, and sins. The principle here is a vital one for every believer of every Age to see and understand fully. Since all sins were judged in Christ on the Cross, God's view of the believer is not related to their sin or failures, but rather by what they do by faith in the Word and Person of God. In other words, God's record of our lives is concerned only with our faith, not our failures. When we stand in the faith of Abraham, God no longer sees our sins at all! Hebrews 10:17: "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more!".

**Verse 8.** Having received God's call, at that time Abraham heard and obeyed God's calling and went into the place God told him of. Abraham had a great life style in one of the greatest cities of the world of his day, Ur of the Chaldees. Excavation of Ur has revealed plumbing, toilets, and all the things that we think were only developed much later. Abraham heard the call of God to leave his comfort and spend the rest of his life under the skins of a tent. For the modern preachers of the false so called "prosperity gospel", this is a strange thing God does, yet as we will see as we advance in this chapter it is the normal thing. The Lord calls more to suffer on the path, and go without wealth, than he calls to the palaces of this world. Look at the great prophets of the days of the Exile. Jeremiah loses everything and dies a fugitive in Egypt, Ezekiel lives a captive in a mud hut by the rivers of Babylon, Haggai and Zechariah grow up as slaves and return to a blighted city to rebuild it stone by stone; Daniel alone lives and serves in a palace.

Abraham heard the Word to him, and he obeyed, and it is this moving out in personally obedient faith that proves his faith was real. The Greek verb, *exerchomai*, literally means, "he uprooted", and that is what he did. He uprooted his family and went out into a place unknown to them. He was told that the land would be given to him for an inheritance, yet in his life time all he would own was a cave in which to be buried. His burial plot became his testimony that one day his descendants would inherit his land, for God had already given it to him. This is a picture of the Christian faith, is it not? We have great eternal reward, and receive the down payment on it here and now in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but we do not enter into our full inheritance in time, only when we cross into eternity. It is also a picture of the faith of those who will serve God and witness to truth in the terrible days of the Tribulation Period.

He went out not knowing really where he went. He had not been to Canaan. He would have heard stories from travellers but had never travelled; few did in the ancient world. He left all he had ever known, and against the advice of friends, he left his house, his businesses, most of his family, all his friends of childhood, and fixed his eyes on what the Lord wanted for him. It is this level of committed obedience to which the Lord our God calls us.

**Verse 9.** He never was a citizen of any country after his move to Canaan. He stood alone, setting his face towards the will of God, and against any who stood against God. He opposed kings, for he was a citizen of no country. He lived as a foreigner under tents all his life. We often get our patriotism towards our country in the way of our obedience to God. We are not here as Americans, Europeans, Africans, Arabs, Jews, or Chinese, but we are all here as "FOREIGNERS", as strangers in a strange land, for our home is heaven. Philippians 3:12-14. In an age when men built great cities to protect themselves against the wandering armies, Abraham lived in tents. He trusted in God's protection rather than the might of any city wall. He had to rescue his foolish nephew who did trust in the walls of Sodom. He set an example of faithfulness in his home (tent), and his believing sons followed him and trusted God also.

Through his failures and falling at times, he persevered and reached the place of usefulness by God. Abraham is a picture of tenacity and getting up again after failure. Truly the believer's motto is Winston Churchill's, "NEVER, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP!" The true heroes of faith, like their mentor Abraham, made their home in the tents they lived in, not seeking a big house on the hill for their retirement! Their hearts were fixed on heaven, and they served the Lord faithfully where they were called to serve, without joining their allegiance to any other nation than their heavenly home.

**Verse 10.** He looked for a city! He was focused on eternity not time, as we must be, if we would have the impact of an Abraham in our generation. He saw eternity as if it was here now; the future was the present to Abraham, and the closer we get to this mental attitude, the closer we get to dynamic service for the Lord. The Lord is the architect builder of the creation, and he alone has the plan for where things are going, and what is prepared for us. Jesus will rule here as King and Lord of all, and then this entire creation will be wrapped up and replaced. Let us place our hands in the hands of the creator, not any speculator! Let us look forward, not in fear around us, for the best is yet to come in the creation.

**Verse 11.** Sarah's faith (vs 11-12) declares the faithfulness and immutability of God; reminding us that He is able to fulfil His Word, for He is the one who made the plan for this creation. In the face of human impossibilities the Lord delights in showing what is possible through faith and obedience to His plan. (Genesis 18:1ff, 21:1-2).

While Sarah has her detractors, and she certainly took a while to get to the place of faith, she got there and persevered in the end, and so received great blessing, through the miraculous birth of her son. The Lord worked a number of powerful miracles in this woman's life, bringing Isaac to birth and then saving him later, and throughout this time Sarah kept on believing that the Lord would do what He had said, because she knew **HIM**, and trusted His character. Though

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well through menopause she received God's dynamic power to conceive and bear a child. Genesis 17:1-8. Romans 4:17-21.

**Verse 12.** Because of Sarah and Abraham's faith in the promises of God, there were born a multitude of people becoming the nation Israel. They were both sexually dead, yet the Lord brought them to life again to fulfil his promises. What people see is not the whole truth; what God wills, that is the truth, and that is reality.

Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph continue the godly line, for all the great prophets of the Old Testament descend from them. The destiny of the nation that will come from old Israel was based on Regeneration, and obedience to the revealed will of God. (Genesis 27:27-29; 39-40). Jacob demonstrated the same "Divine Viewpoint" perspective in his life and worship, even through to the point of death. (Genesis 47:31; 48:8-22). Joseph also, like his father, departed this life in dying grace while ministering to others. His command regarding his bones set up a visual aid in the form of an unburied golden coffin. It was both a reminder of God's provision; for he was Prime Minister of Egypt, due to the grace of God. But the coffin was also a reminder of the future; a reminder that they did not belong in Egypt, and to keep before the descendants of Israel God's promise of the Exodus. (Genesis 15:13-16; 50:24-26)

**Verse 13.** "These all" share the wonderful name of mature believers who made a difference upon the earth due to their faith! These people counted for God, served their Lord, and received their eternal reward. They were people who persevered in their faith and finished their race Philippians 3:14, 15, 16, 2 Timothy 4:7, 8. They all died, but that was not the end! Death is the fear of mankind, for it confronts us with a mystery that only God provides the answer to. They died without receiving the promise themselves, but they still rejoiced in the promise of God, for they saw it, and knew it was real. They rejoiced over the plan of God, and celebrated the reception of his promises in advance.

The words the writer selects for this truth are instructive. They saw, they believed, they celebrated and jumped for joy, as a person does when they see an old friend approaching from afar! They "embraced" the promises of God; they cried out their greeting to the coming promises, as if they and the promises of God were old friends! That is how real the promises of God were to these people. They lived as foreigners and temporary residents of the earth. They never felt comfortable here on earth, for they longed for heaven, and so did not get distracted by famines, or the wealth of the palaces of Egypt. This is the challenge in dark days of the Tribulation Period, when the earth shakes and stars fail. Revelation 6:13, 8:12.

**Verse 14.** Philippians 3:17-19. The people saying such things as these heroes of faith say, have a powerful witness, for by their lives, words, and deeds they proclaim that they live a certain way, seeing the world a different way from their contemporaries. They see everything in terms of their eternal destiny, and they are focused on their heavenly city rather than their earthly abode. They don't mind being different to their fellows, for they see God's reality as more powerful than that of the daily issues of earthly life. By all decisions they make, they make absolutely clear to all around them that they have a divine viewpoint rather than a purely human one. Everything they do speaks of God's way of seeing things. They seek a country! They keep on striving after, seeking out a country to come. Their heart's desire is to be in heaven, and their entire focus in life is to be in heaven with their Lord. They seek a country (Patria = fatherland, or "father's land"); they seek the land of their heavenly father.

**Verse 15.** These people, like us, retained their options; they could have returned to their homeland and had the life of luxury they left behind, but their lives were fixed on the Lord, and His will. They had actively forgotten their old homeland, and no longer considered it as home. Their mental attitude made a return to the place of their birth, simply not an option for them. Humanly speaking they "had options"; they could have returned by the next camel train that passed their tent, but their heart was fixed on the Lord's will and so they saw the camel trains coming and going from Ur of the Chaldees, and they were not tempted, for their heart was fixed on heaven, not Canaan, or Ur.

**Verse 16.** Their desire was expressed by their focus and energy being directed towards the Lord's will ahead of them rather than their past life behind them. They saw, as we must, that the Lord has a "better" life for them than they have had before. Every day is meant to be "better" than the last, for as we grow more like Jesus in character we can be more used, and therefore more blessed, by the Lord.

For the believers of all Ages who grow spiritually and have their eyes set on heaven, the Lord will never be embarrassed of them. Not only is the Lord not embarrassed about growing and failing believers, he has already prepared for them a dwelling place for eternity. Abraham went out from the known into the unknown, focused only upon what the Lord would have him do. Where is our heart's desire today? Matthew 6:21, Where your treasure is, that is where your heart will be. 2 Timothy 4:10. Let us ensure as days grow darker that our heart is fixed upon eternity in God's Holy Character and Perfect Plan. As we draw nearer the end of this Age we cannot "love this present world" without being in despair for it, and side tracked by it.

Our father in faith, Abraham, sets us an example to follow here. Are we ready to leave all that we have known and serve the Lord where he directs us to go? That is the call that is part of the believers calling. The Lord's will for our life alone, is to be our mental attitude. Let us test ourselves against this standard today, and ensure we are in the right place for the Lord's will to work out in our life, where he wants us to serve Him. Abraham was relaxed about being a stranger; a foreigner in a strange land that was never actually his.

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A basic human need is to “belong”, yet the Lord calls us to “not belong” here, and to relax with that strangeness, for we do belong in heaven. So many of us are so determined to “fit in” in human society that we miss out on this life that the Lord God has for us. Like Abraham, do not try to “fit in” on earth believer, for you don’t fit in here at all as a believer! Just relax and enjoy this truth, and focus on fitting in with other believers, and see that you have a “place” that you will perfectly fit into later, and it will last forever.

Abraham lived in tents rather than solid homes, and he trusted the Lord for protection from the armies that swept through the land at times, rather than trusting the big city walls of the pagan strong points. Abraham illustrates an important Biblical principle. The only safe place is where God wants us. A tent is safe if that is where we are meant to be. The only safe place is where the Lord wants us to serve, for there we will serve Him until he calls us home in his perfect time. Many a believer has gone back away from the call of the Lord, for they thought it too dangerous, and were later killed in a car accident, by illness, in what they thought was the “safety” of their home town! In an earthquake a tent will be far safer than an unreinforced brick building!

There is no safety outside the plan of God for us. We are in the creator’s hands. How secure do you feel there? Do you see the future reality as if it is present reality? Abraham and Sarah set us the example of the “faith rest life”, for they saw the Lord’s will as a present reality, even though it’s fulfilment was many years into the future. God said it, and that settled it as far as they were concerned; they rested their anxieties in their faith. They failed, yes, they failed, but they always got back up and re-focused their eyes on the Lord’s will and plan. It is that focus on the Lord’s plan that kept them safe, and it will keep us safe also now. Failure does not stop the Plan of God; it just delays our blessing.

Sarah’s faith in the Lord was rooted and grounded in her knowledge of God’s holy character. What God had said he could do, and she laughed at the thought, not in unbelief, but in amazement and joy, and so they called their son, Isaac (laughter). We are to rejoice in the Lord, and again rejoice! Philippians 1:18, 2:16, 17, 18, 28, 3:1- 3, 4:4, 1 Thessalonians 5:16, James 1:9, 1 Peter 1:6, 8. Let us join Abraham, Sarah, Paul and Peter and all the saints, and rejoice in the Lord and his provisions for us! Verse twelve confronts us with another vital Biblical principle. There is no such thing as a hopeless situation, for God’s plan and character cancels out such things; God’s surpassing grace provisions overcome situations. Impossible situations in man’s eyes have never stopped God working his will out through the lives of obedient, faith-filled (faithful) believers. Let us see things God’s way rather than man’s way!

All the saints of old were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. They ensured their hearts were set on heaven with no distractions by the things of earth, and as in verse 15, no side tracks back to their birth-place, for it was no longer “home”, heaven was home! No distractions by the things of earth, and no side tracks to the places of earth that appeal to the “old man”. Let this be our catch cry each day, and let us walk with the Lord until we go to dwell with him forever. As Leaders of God’s people, how well are we preaching the eternal life perspective? For that is what we are confronted with in this passage in every verse.

The great saints of old, whose example we are to follow, all were characterised by their heavenly focus rather than their earthly desires. They set aside their normal human needs, and in the power of the Holy Spirit looked to the heavenly realities. It is an “unnatural” thing to do this, and this is why so many believers don’t do it! It can be done only through an obedient life, a Holy Spirit filled, and Bible saturated life!

As pastors/leaders of the Lord’s Church Age flock let us ensure it is not lack of Bible teaching that stops the people under our care doing this! In the troubles that will come to every leader let us be sure we focus on the Lord and his provision in the midst of it. We are heralds of the King of kings, and as his heralds we have responsibility to pass on his policy. The Lord’s policy is that we fix our eyes on Him and his plan for eternity, and speak more of that than we do of the things of time and space.

Where is our heart? For where our heart is, there will we be spending most of our time, and that is where we will seek to fulfil our dreams. If our dreams are of building a big house and successful business then that is what we will get. If our lives are focused on the things of earth we may get all the trappings of earthly wealth, but that is not what the Lord wants for us, for all that can be taken away. Only the things of eternity matter and that is the message that the Lord’s people must hear from us every day. It is also the sure message of the future day when Anti-Christ does his worst.

### (g) Some Practical Abrahamic Faith Challenges by James, the Leader of the Early Church.

#### (i) James 2:18-20

#### VERSES 18 - 20

**18** Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. **19** Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. **20** But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

"If we have faith without works we do not have saving faith!" (Draper, 1971, page 89).



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James here uses a literary device which is very common in the ancient world. It can be expressed in the following sentence; "you are saying this, I am saying that, and what I am saying makes more sense than you do". Some have stated that, if you think the right things, then that is all you need to do, and that God will bless you. This is not true for the believer who wants to walk in the faith of Abraham.

While salvation is by faith alone, spiritual growth, or sanctification, occurs as you apply God's Word in your life, and all who are truly saved will do this. There are no works that you can do to save yourself, but once you are saved something should happen in your life to demonstrate/illustrate the new status. If you are saved the Holy Spirit is now active in your life and this will show. Calvin said that faith alone saves but the faith that truly has saved will not abide alone. If the Lord has saved you the Lord will be transforming you on the inside and if it is real on the inside it will work out on the outside.

In **Verse 18** James is clearly not trying to please everyone here! He is using the debater's technique to make a strong point. Faith and works cannot be kept separate, for they are two sides of the same thing; just as skin/bone and the body cannot be separated. "Faith and works cannot be separated when it comes to salvation. God has joined them together. It is not therefore a matter of some people being better at faith and others being better at works; they must go hand in hand." (Prime, 1983, page 65). Faith can only be shown to the world by its works, and works only have significance if they are the expression of a living faith.

In **Verse 19** James says that those people who stand against this truth appear to be orthodox, but they are not at all! He uses as his example the devils themselves. These false theologians lie when they say they believe in one God, but the devils really believe this truth and they tremble. These false theologians may be orthodox in the statement of their beliefs but their lack of response to the truth proves they do not even have the belief of the demons! Satan knows that Jesus is God and died on the Cross for the sins of the world and it makes him and his demons tremble/shudder with fear.

As a believer we should be real with our faith and apply it, or, James is implying we are being shamed by the demons, for they do more with what they know to be true. It is not knowledge about the Lord that saves us, it is living faith: it is not intellectual assent to a creed that proves you are a child of God, but the family likeness in thought, words, and behaviour. We must beware of the, 'orthodoxy of the devil'. (Criswell, 1975, page 56). Intellectual assent is not enough to prove anything except hypocrisy. In the Great Tribulation period there will be only application or hypocrisy and betrayal of truth, for all "middle ground" with its polite words will be swept away by the enemy's malice.

The works that are referred to by James are the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the life. This is another area where James and Paul run the same race; both look for the spiritual production of the regenerated life. The Biblical Commentator Straus notes, "when a Christian shows compassion on others at all times, he looks forward to the judgement with calm confidence. A heart full of mercy has no fear of the day of judgement but rejoices in the face of it."(Straus, 1980, page 101). Matthew 4:1-11, 7:17.

The examples given by James later in this passage represent two believers who are expressing their spiritual status by their actions. This passage in James does not contradict Romans 4:1-5 where Abraham was justified by faith. Paul is talking about salvation on the basis of justification by faith whilst James is addressing the topic of sanctification by fellowship with God, and application of the Word of God to the life. Paul addresses the issue of 'crossing the line' to relationship with Jesus, James the subject of the nature of the person after they have genuinely crossed over. Justification is worked out in your life by your works. Paul is looking at the root, and James is looking at the fruit. Galatians 5:6, 1 Thessalonians 1:3-10, 1 Timothy 1:5, 5:8, Titus 2:7, 11-14, 3:2.

**Verse 20** asks the question, "Are we productive or are we empty, or in James terms 'vain'? There are many wind bags in faith communities, who speak great swelling words of pride but there is no holy life behind the words. They draw near to heaven with their lips but their lives lead to hell. They look and sound like saints but the fruit of the Holy Spirit is absent. Such people are, 'empty headed, empty handed, and empty hearted'. (Plummer, 1896, page 155).

We are to be like our spiritual ancestors, James, Paul, Abraham, Sarah, and Rahab; productive in our lives, showing by events what we believe in our hearts. "Readiness in hearing the word of God is all very well, and correctness of belief in God is all very well, but without readiness to do what pleases Him it is as useless as a dead vine." (IBID, page 141).

When Jesus questioned the scribe about the Law of Moses there were two aspects of the Law that were mentioned by both. Firstly; the importance of the orthodoxy of belief in the one God rather than in many gods, and secondly the fruit of this belief that will always, when genuine, lead to loving your neighbour as yourself. Mark 12:28-34. In the Lord's Prayer in the garden the two elements are kept together again. John 17: 3-4. Our beliefs are meant to work out in our life; if they don't, they are just not genuine.

Your faith/belief and the words that express them should work out your life not be just talk. Your faith should have practical out workings; the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be present in the life that is regenerated by the Spirit of God. Absence of the fruit indicates absence of the Holy Spirit, and that points to only one conclusion, no genuine salvation! Let us stand against all who preach any so called gospel of "cheap grace", that simple assent to truths is enough to be saved. Salvation involves more than saying what Satan and the demons can say, it involves a life committed to the one who gave himself for us and it involves a submission to God, the fruit of which is always a transformed life that all can see. True sons and daughters of Abraham are active in their faith, not passive in their hypocrisy.

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## g. (ii) JAMES CHAPTER 2 VERSES 21 - 26

**21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? 22 Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? 23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. 24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only. 25 Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? 26 For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.**

"Not for faith plus works does St James plead, but for faith at work" . F Hort.

The Middle Eastern view of mankind must be held in mind throughout this passage. To the Middle Eastern mind a person was a unity; a living being, Spirit, Soul and Body in one person harmoniously. To remove any part was to destroy the whole. Just so with faith and works to James's mind; to remove one part you destroy the whole. The "whole" here is the believer's regenerated life, and it comprises both faith and works as a unified response to God's grace, love and mercy. You cannot have faith without works any more than you can have a living body without the soul and spirit. With this in mind let us look at the verses before us now.

This is a circular section, moving from the assertion in verse twenty that faith without works is dead, back to that same point after the two examples are given from the Old Testament. James gives these two examples to prove his point; taking a man and a woman lest anyone should feel that the principle does not apply to them.

In Genesis 15:5-6 we see Abraham believing God regarding his offspring. He had believed in the promises and person of the Lord who had counted it to him as righteousness. Abraham was saved by faith. James however refers to Genesis 22 where this faith was worked through a test with Abraham being willing to sacrifice Isaac believing that if necessary the Lord would raise Isaac from the dead. Many years separate these two events. The root was set some fifteen years before it bore fruit. The place Abraham called Jehovah Jireh – meaning "the Lord saw and the Lord will provide".

In Hebrews 11:17-19 we have the story referred to again, it was Isaac who was to be his heir, and Abraham's mature faith expressed itself in his actions on that mountain. God made the promise, Abraham believed it; he believed it before Isaac's birth, and he was ready to believe it even, if necessary, after Isaac's death.

As a second example James cites Rahab the prostitute who rescued the spies, lying to her own people and ensured that they got away by giving them very good instructions. Joshua 2: 8-21, 6:25, Hebrews 11:31. Rahab said that her fathers had heard of the Jews over the last forty years and she had believed that their God was the true God because of the information received. For all the years of her life Rahab had been brought up hearing about what the Jews were doing in the wilderness. She had been an intellectual believer in the truth for quite a time, but now her faith was required to prove it was more real than a PhD in theology.

When the Israelites arrived her "belief" was tested; was it going to cross over the boundary from 'knowing about', to 'faith in'? Would she have a living faith that the spies would survive because of, or was her faith a 'dead' faith, and would she give them up to the authorities? Would she express her faith in the God of Israel at this point; was her faith living or not? If she had got things wrong she, and her household, and/or the spies, would be killed. The faith she expressed she showed by her actions. Her deep inner beliefs had to be expressed in dynamic and potentially fatal actions.

**Verse 21.** Real faith is obedient faith and resurrection faith is faith in the God who raises the dead! It is this mature faith that we see with Abraham, and it is many years after his call and God's promise, but it illustrates that the promise has taken root in his soul. He has been raised from the dead sexually and he believes he will be raised to stand with his wife in resurrection body – hence his burial. He believes God, and we know this because we see his actions. Faith attains its goal or sense of completion in Abraham's actions. This is the fruit of his beliefs.

**Verse 22.** Faith is completed by actions that express in life the inner conviction. It is such an obvious point, James states! James identifies the, 'inseparability of faith and works' (Hiebert, 1979, page 194), they are mutually inter-dependent.

'Faith never exists in total isolation. It is a living thing which produces living things in the form of actions performed in obedience to the will of the living God.' (Tasker, 1967, page 69). 'Faith co-operated with deeds, faith was completed by deeds, ripening in the exercise of obedience to God.' (Moffatt, 1963, page 43). "This does not mean that he never entertained any doubts. It means that by his obedience his faith was now complete because visible evidence had been given of it." (Lightner, 1979, page 53). "Faith must be accompanied by deeds so that they complement and enrich each other. Faith constitutes the foundation, but reaches fruition in works of mercy. (Reicke, 1964, page 34).

**Verse 23.** This verse sums up the great principle of justification by faith. Refer to the doctrines in the Bible Topic Book on the website [www.ebcwa.org.au](http://www.ebcwa.org.au) to re-examine this subject, and strengthen your own faith foundation. Your belief is credited to your eternal bank account, and works are the interest payments made into the life. To be God's friend is to be a growing believer who is living in passionate, not reluctant obedience to the Lord's Word.

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**Verse 24.** It is not just believing that something is true that demonstrates that the person believing is saved. A person's actions demonstrate their status as genuine believers (friends of God), rather than those who know (the demons) but are not obedient. Robertson notes, "thus with Abraham faith was shown to be alive not dead, fruitful not barren, brought to good result or end, not cut short with mere profession or promise." (1964, page 100).

Is James attacking some "ultra-Paulinists" who believed faith was something that exists alone? Clearly some who held this "cheap grace" position existed in the early church as they exist today, but should we associate them with Paul? Given what we have seen of the similarity between the two men this writer believes such a term is unfair to both men.

**Verse 25.** With Rahab and Abraham (male Semite and female Gentile), James covers all possible people and ensures no-one can say this principle does not apply to them. He also covers the falsely humble person who would argue, "well I am not an Abraham". That is all right, James replies, you can at least be like a Rahab!

"If a gentile woman with an immoral past can express her faith so can you super-moral people!" James is being very direct with his listeners. He mocks their super/false spirituality and underlines that for all of us there comes the time when faith must be expressed in actions, if we are to be a living part of God's plan for our life. Rahab may have believed secretly for years, but the day came when she had to demonstrate the faith that was in her heart; just so with us, daily we should be demonstrating our living faith in living deeds.

**Verse 26.** James sums up his case here by referring to a dead body and asks the hearers to open their eyes and see the truth clearly. As a body without a spirit is dead so faith without works is dead and good for nothing except burial. By analogy we could go to John 15 to our Lord's words about dead branches. John 15:1-8. If we are truly 'in him' we are alive and fruitful, if we are not in him we are dead wood fit only for the fire of judgement. Faith and works are a unity; they do not separate without their being no life in either.

Our demonstration in life of what we believe proves whose family we belong to. If we are true children of Abraham, according to faith, we will act in obedience, as he did. Such people God calls his friends. Note this, we do not call God our friend, he calls us his if we are obedient to him, if we complete our faith in actions. John 15:14-17. Speaking of Rahab, Straus records the following application and challenge. "How long she trusted in God we are not told, but the day arrived when she proved her faith by her works and not merely by her words." (1980, page 117). So must we! If God's Word is true it can be trusted. Do you want the spiritual blessings of an Abraham or Rahab? Then you must believe and apply your faith. Are you living spiritually alive or dead? Are you ready for the tests of life? Then know God's Word and apply it.

## **SUMMARY**

The faith of Abraham was a living and active faith in the Plan of God. It expressed itself in his righteous actions, and all who would inherit the eternal blessings of Abraham need to express the same sort of faith in their own historical context. In the days of the Great Tribulation period this will mean supporting and protecting all who have accepted Jesus as the Messiah and who await his Second Advent. The promises made to Abraham centre around Jesus, and so it is attitude to Jesus that will finally determine whether people are delivered in that terrible time or not.

In all ages God calls mankind to righteous actions that express genuine faith in the One True God. In the "Latter Days" the Jewish and Arab people are called to express Abrahamic faith; believing the Plan of God as revealed in the words of the prophets, even though all around them is in flames. God's Word must be more real than their circumstances or they will not survive. It is this that is the real definition of "Abrahamic faith" and it is real faith, and it will deliver in that day, as it delivers today.

## **SECTION 5      How the Story Ends – The Sons of Abraham Decide Their Own Fate by Their Faith Choices**

### **The Key Instruction from Jesus - "Flee to the Mountains!"**

Survival for all believers in the last three and a half years of this terrible phase of world history will depend upon absolute and instant obedience to the instructions of relevant scripture. The first key passage comes from around 535 BC when Daniel receives his vision of the Seventy Weeks as recorded in Daniel 9. These words are taken by the Exiles returning back to Jerusalem, and the prophet Zechariah there, around 517 BC, receives further significant revelations about the nature of the Great Tribulation (the last half of the last prophetic week of Daniel's vision from Gabriel), that will occur at this mid-point, and further directions for believers are then given. The Lord's words, from Matthew 24-25, in 32 AD, complete this set of prophetic instructions and set the Lord's seal upon it.

A repeated series of instructions, with this amount of specific detail, is ignored only by those who seek a pointless death! The faith choices of the people of this last time period for man before the Second Advent determine their temporal fate and their eternal destiny.

(i) Daniel 9:26 The Seventy Weeks – The Context of the Instruction to Flee

DANIEL CHAPTER 9:22-27 The Angel Gabriel sets the scene for history to unfold

**22** And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. **23** At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision. **24** Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. **25** Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. **26** And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. **27** And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

In **verse 22** the reply to Daniel's prayer is given. Gabriel interpreted the answer and talked to Daniel face to face about the vision he has seen. The word translated "to talk" is in the Piel stem which is intensive active, so that it was an intensive teaching session in view here. Here Gabriel gives Daniel an overview of the future of Israel. In Daniel chapters 10, 11 and 12 we will have this spelled out in even more detail.

This format is in a typical Jewish form with the summary given, then amplification on the important features of the outline. Gabriel says that he is come to give skill and understanding. Skill is the word "Sakal" in the Hiphil infinitive. The Hiphil stem is causative active, while the infinitive shows the purpose of the task. The purpose of Gabriel's talk to Daniel is to cause to give him skill and understanding. The answer to his prayer is going to be given in the story of 490 years of then future Jewish History. The word "skill" indicates that specific applications are going to be required.

In **verse 23** Gabriel tells Daniel that as he started his prayer, the Lord sent the answer, and that he was instructed to go and teach him. Gabriel starts with a great piece of encouragement for Daniel telling him that he is greatly beloved by God. Daniel is one of the most consistent believers of all time. He obviously sinned from time to time because all members of the human race sin, and he was confessing his sins earlier in this chapter, but we just see a magnificent mature believer in this exiled Jew in the Scriptures. He had a phenomenal capacity to love God and to trust God through difficult and testing circumstances. He is truly a man with Abrahamic faith, and is a mentor for all believers, as Abraham and Moses are also. Daniel's words and godly righteous example will be important for believers of the Tribulation period. Understanding Daniel and the other prophets will be crucial for people's survival at that time.

Gabriel tells Daniel to pause and sit with the vision he sees long enough to understand the matter and to really consider the meaning of the vision. He is to see that the days of Israel being at the centre of God's Plan are coming to their great climax. The long awaited Messiah will come, and the timetable is spelled out very clearly to Daniel. From the edict of the Persian King to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the Jewish people will have but 490 years (70 weeks = 70 x 7 = 490 years in prophetic image) as a focal point in the plan of God. The Plan reaches its climax with Messiah, and all mankind will be judged from that point onwards by their attitude towards HIM.

**Verse 24** says "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity and to bring in everlasting righteousness and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy."

What is a week? In the ancient world most peoples and their philosophers would immediately understand such a reference as the week of years. In this system one week equals 7 years. Thus seventy weeks equal 70 x 7 years = 490 years. What Type of Year? The year used in scripture of Daniel's time was the lunar year that Abraham had preserved from his Chaldean home. Abraham and Daniel's year was the lunar year and consisted of 360 days. The period stated then is 70 x 7 x 360 days giving a total of 176 400 days. Who are Involved? Note the reference is to, "Thy people, thy holy city", and this can refer to the Jews and Jerusalem or Judea. We therefore have a period of 490 years involving the Jews and Jerusalem. There is some serious and specific calculating required here.

The word "determined" is the Niphal perfect of the verb "Chathak", which in the passive voice means to be cut or "to be cut out". In essence it means that this period of 490 years is taken out of history and is the remaining time of the Jews being the key servants of God. They were at this point remember, just a remnant of the survivors of their destruction in the years 605-586 BC. They all felt that their national history would now be irrelevant to others and that they would be a second rate nation/province in a larger Empire. They would indeed be a province for many more years, but they were to be the centre of the Plan of God for these 490 years until Messiah comes in glory(to rule as King).

The answer to the prayer of Daniel is based on what is going to happen in the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish nation. It was this concern that moved Daniel to pray, as he wondered what would become of his people as they ended their exile

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and returned to their blighted land and destroyed capital city. The answer to the prayer of Daniel centres in the "Seed of Abraham" – the Messiah. When Does this Period End? As this whole prayer is about the Jews and Jerusalem, the end of the period is the end of the Jewish Age, which we will see occurs at what we now call "the Second Advent of Jesus". Daniel will see that there is a gap between the 69<sup>th</sup> week and the 70<sup>th</sup> week, and will explain that to us also. In answering the question Gabriel gives six things that are going to be fulfilled at the end of this period in the person and work of the Messiah. They are items that are only fulfilled completely at the Return of Jesus!

The six items are:

1. To finish the transgression – this marks the official end of the dispersion of the Jews. While there is a nation Israel at the moment, the formal end of the dispersion of the Jews occurs at the Second Advent when he, as the King and Shepherd, calls for all the Jews to come back into the Promised Land as part of the complete fulfillment of the Palestinian covenant.
2. To make an end of sins – refers to the Baptism of Fire that separates the believers who enter into the Millennium from the unbelievers who are cast off the earth. This occurs at the Second Advent.
3. To make reconciliation for iniquity – this is the regathering of Israel as a bone fide nation under God. When the Jews returned to the land after the Babylonian Captivity they returned with a high priest and a prophet but no king. When Jesus comes back it will be as acknowledged and accepted Prophet, Priest, and King.
4. To bring in everlasting righteousness - this is the resurrection of the Old Testament saints and the start of an eternal perfect future with the millennial reign of the King.
5. To seal up the vision and prophecy - as this is the end of the Jewish Age and the prayer and answer relates to the Jews and Jerusalem, the Second Advent is the final act in both the vision and prophecy regarding the Jews.
6. To anoint the most Holy. – this deals not with Jesus but with the dedication of the Temple for ministry during the Millennium which is described in Ezekiel 40-48. This is similar to the cleansing of the Temple by the Jews after the Abomination of Desolation, installed by the prototype Antichrist Antiochus IV, was removed from the Temple.

From these six elements described by Gabriel it is clear that the 490 year period ends at the yet future Second Advent of Jesus Christ, so we have a period of 490 lunar years terminating at the Second Advent. Given that there are far more years than that between the decree for the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls and today, we need to see the divisions of the period, and the nature of the "gap". In the next three verses the period of 70 weeks is carefully divided by Gabriel into three sections; of 7 weeks, 62 weeks, and then 1 week.

**Verse 25 "Know therefore and understand that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks (49 years) and three score and two weeks (434 years):the streets shall be built again, and the wall even in troubled times. "**

In verse 25 Gabriel tells Daniel to "know", which is the Kal imperfect of "Yada", which is followed by the Piel imperfect of "Sakal", which means to skilfully understand for application. The sequence here is to know something, but not just superficially; Daniel is going to have to work hard to understand and then apply what he knows. From the grammar here there is a level of concentration required, as the Piel stem of the verb to understand is intensive. There needs to be intense concentration by Daniel to learn these truths.

Daniel is not to jump to any quick conclusions, but record everything and reflect deeply. He will receive only part of the revelation, Zechariah will, just after his death, receive the next and significant piece of information, John in Revelation will complete it. All the information needs to be put together skilfully by the people of the Last Days, as this alone will ensure their survival.

Note the Starting Point for the calculation to begin. There were three edicts issued by Persian Kings relating to the Jews returning to their homeland, they were:-

- i) The edict of Cyrus in 536 BC to allow the Jews to return and to rebuild the house of the Lord (Temple) (Ezra 1:1-4).
- ii) The edict of Darius in 520 BC to rebuild the temple which is found in (Ezra 6:3) Darius' edict was to confirm Cyrus' previous order, the temple works having been stopped after the death of Cyrus.
- iii) The edict of Artaxerxes Longimanus to rebuild the walls and gates of Jerusalem in 445 BC (Nehemiah 2:1-8)

Inspection of Daniel 9:25 shows that the critical commandment which starts the 70 weeks clock ticking was the order to rebuild Jerusalem's gates and walls, not the temple. That order then was the edict of Artaxerxes in 445 BC and fulfilled by Nehemiah, who requested and was appointed, as the Persian Governor to oversee the task. The practice of Persian Kings was to issue such orders on their New Years day, the 1st of the month of Nisan (around our months of March/April – remember lunar months move around in relation to our calendar which is a solar one).

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What is the start date for the 70 Weeks? The time frame for Daniel's Seventy Weeks was exhaustively studied by Sir Robert Anderson, a former chief of New Scotland Yard, and well known Christian author in the 1870s. (His book is "The Coming Prince"). He made inquiry of the then Astronomer Royal, Sir George Airey, and was informed on the 26<sup>th</sup> June 1877, that calculations showed that the new moon which commenced the New Year 445 B.C. - Artaxerxes 20<sup>th</sup> year, occurred in Jerusalem at 7:09 a.m. on our calendar's system, on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 445 B.C. As the date of an edict was reckoned from the first day of the Persian New Year the date of the edict which commenced Daniel's Seventy Weeks was March 14<sup>th</sup> 445 B.C (the Persian New Year's Day that year).

### Summary of Facts so far:

1. Start of Period - 14th March 445 BC
2. Length of Period - 490 lunar years of 360 days
3. End of Period - 2nd Advent of Jesus

In verse 25 it also states that Jerusalem will be rebuilt with its walls completed in difficult and trying circumstances. There is considerable biblical evidence that Jerusalem was rebuilt under very difficult circumstances with great pressures upon them from surrounding Persian Provinces for 49 years (the first seven weeks of the prophetic time frame). Nehemiah tells us of the start of this story which is beyond the scope of our present work, but may be referred to in the EBCWA Commentaries on the books of Nehemiah and Daniel.

The passage continues in **verse 26 "And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined."**

Looking at this section by section we see that after 69 (62+7) weeks of years, or 483 lunar Years Messiah - The Prince, will be cut off, but not for Himself. This can only be speaking of a sacrificial death of some sort – he dies, but not for himself! Who is the Messiah – The Prince? There is only one claimant around this time, and that is Jesus of Nazareth! We will see the calculations that Sir Robert Anderson did below as they unfold through these verses and we will see just how accurate the scripture is. In Luke's Gospel on his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, just prior to his crucifixion, the crowd welcomed Jesus as the promised Messiah (Luke 19:38); this being the only time when he was so called by the mass of the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

When was He cut off? – We have good biblical evidence of dates and times. According to (Luke 3:1) Jesus Christ was baptized in the 15<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius Caesar. As his ministry was three years in length, the entry into Jerusalem occurred in the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Tiberius.

Searches of literature has shown that Tiberius became Caesar in 14 AD, so the Lord's triumphal entrance into Jerusalem was therefore on Palm Sunday of 32 AD. Again by astronomical computation the date of Palm Sunday 32 AD, (the only time in his ministry when Jesus was greeted as the King of the Jews), was the Jewish date of 10<sup>th</sup> Nisan, or our date of 6<sup>th</sup> April AD 32.

If this is correct, we should find exact correlation between the 483 lunar years of the prophecy to the cutting off of the Messiah, and the time between 14<sup>th</sup> March 445 BC and 6<sup>th</sup> April AD 32. The time between these two dates is 476 solar years and 24 days.

Total number of days are therefore as follows (Sir Robert Anderson's Calculations with the Astronomer Royal):-

476 solar years x 365 days =	173,740 days
14 <sup>th</sup> March to 6 <sup>th</sup> April 32 AD	24 days
Leap years 445 BC to 32 AD	116 days
TOTAL =	173,880 days
Jewish time: 483 x 360 days	173,880 days

Not unexpectedly the correlation is absolutely accurate, as it is God's Holy Word, and given to Daniel by the angel Gabriel. The book of Daniel was used by the Jewish High Priest in the 330s BC to welcome Alexander the Great into Jerusalem, and it saved the city from destruction, so we know it existed at that point. This is PROPHECY and genuine prophecy is always 100% accurate.

The timeline now shows for the first 69 weeks:- 14th March 445 BC -- 483 years -- 6th April 32 AD

The following questions now arise:

Has the second advent of Jesus occurred? - No.

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Is it longer than 7 years since Jesus rode into Jerusalem? - Yes.

Therefore there must be a gap between the 69th week and the 70th week.

The second half of the timeline is now 32 AD -- GAP -- last 7 years -- 2nd Advent

This gap has been filled in God's view of history by what we now call "The Church Age".

The 70th week which is 7 years in length therefore starts at the end of the Church Age after what is prophetically called the Rapture, or removal, of the Church. The Church must "leave" before the last week can begin, as it is a week for Abraham's physical descendants, not for the Church. It is the time when the sons of Abraham stand against Satan's last great man of sin and find faith in Jesus through darkest days.

These 7 years of the 70th week are the worst 7 years in the history of man and are called the Tribulation; the time of "Jacob's Trouble". We will come back to this period in other prophetic passages. The Great Tribulation period is the last three and a half years of this, seven year over-all, period of Israel's history.

The course of human history after the death of the Messiah is given in the second half of verse 26 and verse 27.

In **verse 26** it continues **"and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary, and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and until the end of the war, desolations are determined.**

The prince referred to here was a Roman General (later Caesar) named Vespasian, whose son and successor as Emperor, Titus, was in charge of the legions which destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD. They left one wall, the Western or now referred to as "The Wailing Wall". The Romans systematically looted and totally destroyed the city and the great Temple. There is no temple in Jerusalem today, but there is an area to the north of the two mosques where the Temple could be built, its Holy of Holies most likely centered over the little cupola named the Tabernacle of Moses today.

The Roman Army in 70 AD killed well over 100,000 people in Jerusalem and sent from all of Israel upwards of 1 million Jews into slavery. Josephus says that it was carnage of blood, as the Romans poured into the city like a flood! The survivors were sent to slave markets, but they were so over supplied with slaves that the price fell and many were slaughtered in the markets of Alexandria and Syria just to maintain prices. Moses had prophesied such things 1500 years before! Deuteronomy 28:64-68. Until the 70<sup>th</sup> week begins there are to be "desolations" like this, but the last week is far more terrible than anything that has ever gone before it. War and trouble is the lot of mankind until Messiah returns, but it gets steadily worse as the days draw closer to the end.

In **verse 27** we have the outline of the final cataclysmic week of Israel's history: **"And he shall confirm the covenant with the many for one week and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate"**

The "Prince" (the political descendent, holding the power once wielded by the first Prince who destroyed the city of Jerusalem) is known in scripture as the Antichrist. He leads the Western power bloc of nations. This man, the dictator of the old Roman Empire area in the time immediately preceding the Second Advent will make a treaty of some form with Israel for a seven year period. This entire seven year period is called by most "the Tribulation" as the first half will be a trial of faith for all who come to believe in Jesus through that time, and many will be martyred. Newly converted followers of Jesus through that first 3 ½ years will be persecuted, but Israel will prosper under the treaty with this Western Power Figure. He will allow sacrifices and oblations to be made in the Temple of that day and apparently honour the "God of Israel/All Nations". This clearly indicates that a Temple will be in place by this time, beside the mosques, possibly built as a result of the victory of the Jews and Arabs against the Persians and their allies (Ezekiel 38-39 below).

However half way through this seven year period the Anti-Christ will order a stop to the sacrifices to God and set up an image of himself in the Temple to be worshipped [Revelation 13]. It is an abrupt change of policy and a total break of faith which will shock all Jews, and as it centres the sin of idolatry, it will also shock the other sons of Abraham, the Arab peoples. The instructions for all the believers in the one true God at this point, when the Anti-Christ breaks his treaty, are revealed in the next visions Daniel has, and in the words of his younger contemporary, Zechariah (also below). They are completed by the words of the Messiah Y'Shua (Isa, Jesus) himself as recorded by Matthew in chapters 24-25 of his Gospel.

Daniel later reveals a crucial piece of information that will be important for the believers of this day to understand and apply at the critical half way point in the seven year period. The Anti-Christ does not have control of every country, and the Arab nations to the east of Israel are outside his orbit of power. Daniel 11:41-43. It is to these nations that the Israelis will be able to flee when the statue is set up. Daniel sees however that on his return to the earth the true Messiah eliminates this "Prince" and all his followers, for there are to be no unbelievers left on earth as he sets up his kingdom.

We thus have Daniel's 70 weeks divided as shown:-

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445 BC -- 483 years -- 32 AD – Church Age [unknown time period]-- Rapture -- 7 year Tribulation -- 2nd Advent

If we truly seek the Lord He will provide ways in which we may be able to both understand and be skilled in the area in which we need divine knowledge and guidance. What the Lord requires is obedience and maturity so that we can ask of God what he is willing to show us. Those in the last prophetic week of Israel's history will need to study these things very carefully and get their orders right. They must stand in faith, believing God's Word ahead of their own eyes at times. They must be true sons and daughters of Abraham in their dynamic and sustained faith.

As believers in the Lord, He is our life and our hope; everything else is a detail. We are not to be a slave to any of the details/troubles in our lives. Every day is a wonderful day with the Lord when our eyes are fixed upon Him. No matter what happens it is the Lord who counts in our lives, and He will bring us through. It is this focused Abrahamic faith that those in these latter days will need to sustain them in the midst of great evils.

## (ii) Zechariah 12:10

**10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. 11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. 12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; 13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; 14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.**

Chapter twelve begins with Jerusalem a "cup of trembling" to the nations of the world. It would appear to be a prophetic word that has a latter day's application, where every nation hears and knows what occurs in this city and trembles at its significance. God is driving things in this chapter and judgment is the feeling very strongly. Only at the time involved will it be 100% clear, but this chapter certainly appears to cover events of the last week of Daniel's 70 Weeks prophecy. At a certain point the Lord pours out the Holy Spirit in power upon all surviving Israel. The ministry of the Holy Spirit here is one of conviction of their great national sin of rejection of their Messiah, but it is conviction in grace to move them to prayer and deliver forgiveness to them. John 16:8-11. The words are those of the Lord himself from verse one of this chapter. It is the Lord God of Israel who is speaking to Zechariah and who will be pierced! It is He who will be the "only begotten Son" who they need to mourn for.

These events must occur after the Cross, and as they have not occurred until this point in 2013 my belief is they are events that will occur in the last of Daniel's Seventy Weeks. This massive and painful breakthrough in the national consciousness of Israel turns the entire nation around in a day. All may not be saved and delivered, as we will later see in the next chapter of Zechariah, but it would appear to be an almost total national revival, such as never has been seen in Israel at any time in its history before.

When does this occur? The answer to that is sheer speculation, and I have at different times in the last months wondered about different times in the seventieth week period when this might occur. Is it before or after the setting up of the idolatrous image in the Temple at Jerusalem? It may be that this great turning point is caused by the setting up of the image, or that it precipitates it. Full reflection upon Jesus sense of urgency in the Matthew passage affects my conclusion. The speed with which Jesus urges all in and around Jerusalem to flee in the Matthew passage would indicate that the event here recorded by Zechariah occurs before the idol is set up. These people sit with their grief for some time and weep; something they are not able to do and survive once the statue is set up.

As we will see in the next Zechariah passage the fate of the Jewish people is a mixed one, with two thirds of the population being destroyed by Anti-Christ's assaults upon the land to enforce his will in the Temple and around it. It makes logical sense that the national revival that occurs precipitates Anti-Christ's great hatred towards the Israelis and those who support them. He hates Jesus and hates God, and so he breaks his treaty with these "God lovers" and openly establishes the idolatry he all along preferred. His reaction isolates Jew and Arab, and together, expressing the faith of their common ancestor Abraham, they will survive against him.

## (iii) Zechariah 13:1-9

**1 In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.**

The phrase "that day" refers to the future day of the Lord. This phrase occurs no less than 16 times in the last 3 chapters of the book of Zechariah. The phrase "that day" can only be a blanket phrase covering all the events that directly lead to the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus. This spiritual cleansing of the nation is associated in other passages of Scripture with Israel's spiritual regeneration and the start of the blessings of the New Covenant, Jeremiah 31:31-37, Romans 11:26,27.



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The two groups involved here are referred to as “the house of David”, who are the political leaders of Israel and the “inhabitants of Jerusalem” include all the people in the land who need cleansing. Here we see reference to the general cleansing of the nation prior to the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance in the previous chapter begins the process and their obedience to the Lord’s commands from that point onwards continues the process until the Lord’s actual arrival. National and personal sins are wiped away by the Lord’s Coming, for he has heard their prayer and returned to deliver them.

**2 And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered: and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. 3 And it shall come to pass, that when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the LORD: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth.**

The Lord now announces the removal of all the idols from the land [cf Micah 5:13-14]. This is the first area for cleansing for Israel. Idolatry had led to their Exile in Babylon. 2 Chronicles 36:13-16. The worship of things continues to be the preferred “religion” of modern man. As part of the great national repentance that chapter twelve referred to idolatry will begin to be cleansed, but the Lord’s arrival is required to complete the task. He will overcome all things that detract from worship of Him and all idolatry will become extinct. One of the major areas of idolatry in the land during the second half of the Tribulation will be the worship of the abomination of desolation, the statue of the Antichrist in the Temple in Jerusalem. This is personally destroyed by the Lord.

In addition to the removal of idolatry will be the final and full removal of false prophets and their empowering false spirits. These spirits try to deceive people into thinking that the false prophets are telling the truth. All unclean spirits/demons will be dealt with by the Lord Jesus at his Second Advent. This area of false prophecy is the second area where cleansing begins in the last days of the Great Tribulation period and is completed by the Lord on his return. All falsehood is removed from the earth with the father of lies and his demons removal. John 8:44, Revelation 19:20-20:10.

The qualities of the genuine prophet, and the death penalty for any false prophet, are given to the Jewish people by Moses, and recorded in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy 13:1-11, 18:9-22. These passages will be taken seriously and enforced in the dark days of the last week of Daniel’s seventy weeks, because false prophecy will lead to the death of those who believe false prophets. Such prophets will be executed by their own people at that time!

**“Deuteronomy 13:1** *If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, 2 And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; 3 Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul. 4 Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him. 5 And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee. 6 If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; 7 Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; 8 Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: 9 But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. 10 And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. 11 And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you. 12 If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying, 13 Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known; 14 Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; 15 Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. 16 And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again. 17 And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;*

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*18 When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God”.*

*“Deuteronomy 18:9 When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.*

*10 There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch.*

*11 Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.*

*12 For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.*

*13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.*

*14 For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.*

*15 The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;*

*16 According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.*

*17 And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.*

*18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.*

*19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.*

*20 But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.*

*21 And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?*

*22 When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.”*

### AN OBSERVATION ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS

There have always been false prophets; in fact the great prophets of the Old Testament were always outnumbered by false prophets in their own day (Jeremiah 2:8, Ezekiel 13:1-23). Our Lord warned us that there will always be false prophets about until the end of this phase of history. They are not to be judged by their power, for Satan may give his people power at times. They are to be judged by their spiritual fruit. (Matthew 7:15 - 23).

Throughout history God allows the false prophets to operate without immediate judgement upon them, so that believers are always presented with an obedience test, to see whether we will obey the scriptures or follow our own lusts to judgement. False prophets will always abound at times of poor Bible teaching, and when the stakes are highest if a true prophet is ignored. Weeds grow best in poorly cared for soil (Hosea 4:5, 6, 9:7, 8).

There are eight specific biblical tests that believers must apply when confronting a person claiming the gift of prophecy:

- 1.) The words of the prophet will never contradict the Word of God (Jeremiah 23:33-36, 2 Peter 2:1-3, 1 Corinthians 14:32).
- 2.) The prophet will never call people away from genuine worship of God (Deuteronomy 13:1-5).
- 3.) The prophet will always be specific and the prophecy will be able to be tested (Deuteronomy 18:20-22, Jeremiah 28:9).
- 4.) Any prophet who asked for money was to be treated as false (Jeremiah 8:10).
- 5.) Any prophet who was a drunkard was to be treated as false (Micah 2:11).
- 6.) Any unconfessed sin of envy, jealousy, strife,.....etc in their life, they were false! (Jeremiah 23:11).
- 7.) God's prophets were generally alone, not in groups (1 Kings 22:5-8, 18:22).
- 8.) Does the prophecy accord with scripture? (1 Corinthians 14:37, 38, 2 Kings 23:2).

Remember, from the beginning of our study, the challenge to all believers in end times is to stand with our father Abraham. Believers are to stand in genuine faith and resist all temptations to follow after fake faith. The false prophets of today, and those of the last days, all try to get people away from the truth of God's Holy Word, and get them to follow after the myths of men and Satanic deception. For every truth Satan has a lie to counter it, and only systematic knowledge of the scriptures will protect believers in this last and most difficult day. The challenge is to "cleanse" from all evil and all deception, and that is done by living in the Word of God; feeding upon it daily and passionately. Those who study, understand, believe and obey will be delivered. Half heartedness in that terrible day will meet with an early death.

**4 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive: 5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth. 6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.**

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When biblical standards begin to be applied the false prophets will modify their behaviours, and many will distance themselves from the area of prophecy. They will no longer promote or mention the visions and dreams they have pronounced before. They will not wear the standard uniform of the prophet which was a rough coat of camel hair which some of the earlier prophets wore such as Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8 and John the Baptist in Matthew 3:4. Every period of history has its "proper dress" for fakes! They will always try to copy the true men and women of God, but as the heat of truth is put on them, they back away.

They will even lie about their profession saying that they have been a farmer or cattle hand for their whole life. It is noted that the word husbandman is the translation of three Hebrew words "lysh Abad Adamah" meaning "man work soil" or farmer. In verse 6 they are asked what the wounds are in their hands. The Hebrew word translated "in" is "beyn" which means "between" and probably means wounds on other parts of the torso in addition to the hands. They probably have received these scars as part of rituals involved in idol worship, where wounds are self inflicted, or made by the cultic priest. An example of this would be the self mutilation of the prophets of Baal during their confrontation with Elijah. They may even however wound themselves with the so called "stigmata"; trying to pretend they are like Jesus.

All such fakery will be shunned and lied about in these last days before the Lord's return, as Satan's people are seriously running scared. They will pretend their wounds are from their violent childhoods or a brawl or play fight with friends, but they lie, and their lies will undo them when Jesus returns. Even before the Lord's return such people will be judged in Israel by the events unfolding. As so called "prophets" they should have known what to do when the Anti-Christ sets up his image in the Temple, but they do not, and so they perish with all others who have fatally delayed their flight. The fake religions are all satanic, and he hates his own fools and delights in destroying them.

**7 Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.**

The word "awake" here can also be translated "raise up". When combined with the sword, which is judgment, and the phrase, against my shepherd, we see that this is the judgment suffered by Jesus on the Cross. Until the Cross God the Father holds off on his discipline for sin, he overlooked sin. The shepherd is judged on the Cross in 32 AD and in 70 AD the sheep who are Israel are scattered abroad under the dispersion and are still in dispersion. Jesus also used this as an illustration just prior to the Cross, when he prophesied that the disciples would scatter as a result of the Cross. Matthew 26:30-32. Jesus makes this passage from Zechariah a hopeful one, for he notes that he will be raised from the dead and go ahead of them into the Galilee after his resurrection. The resurrection appears to be the gentle hand of God restoring his "little ones" in faith and building their faith up.

**8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. 9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.**

The survival rate of the nation of Israel through the last week of their seventy weeks is now given to us and it makes humbling reading; only one third of the population of Israel will survive to welcome the Lord back to Jerusalem as King. The reference to a refining process, and the context of these verses, after the passage about cleansing, would indicate that those who understand and obey the Word survive, but those who are not absolutely pure in their devotion to the Word make the errors that a casual faith produces and they die as a result. The Lord is refining his people and a close walk to the Lord is essential for survival.

Half hearted faith leads to death. Inadequate obedience leads to death. Only 100% obedience places the believer in a place where they are safe until the Lord's return for them. The dead believers do not lose their eternal life, and they do win the martyr's crown, but they fail to enter the Millennium and live with the Lord there. Their fate is like the Exodus Generation, but there are far more survivors than at that time, when only two men enter the land of the adults who left Egypt.

(iv) **Zechariah 14:1ff**

**1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.**

The "Day of the Lord" can refer to the events of the entire last week of Daniel's Seventy Weeks; the initial time of Tribulation, the second half period of great tribulation, the Second Advent, and even into the early Millennium judgments. The exact meaning appears to be depending on the context of the passage in which the phrase occurs. (Isaiah 2:12, 13:6, Joel 1:15, 2:1 Zechariah 14:1, 1 Thessalonians 5:2, 2 Peter 3:10). In this context it refers to a period of time leading up to the Second Advent, and then followed by the Millennium.

The word "cometh" is in the Kal perfect. It is in the perfect tense showing that the coming of the Lord and the Millennium is a certainty because God knows precisely what is going to happen in the future. The spoil in verse 1 refers to booty taken by the attackers from people in Jerusalem especially those who do not resist. Those who do not resist are going to be subject to violence. The believers of the mid-point in the last prophetic week of Israel's history are urged to "flee to the

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hills". The people who are subject to these and the next verses are either those who didn't flee the cities of Israel, or who were led to faith after the Idol was set up. Much time has passed and it would appear that a rebellion against the Anti-Christ has broken out in Israel itself and he has launched a massive invasion to crush it. The army of the Anti-Christ gains initial success and the evil men celebrate with looting the places they capture.

**2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. 3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.**

The Hebrew word for nations "goy" also means Gentiles, or heathen, so the heathen Gentiles attack Jerusalem. The forces of the Anti-Christ are basically "Gentile", from the old Roman Empire, and they cruelly treat all the inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem that they capture. There is rape and murder and looting. Half the city is taken, but half remains intact and the battle rages on in that half with believers resisting until the end, when the Lord returns to deliver them.

There is a believing remnant that is not cut off. They follow the instructions in the Bible saying that they must fight, knowing that the return of the Lord is near. Those at the mid-point of this last prophetic week are to flee when they see the idol set up, but those later on are to stand and fight; they are not to surrender, for no mercy will be shown them. Anti-Christ will by then be trying to exterminate the Jewish people world wide, and all with weapons around Jerusalem are to use them until the last day, when the earthquake opens up a way of escape from Jerusalem, just before the Lord's return there to judge the enemy forces.

***Luke 21:24** And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. 25 And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; 26 Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 27 And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.*

The Lord now returns and fights for the believers with devastating power and destroys the enemy.

**4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. 5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.**

After confirming the Lord's intervention into the defense of Jerusalem Zechariah now explains the way in which it will occur and the way of escape that will open up for the besieged inhabitants of the city. It will begin with the return of the Lord Jesus Christ when His feet will touch the surface of the Mount of Olives just as had been prophesied in Acts 1:11-12. It is of interest that the glory of God in the form of the Shekinah Glory departed towards the east in Ezekiel's vision of Ezekiel 11:23, and it returns from the same direction in the person of the Messiah.

Geological examination of the Mount of Olives has shown a fault that would be conducive to split the mountain in the way outlined in this passage. The resulting valley allows for the people to escape. They will flee as they did in the time of the great earthquake of Uzziah which is mentioned in Amos 1:1 Josephus regarded this great earthquake as divine judgment on Uzziah who had gone into the Temple to assume the role of the priesthood 2 Chronicles 26:16. Now pause and reflect upon these things, for with this knowledge, and the knowledge of the number of days until the Lord's return, the believing fighters of these days will be able to position themselves ready to flee, exactly facing where this fault line will open up and give them their escape path. They are given their exact route and told to run for it as fast as they can just after a Richter Scale 8+ earthquake – this is Abrahamic faith writ large – to run down a canyon just opened in solid rock by an earthquake. This is the faith we are called to – a faith that is expressed with dynamic and instant obedience.

**6 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: 7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.**

The day of the Second Coming is unique in a number of ways. One is that there will be an unnatural darkness over the earth. This is so every eye will see his coming. Revelation 1:7. Even on a dark night without the moon there is still a level of light under which one can operate. This light comes from the stars. This verse however says that even the light of the surviving stars will be concealed or darkened. The tectonic situation described in Revelation may explain this.

Under these conditions armies grind to a halt. Darkness will be the friend of the defenders of Jerusalem as they make their escape down the valley opened along the earthquake fault line. This is the same type of darkness which covered Golgotha at the time our Lord was bearing and being judged for the sins of the world. In the evening however the light will return, but with a flash of judgment that is terrible to read of. The next verses through until verse 11 cover the glories that will be present when the Lord transforms the area around Jerusalem for the Millennial Kingdom, but then the

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following verses record the Lord's judgment upon the enemies in and around Jerusalem. It is a passage that appears to resemble the use of what appears like a thermo-nuclear device, as Isaiah 29:5-6 had also prophesied before.

**12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.**

**13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.**

**14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.**

**15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.**

Verses 12 – 15. It is to be noted that the result of exposure to the atomic bombs dropped on Japan at the end of World War 2 had the effect similar to those outlined in verse 12. The use of nuclear weapons cannot be ruled out, but these things can be done directly by the Lord without any man made bombs. We need to remember what happened to the Assyrian troops surrounding Jerusalem at the time of the Sennacherib invasion, when overnight the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 troops outside the city causing the survivors of the besieging army to retire. The Lord directly assaults the enemy in the city by this great "blast", but also the chaos caused by it creates murder in the camp of the enemy, who fall upon each other in the confusion they feel. Whatever the means the Lord uses, Satan's plans are brought to nothing and his men to dust.

Having concentrated on the situation in Jerusalem Zechariah now adds the fact that there is another group of Jews who are also resisting. In verse 14 we see that those in the mountains of Judah and beyond also now fight and as a result accumulate a large amount of booty from the Gentile or heathen armies. This in large measure will be retrieving the plunder that the enemy has taken earlier from the section of Jerusalem which has been taken from them. In verse 15 we are reminded of the fact that the plague not only affects the opposing army but also all the animals as well. Those who do what the Lord's Word directs them to do are saved from the assaults of the enemy and the blasts of the Lord, but those who reject the Word and Person of Messiah are without hope facing judgment, and are wiped from the earth.

Note the parallel passage to this one from **Isaiah 29:5-7**.

*"5 Moreover the multitude of thy strangers shall be like small dust, and the multitude of the terrible ones shall be as chaff that passeth away: yea, it shall be at an instant suddenly.*

*6 Thou shalt be visited of the LORD of hosts with thunder, and with earthquake, and great noise, with storm and tempest, and the flame of devouring fire.*

*7 And the multitude of all the nations that fight against Ariel, even all that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision."*

### (v) Matthew 24:9-28

**9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**

Faithful believers in the one true God will experience great personal testing during the final years of the Church Age and into the Tribulation period. The period begins with no believers, as the Church has been removed, but many are led to faith in the Lord very quickly, and a new body of believers develops and confronts the truths they rejected before the rapture occurred. The nations under the Anti-Christ's sway will conduct a bitter hate campaign against all who are true to the Lordship of Jesus in this time, for Anti-Christ's religion is a synchronistic system that makes all religions one.

Not only will genuine believers be tried in religious and civil courts but many will be martyred because they refuse to recant their true faith. Revelation 7:13-17 identifies just how large the multitude of Tribulational martyrs will be as a result of this persecution. While such testing times have occurred during all periods of Christian testimony, this testing will be the most intensified period of history during the Tribulation period. Many will become apostate rather than suffer and die. Family members will inform against their own relatives and betray them into the hands of their adversaries to be murdered.

**11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.**

The False Prophets in this verse should not be confused with the false Messiahs of verse 5. False prophets claim to be spokesman for God as we have seen in the Zechariah passages. They can be detected in a number of ways that we saw above. Another feature of this is that iniquity or evil shall expand and become normal. As a result acts of genuine love will be rare and there will be many acts of selfishness and self centeredness. Anti-Christ rules as an arrogant dictator and those who support him are the narcissists of that day; people who care only for their own good, not that of others. The challenge for genuine believers through this entire period is to hold fast the truths of God's Word and obey the Lord's Word to death. The believers need to stand with Abrahamic faith. The Anti-Christ is not able to completely control the

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Arab countries as we saw in Daniel 11:41. Arab and Jewish believers can resist him and will do so, with many coming through this period to enter the Millennium. There is hope in the midst of incredible pressure, but only for those whose eyes are on the certainty of the Lord's Second Advent.

### **13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

This verse obviously does not mean that the believer's souls will be saved at that time by the human power of their enduring, for salvation is always presented in the Bible as a gift of God's grace received by faith in Christ's death and resurrection. Neither can it mean that all to endure will escape physical harm. We have already learned that many believers will be martyred. It is a general statement of hope/confidence however to those who stand fast during persecution; that they will be delivered at Christ's Second Advent. Many will follow the Scriptures and be delivered by the Lord's Second Advent.

### **14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.**

This verse is often misused to show that Christ could not return for his Church at any moment because so many tribes have apparently not yet heard the gospel. This difficulty is removed when we realize that this passage refers to His coming with his saints (Second Advent) rather than for the saints (Rapture). This also refers to the gospel of the kingdom not the gospel of the grace of God. We know that up to and just after the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ the gospel of the kingdom was given because the kingdom was imminent at that time. Once however the offer had been rejected, and specifically after the stoning of Stephen, the gospel of grace came into focus. This verse applies to the last Week of Israel's history, not to the Church, that is gone by this time.

It should be noted that both the gospel of the kingdom and the gospel of grace have as their basis faith. However the gospel of the kingdom relates to the time when the kingdom is imminent which it was at the time of the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will be again in the Tribulation. However in the Church Age we know that there is a seven year Tribulation to follow the Rapture of the Church thus the kingdom of heaven is not imminent at this time. From the fact that He is not willing that any should perish, 2 Peter 3:9, and that God is absolutely fair, it demonstrates that all seeking members of the human race are provided with opportunities to hear and accept God's plan for their lives.

Even through the worst time in human history, when mankind is being judged for their evils, the Gospel message is still being given, right up until the last day, and the Tribulation generally is the greatest time of evangelism in space-time. None will stand before the Lord with any excuses. It is of interest also that the final world wide evangelism is undertaken by the 144,000, their converts, and even by a mighty angel – Revelation 14:6

### **15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)**

The abomination of desolation is mentioned initially in Daniel 8:13,14 It is then mentioned again in Daniel 9:27, and 12:7-13. The exact nature of the 3 ½ years of Great Tribulation are spelled out and the fact that the raising up of this idol starts the period is clear from a study of the three passages. The total period of seven years of oppression is also given tying this into Daniel's Seventieth Week.

The first time such a thing occurred was in the second century BC under the Syrian Greek dictator Antiochus Epiphanes. Daniel appears to refer to him and his desecration of the temple in the first reference. The saints or set apart ones in Daniel 8 are angels talking one to another. They ask "How long is this oppression going to last"? The reply to that question was 2300 days, 6 years 3 months and 20 days. The sanctuary was cleansed on December 164 BC so the time takes us back to 170 BC to when the trouble began. In some way that will assist the believers of the Great Tribulation period there will be similarities to the evils of Antiochus Epiphanes and the traitorous Jewish high priest Menelaus. We may not understand these verses right now, but in the future day, the believers will have clues here that help them respond and live. It may be that some deal is made by a corrupt Jewish high priest with the Anti-Christ figure and that when that occurs the believers have a clue that it is now 6 years, four months and 20 days until Jesus returns, and under three years before Anti-Christ sets up his statue!

170BC was the year that the evil Jew Menelaus wanted to be high priest, but he had to get rid of his rival Jason. He went up to Syria and offered to rob the Temple for Antiochus Epiphanes and so, in effect, pay for the high priesthood. This he did and as a result he was made the High Priest. He was a Hellenistic Jew and was willing to hand the Temple over to the Syrians and compromise his own faith for their power and wealth. A general from Antiochus came down and received the money that was the price of the office 2300 days before the Temple would be finally cleansed. [for further details see Josephus "The Antiquities of the Jews Book 12 Chapter 5]. Antiochus Epiphanes later sets up his statue in the Temple and desecrates it 3 ½ years before the cleansing/rededication. It may be that before the final desecration of the temple with his idol, that Anti-Christ will make a deal with a false Jewish religious leader and work with him until he sets up himself as "god".

As with many prophecies there is most likely a double fulfilment here, with the first fulfilment being during the time of the Maccabean Wars, as outlined above, and the second which is pictured here, during another future seven year period in

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the Tribulation. The setting up of the statue marks the exact start of the second half of the Tribulation, and the national shock can only be imagined when the idol, the "abomination of desolation" is suddenly, without any warning, erected in the Temple in Jerusalem. This is when the Antichrist, in the middle of the Tribulation takes over the Jewish temple, and seats himself in the Holy of Holies and declares himself to be the one true God. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12. When this occurs there is need for immediate action for all believers in the city who wish to live to see the Lord's return in glory.

**16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: 17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:**

As a result of the abomination of desolation there is to be the flight of believing Israel. Believing Israelis flee the city for the countryside and neighbouring lands. The emphasis is on the urgency of their flight. They must run and run quickly, and immediately, and there are three in consequences if the abomination of desolation occurs at the wrong time for them. In some way the prophecy of 2300 days gives believers the opportunity to plan for this evil day well in advance.

1. It will be difficult for those who are pregnant or who have to carry small infants.
2. It will be difficult if it happens in winter.
3. It will be difficult if it happens on the Sabbath because of the lack of public transport on that day.

**21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.**

It is at this point that Satan inaugurates his final attempt to destroy the Jews once and for all. He does this because he knows what the basis of the second coming is. If he is able to eliminate all the Jews then Christ's return is in vain because as King of the Jews he will have no people to reign over and there will be no Jews to take over the Promised Land as God had promised the nation Israel. So the abomination of desolation marks the beginning point of Satan's final attempt to destroy the Jews, once and for all, and so it also begins a period of worldwide anti Semitism. Not all nations support this however, and many individuals world wide reject this, and these people will be blessed by the Lord at his return.

In verse 22 we see that the remnant of believing Israel will survive, and the days will even be cut short so that they will survive, because if the day's did not get cut short everyone would die and Satan would win. God will win and the days are short for Satan to operate, and his defeat is certain. We will come back to this concept of "days cut short" below.

**23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.**

The Jews leaving the land that day are told to head south eastwards into Jordan and retreat into the mountainous area around Petra to the south and possibly Pella towards the north. The armed forces of the gentiles will know where they have gone and will send down propaganda experts to try and encourage the Jews to come out of the mountainous area where they have sought refuge with Arab believers who are equally shocked at Anti-Christ's idolatry. These mountainous areas are difficult to attack and so the forces of the enemy will try all deceptive means before attempting force.

The techniques used by the attacking armies also include false prophets who will perform miracles to try to deceive believers to come out and be captured and killed more easily. These miracles will be so spectacular that they will convince the unbelievers and will greatly impress any believers that witness them. In this passage Jesus tells the disciples that he is warning them about distant future things. He says that those in that far off day should not believe what the propagandists say because it is a trap and if they come out to see Jesus the enemy will kill them.

**27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.**

In verse 27 Jesus reminds the disciples that his Second Coming will be seen by all. It will be at a "glorious appearing" and one that no one on the earth will be in doubt about. In verse 28 the corpse or carcase is apostasy or corruption, the eagles are the inevitable judgment of God. The whole world system, political and religious, has been arraigned against God and is in God's sight a corpse. The eagles or vultures typify the judgments of God that will be unleashed on this system in conjunction with the Second Advent.

We need to weigh everything up against the Scriptures to ensure we are not being led astray, especially by signs and wonders. Like our father Abraham, we walk by faith and not by sight. In the Tribulation period there will be many signs and wonders done by the forces of evil, but biblical discernment will protect believers. The Lord said that the Jews look for signs, and with the demonic activity signs will abound, but as we are seeing faith will also abound in those who are determined to stand with Abraham and serve God alone.

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## **SECTION 6 Satan's Counterfeit Saviour – The Anti-Christ Foreseen, so God's people are fore-armed**

All good military manuals always urge the strategist to “know their enemy”, so as to avoid his strengths, play to his weaknesses, and stay well away from his deceptions. With Satan we can truly know and resist our enemy, and are urged to do so strongly. James 4:7-8, 1 Peter 5:8-9. Satan was the greatest created being, but he is still a creature, and understanding this we can study his character in the scriptures, and for those in the last days of this present age before the Lord's return, their knowledge of Satan's character and plans will be crucial to their survival. Today believers can be lax in their understanding of Angelic Conflict and may never come up against the demonic in some cultures and places, but that luxury is gone for seven years as Israel enters the last prophetic week of her history before Messiah comes to rule the earth.

Satan's Plan finds its ultimate fulfilment in the person of the Anti-Christ and he plays all Satan's cards at that time, towards the end with the help of a false prophet with extra-ordinary powers. The power wielded is prophesied to be great, but it is still creature's power, not creator's power! The challenge for believers through this period remains the same; stand firm in the truth of the prophetic words of Scripture and be like Abraham – men and women of faith in dark days.

*“James 4:7 Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

*1 Peter 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:*

*9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world”.*

Several specific passages describe this “man of sin”, this servant of Satan who stands for everything that is opposed to the person and work of Jesus.

- (a) The Descriptions given to Daniel are very descriptive and precise – God wants us to be clear in our thinking.
  - Daniel 7:8, 20-27
  - Daniel 8:9-12
  - Daniel 11:36-45

Let us go through these passages systematically verse by verse – we must know the enemy's plan – not chase shadows

### **DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS 7:1-8**

**1** In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. **2** Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. **3** And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another. **4** The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. **5** And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh. **6** After this I beheld, and lo another, like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it. **7** After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. **8** I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

In verse 7 we have the fourth world empire introduced; that of the Romans. There were a number of quite different people groups which made up the Romans. The first were the valley people who in the Iron Age were known as the Latins or Villa Novans. There were three groups of hill peoples including the Sabines. To the north of the Tiber were the Etruscans and the Gauls. To the south of Rome were Greeks who had settled there. The survivors of all these people would merge into the army that conquered the Mediterranean world, led by the aristocratic and ruthless Latins, who worshipped war itself (Mars) and raped and killed captives as “worship”. They followed demonic religion, and Satan truly ruled their kingdom, as he constantly aims at ruling all others. When Satan offered rulership to the Lord, the Lord didn't counter the claim of Satan by saying, “they are not yours to offer”, for they were, and still are – that is at the heart of Daniel's dream. God gives him this vision to show him, and us today, that political power is Satan's playground, and will be until the end, when the Lord brings it all down with a crash at the Second Advent. **Matthew 4:8-10.**

Initially only three of the seven hills of Rome were occupied, with the first hill being called the Palatine. The second was the Quirinal and the third the Caelian. The Latin groups, who were constantly fighting each other, decided to stop and had a common market in the valley. This common market was known as the forum. The “power” people of the forum became called the Patricians, and were to become the aristocracy of the early Roman people. They organized themselves into three hundred clans, and each clan had a chieftain. They used to meet at a gathering called Senatus



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from where we get the word Senate. This would become the Roman State – a demon led group who would become the rulers of Judea and the killers of the Lord Jesus, and in the final form of this “beast” of an evil empire, they would be led by Satan’s man, the Anti-Christ himself.

Other mixed race people came in and joined the group but were non-citizens. They were called plebeians. They were not able to marry with the Patricians. This caused problems and in about 460 BC the plebeians had gained sufficient power that they demanded written laws. These were written on 12 tables and were called the law of the twelve tables. The laws were very objective and formed the basis of Roman law. The laws were for both groups. In 367 BC other laws relating to land and the structure of Roman society was published. By the turn of that century the Patricians and Plebeians merged to form the foundation of the Rome we know. The unification of Italy under their authority took another 100 years.

The early Romans had an unusual basic diet of onions, turnips, cabbage, figs, olives, apples, pears, porridge, bread, pork, and beef. Their drink consisted of water and goats milk and was unique in the absence of alcohol in the early days. The houses initially were one room with wooden furniture and a few cooking utensils. They had their main meal at noon. Simplicity and military ruthlessness and toughness were their hallmark. All their values were military ones, and any who opposed their will was dedicated to their god of war, Mars, and was to be killed. They placed no value on prisoners.

They were the first people to have a concept of equal value amongst their soldier citizens, and formed labour unions with the first union being one for carpenters followed by shoemakers and dyers and even one for flute players. There was no poverty in Rome from its inception to the three Punic Wars, a period of almost 500 years. A very hard work ethic, legalistic violent religion, and family loyalty, all of which kept them strong in the early years. They had little true culture of their own; they took most of their early cultural, artistic/architecture, and theoretical/industrial ideas from the Etruscans, the Carthaginians, and later from the Greek colonies in the south of Italy.

The Romans, though demon influenced dominantly at times, have been used as a people by God more than any other, with the exception of the Jews, for the promotion of His purposes in the ancient world. They play an important part for the good of God’s chosen people, and for their testing. Their use by the Lord proves God’s superiority to the satanic forces who have influenced the empires for evil down the centuries. The Roman Empire remains at centre stage as a political power base for mankind until the Second Advent of the Lord. The story of Rome can be divided into three, the Republic, the Empire, with Julius Caesar being the dividing line. Julius Caesar died in 44 BC. The third phase is the Post-Empire European “Union” of nation-states, of various strength and ruthlessness, both in East and West, down the ages since 500 AD.

The Romans provided a safe, if organized-violence saturated, environment for the life and ministry of Jesus. His ministry, and the spreading of Christianity in the four hundred years after the resurrection occur within the structural stability provided by this fourth empire of man. The structure of the Roman Empire provided a container that gave freedom of movement for the Gospel through the world in a way that had not been possible before. While the background of the Old Testament is Jewish, that of the New Testament is Roman History. The very brutal nature of their rule meant that the tyrants of the world they took over were in fear of them; they created an empire built upon fear. They would think nothing of the murder of an entire city’s population for a minor offence against Roman Law. They didn’t care how much they were hated, as long as people feared them. They killed believers and pagans – but even though stanic violence saturates their history, in spite of themselves they have been used to serve God’s purposes.

In the vision of Daniel the Roman Empire is rightly referred to as the most fierce beast of all the creatures he sees; they are the culmination of the political violence that is the history of man’s nations and empires. Looking at the description of this beast we have eight phrases which can be followed through historically, but we also have characteristics that occur all through her history, right through into the modern Roman Empire of today. The last phase of this Roman “beast” will be the satanic empire of the last days led by the man called the Anti-Christ, or “the Beast”. This is the empire that ends in the Great Tribulation period. The eight phases of Rome’s history are seen and described prophetically by Daniel as follows:

1. **“Dreadful”** – deals with the conquest of the Mediterranean area. Originally in 264 BC there were five centres of power, the Romans, Carthaginians, Macedonians and the Hellenistic Empires of Syria and Egypt. Carthage consisted of North Africa and Spain. It took just over a hundred years for Rome to become totally dominant. This was the times of the three Punic Wars where they conquered and systematically wiped out the Carthaginians.

The word Punic comes from the word Phoenicians which was what the Carthaginians were. The most famous of the leaders of Carthage was Hannibal who inflicted a massive defeat on the Romans at the battle of Cannae in 216 BC. The people of Carthage did not support Hannibal 100% and eventually this led to the downfall of Carthage and its being sown with salt. The Carthaginian people were murdered to the last child! Over 400,000 people were massacred by the Romans over a three day orgy of murder in and around the city. There were no survivors from the city. Hannibal survived only because he was away. He fought for other enemies of Rome, but finally committed suicide in 182 BC just before Roman troops were about to arrest him in what is now northern Turkey.

They created a sense of **“dread”** in all peoples they came up against, for cruelty and murder was all the conquered people could depend upon from Rome. By 201 BC the Romans had conquered the eastern Mediterranean. The Greek language was the language east of the Adriatic while Latin was the language to the west. The two languages became

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compatible as means of expression and would be used side by side for the next six hundred years and be the two that would spread the Gospel message.

2. **“Terrible”** – This represents the time period of the rise of the Roman mobs, and also terror as a state tactic to control the mobs, and their conquered territories. The whole structure of their traditional and tribal society was destroyed. The mobs were those driven off their properties and who had congregated in the squalid and overcrowded slums of Rome. In the 17 years of the Second Punic War over one million people were killed, reducing drastically the able bodied people within the Empire. There was great depopulation and demoralization in the countryside. The wealthy survivors of the aristocracy seized the abandoned lands and slavery replaced the old tenant farmers on the depopulated lands. The same aristocrats used the urban poor, paying the mobs to do their will like a local mafia. Rival political and financial factions of government used the mobs to intimidate other groups for the rest of Roman history, and the “underbelly” of modern Western cities retains this criminal centre of power in the slums.

The Roman Empire was an agricultural economy and with its destruction by wandering armies dispossessed people headed for Rome and formed mobs/gangs who were driven to crime due to poverty. The Roman officials of the city fed the mobs with grain from Egypt and provided blood sport entertainment at government expense to keep them as quiet as they could. The word “terrible” reflects both moral and financial decline. This ended in a brutal and bloody civil war. It ends with Augustus Caesar’s victory and then after his death to dynastic emperors, who continue to utilize terror tactics against their subject peoples, including by the middle of the First Century of our era, against the Christians.

3. **“Strong Exceedingly”** – this represents Rome evolving from a City State into an Empire. The Romans systems were tougher and more brutally applied than any previous Empire except possibly the Assyrians. Their systems of government worked and were applied without any compromises made unless you were incredibly wealthy, and then you could buy your way through the system to power within it. Even today we see this aspect of the old Roman Empire in our taxation and criminal laws. The wealthy certainly hire the best lawyers and have the most powerful friends; the “subject peoples” are crushed or ignored and left to starve or die early of diseases the wealthy don’t notice any more. The Romans attitude was that “strength is mighty, and weakness is pathetic”. If you were weak then you were despised by this Empire, and its modern equivalent has the same attitudes. Observe events of 2007-2013 in the World Financial Crisis! Even observe the bankrupting of the world to obtain more centralized control of governments through Covid-19!

4. **“Great Iron Teeth”** – represents the great civil war from 146 - 49 BC. During this time there are a number of reformers, but also a number of ruthless tyrants and executors of thousands. There were also revolts by slaves, such as the Spartacus revolt of 71 BC, which was crushed by Crassus and Pompey resulting in the crucifixion of upwards of 40,000 people on the major routes out of Rome. There was huge conflict also between Sulla and Marius, two military dictators between 100 and 79 BC. They used a system of proscriptions where they would murder those of their opponents who were not in power and seize their wealth. The iron teeth are symbols of the ruthless tearing of the flesh of their enemies without mercy. This is an empire that crushed its foes and ate up its enemies, and at times old friends, for lunch! Satanic structures are known by their fruits (Galatians 5:19-21) – you can spot these all through Western history.

The iron teeth turned on their own people with violence numerous times also. In 60 BC the Triumvirate of Julius Caesar, Pompey and Crassus formed. Crassus was the richest man in the Empire. He had a million people working for him and had made his money out of extortion and slavery. The others were victorious generals. Crassus decided he wanted to be known as a military genius and led an army to Parthia where he was killed after a battle in 53 BC. The Parthian King, when told by Crassus he would be paid in gold for his release, poured molten gold down Crassus’ throat and killed him. Pompey and Julius Caesar eventually clashed, with Pompey being defeated at Pharsalia in 48 BC, leaving Julius Caesar as Dictator of the Roman Empire. The civil wars with Roman Army facing Roman army led to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of men!

5. **“Devoured and Break into Pieces”** – there were three areas of problems facing Caesar

1. The corruption of the Roman financial-business system
2. The danger of the Barbarian invasion especially from Germany
3. The need for better government in the Roman provinces, with less corruption and resultant rebellions.

Cicero said of Caesar that, “He was great as a soldier, statesman, law giver, jurist, orator, poet, historian, grammarian, mathematician and architect”. Caesar was an unbeliever who was more gracious in his manner and attitude than any person of his day. During the conflict with Pompey one of his generals wanted to desert and go over to the opposition. Caesar not only said that it was a matter of his own free will but gave him an honour guard to Pompey’s camp and also sent his baggage over to the camp afterwards.

When he defeated Pompey he took the aristocratic group who had apposed him and restored them to their lands and possessions. He said that the Empire would not be a great place until all were citizens and had equal rights. He refused to feed the mob, he tried to give them work to do. He sent them to Corinth and other places to undertake reconstruction. By this means he eliminated the mobs for a time, but by so doing he annoyed the leading families of Rome who had used the criminal underbelly of society for their own political and business ends.

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Caesar looked at the traditional 12 tables of laws and found them to be inadequate, so he codified them in the last five years of his life. While he was doing that he fought three major military campaigns. He found that spring was coming in June under the old lunar calendar of Rome so he changed the calendar, providing the Julian Calendar that we still have today with only minor modifications. He was a genius, but like all with great intelligence, he did not realize the danger of the hatred of inferior men towards him, and the threatened feeling they had by his very brilliance.

He refused to have an armed guard, saying that a coward dies many times, a brave man but once. Eventually on the Ides of March 44 BC he was assassinated in Rome and fell dead of 23 stab wounds at the foot of the statue of his old rival Pompey. Caesar had a brilliant mind and was able to dictate to six secretaries at one time on a range of subjects. He also was able to survive with little sleep. He was immensely hard working. He restored order to the Empire, but a man of equal genius was required to hold that order. The next Caesar, Augustus, was such a man, but others who followed him were not. The Western nations that have stemmed from the Roman Empire are strong when they are well led, as by a Caesar, but are immensely destructive when led by inferior men who think they are like a Caesar, eg, Hitler and Mussolini.

**6. “Stamped the Residue”** – The Julian Caesars commenced in 31 BC with Octavius, soon renamed Augustus Caesar, laying down a pattern for the Empire some 4 years later. It was a time of great peace and stability. Augustus died in 14 AD and was succeeded by Tiberius to 37 AD. The final three Caesars in this line were Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. In the second half of the first century the Flavian Caesars ruled. The stamping of the residue is the elimination of all the rebellion. This was an Empire that was ruthless in its extinguishing of any rebellion; they simply would not rest until they destroyed the rebels and their power bases.

**7. “Diverse from all the beasts that were before it”** - The Flavian Caesars were followed by the golden age of Rome, the 100 years from 96 to 192 AD, which was different to anything seen before. It was possible to travel from one end of the empire to the other in peace. The peace was based on a strong military. Soldiers however were not seen other than on the fringes of the Empire. Rome became the banking centre of the world. The position for women was the best at any time in history. They were safe and protected. They allowed maximum freedom, except for religions like Christianity. There was a fine system of charity for the poor. Slavery was so mild late in the Empire as to be practically non-existent with the slaves having recourse to Roman law. The crime rate was at an all-time low with fair justice dispensed with vigour, but this same vigour was directed at persecuting the Christian Church within the Empire.

The best Caesars were often the worst persecutors of the early Christian Church. This period of history will be the model for the Anti-Christ in his last satanic attempt to extinguish faith in Jesus from the earth. This was an Empire that lasted longer than any that went before, and it never actually disappeared, just changed into the “Holy Roman Empire” in the West, led by the Germans, alternating with the French, and the Eastern Empire in the East until 1453, when it fell catastrophically to the Ottoman Turks. This was an Empire unlike anything before it, and it still exists today in the European Union and so called “Western Allies”. The Roman Empire has never ceased to be, it just became a mix of strong and weak nations with “western” origins, and at times “noble”, but always brutal narcissistic values driving it.

**8. “And it had ten horns”** – The “horn” was the primal symbol of power and violent rulership. The number ten in the ancient world stood for perfection/completion in the order of numbers where ten is the base number. The combination of ten and horns indicates a complete system of power based government, and as a system of man it indicates the culmination of man’s government separate from God = the Anti-Christ. This phrase therefore deals with the culmination of Imperialism, the one world government of the Antichrist. In verse 8 Daniel considered a possible meaning of the ten horns, and correlated them to the ten toes of Daniel 2. The wild beasts in this chapter related to its power and speed whereas the statue dealt with its political unity and stability.

The ten horns being therefore pictures of power and stability of government; the base upon which the entire political “statue” of man’s grandeur stands. Out of the ten horns comes a little horn who is the Antichrist who destroys three of the kings. He is a genius as shown by the phrase, “he has eyes like the eyes of a man”. He is probably Satan possessed and is described in other passages as a tremendous orator who is blasphemous about God. The Roman Empire reaches its final form in the Western based Empire of the Anti-Christ, for in him the world sees the worst and best that Roman (Western) Power can achieve. The end of the Roman Empire comes only with the return of Jesus.

### EXPLANATION OF THE FOURTH BEAST

Daniel 7:19-28

**19** Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; **20** And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows. **21** I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; **22** Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom. **23** Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. **24** And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. **25** And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be

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given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time. 26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. 28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

Daniel was particularly curious regarding the fourth and final beast with its ferocity, and the ten horns, and the little horn, because it was so seriously different from anything he had seen before it. In verse 19 Daniel notes that this beast is different from all its predecessors in its ferocity and its effect in the longer term on believers. It is particularly ferocious and unlike any animal that Daniel had ever seen. More believers have died in Europe because of evil or pagan Europeans than from any other cause. The Crusaders murdered more Christians, for example than they killed Moslems. In southern France, for example, Simon de Montfort murdered over 400,000 Albigensian believers on the orders of the Pope. The Western Power centre of the Old Roman Empire is the centre of Anti-God activity throughout history, with brief intervals of revivals of spirituality by a few genuine believers within the Western Power bloc. Satan's main focus has since the fall of the Greeks been this fourth beast "Europe", and it will be until the end. Europe expanded into America and now the "Western Alliance", or new Europe/Rome is the combined American-European power base.

In verse 20 he notes the ten horns and the little horn which comes up and is impressed by the fact that the little horn is in fact stronger than the other horns. This is a fact borne out in Revelation chapter 17 where the ten rulers give allegiance to the Antichrist. **Revelation 17:12 – 14** says, "*And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful*".

The word translated "stout" is the word Rab, which means great, Abundant, Much, or Many, indicating controlling power. Daniel sees the little horn as pure evil. He makes serious war against believers and overpowers them, which is what Revelation 17:14 confirms. In verse 22 Daniel records that the tables are turned suddenly however, and the rule of the Antichrist is broken by the return of Jesus, and the setting up of his Millennial Kingdom. This transforms all the kingdoms of the world and evil's rule over the West is over for good.

In verses 23 and 24 we have the rise of the Antichrist discussed. It is noted that this final fourth stage, which started with the Roman Empire, actually represents the development of Western Imperialism during the period right up to the Second Advent of Christ. The Anti-Christ rules at the end of the period and this is the period covered by the two feet of the vision in Daniel Chapter 2. The two legs/feet in Daniel 2 represent a split between the eastern and western sides of the old Roman Empire, and it would indicate that the "one world government" that will be formed is fatally flawed from the beginning, and the Anti-Christ is unable to control all the nations. Several of the Eastern Provinces/States of the old Roman Empire, are now Arab states, and are specifically noted as being outside his power. Daniel 11:40ff.

While the world falls under some form of a "one world government", and the Bible says that this beast will "devour the whole earth", there are limits to his power. The last verses of Daniel chapter eleven indicate that this power is not that efficient in some areas, and this would be true of all satanic dictators through history. Daniel is clear that rebellions are common at the end of the Great Tribulation period, and tie Anti-Christ up so that he is unable to concentrate on his goal of eliminating the Jews. Daniel sees that the ultimate form of the fourth beast is of a "one world government" structure which will be divided into ten kingdoms or regions. Daniel Chapter 11 does remind us that it is not that effective however, and so let us beware of talking his power up, as Satan has a track record of failure and Anti-Christ will be his last and most spectacular failure. The most publicized recent movement that tries to achieve these goals of one world government is the so called "Club of Rome", and it has "morphed" into other groups and formats.

**CLUB OF ROME** – It is of interest that a group of a hundred men from at least 25 nations came together to form this group in the 1970's. Their leader, Dr Peccei, stated that, "The only possible way to make these decisions is to take a global approach. A New International Order will have to be established not just in the economic sphere, but in social and political areas". The Club of Rome interestingly divided the world into ten sections:

- (a) North America.
- (b) Western Europe.
- (c) Japan.
- (d) Israel, South Africa and Australasia.
- (e) Eastern Europe, including Russia.
- [f] Latin America.
- (g) North Africa and the Middle East.
- (h) Main Africa.
- (i) South and South-East Asia.
- [j] Central Asia, including China.

The Club's solutions to global problems were:

- (a) A global approach to the problem.
- (b) Investment aid rather than commodity aid, except food.

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- (c) Balanced economic development in all regions.
- (d) Effective population policies.
- (e) Worldwide diversification of industry – global inter-dependant economy – dependant on EU money.

With the fall of the eastern Communist bloc, the economic growth in power of China and India, the threat of terrorism, the impact of world wide pollution/climate change, and the financial collapse of 2007-2012, the pressure towards global solutions are seriously increasing. The older biblical scholar's interpretation of the ten kings as Western European Prime Ministers/Presidents may not be correct, as the ten "toes/heads/horns" may be regions rather than countries or their leaders, although the Antichrist will have a political and religious power base in a place identified by then as the "New Rome/Mystery Babylon", and he will racially come from old Roman Empire stock as we shall see in Daniel chapter 9.

The rest of this chapter concludes with the Antichrist who will have rule over much of the earth for three and a half years, his removal of three regional leaders, his severe persecution of believers, and final demise are the subjects of later prophecies. The picture of this man and his political power emerges steadily through the centuries, from Daniel, Zechariah, the words of Jesus, then St Paul and St John.

## VISION OF THE GOAT – The First Example of the "Anti-Christ" type Daniel 8:8-14

**8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. 9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of the sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. 13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.**

The time of the vision is given as 546 BC which was the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar. It will be remembered that the King, who was Nabonidus, went into retirement in Arabia leaving Belshazzar to run the Chaldean Empire. We are, at the time of the vision ten years short of the end of the Empire which concluded with the famous writing on the wall incident given in chapter 5. This vision pictures the kings who will replace the Babylonians, both Medio-Persian, and later the Greek descendents of Alexander the Great, who defeated the Persians.

Our subject is the king of the Syrian segment of the remnant of the Empire of Alexander the Great – Antiochus Epiphanes. He becomes Satan's first "dry run" at the Anti-Christ type figure, and he does what the Anti-Christ will later do at a more advanced level. As we look at history Satan has been "practising" for this last figure of evil for centuries, but he repeats errors, for Satan's arrogance is such that he will not learn from history.

In **verse 8** the he goat (Alexander the Great) "waxed very great" showing that Alexander became hugely powerful and incredibly arrogant. He was great because he was a genius, and he had incredible moral and battle courage. He was always outnumbered but always won and he always went forward. His weakness is that he believed he was part god and part man, and that he was therefore invincible. His arrogance started to annoy his generals and they murdered him at the height of his power in Babylon. It is of note that before 2009 there was not the evidence for murder in any historical text book, but the Bible prophecy was clear, his horn was "broken"; that is, he was violently killed, he didn't die of alcoholic poisoning or "fever" as most histories argued until 2009, when the Kiwi toxicologist proved it was poison that killed him.

For a while the object of the generals was apparently to keep the empire together, but they lacked Alexander's genius and energy, but shared his satanic narcissism. This struggle lasted for about 20 years. The first dominant general was Antigonus the one eyed, and Demetrius his son. They almost succeeded but Lysimachus and Seleucus, two other generals, thwarted them by obtaining elephants from Porus the king of the Punjab in return for giving him a chunk of the empire in the east. These two defeated the father and son combination at the battle of Ipsus.

Eventually the empire was divided into four parts; Seleucus taking Syria, Ptolemy took Egypt, Lysimachus and Cassander took Macedonia and other areas of Asia Minor and Europe. Seleucus was well known for his strength. One of the games they played in the field was to see how long a person was able to keep hold of a bull while others were goading it. If you were gored by the bull you were disqualified. Seleucus was renowned for being able to control a bull and invariably won the contests. Ptolemy was one general who kept to the sidelines. He realised that the empire would not stay together, so he eventually went down to Egypt, taking the body of Alexander with him as a "good luck charm", and was the founder of the longest dynasty of the Greek Empire with the last of the Greek rulers being the last Cleopatra who lived in the first century BC, and satanic narcissism guiding her, used sex for power until suiciding.

From **verse 9** we will follow Seleucus. He and Ptolemy with their descendants will be seen further in Daniel Chapter 11. Seleucus lived until 281 BC. He was murdered by Ptolemy at a military reunion. His son Antiochus 1 had difficulties

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with the Gauls. Some had gone into France, Britain and Ireland but a number turned back and ended in the mountains of Asia Minor to form a kingdom in the centre of what is now Turkey. The next ruler was Antiochus II. This is why we have so many Antioch's in the world. In the ancient world there were 25 Antioch's and 50 Alexandria's. The king of the north was either Seleuchus or Antiochus while the king of the south was always called Ptolemy. They showed little imagination in naming their descendants, as narcissists do – their arrogance eliminates all real imagination! **Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:1-10.** Satan's great sin was narcissism, and it is the "fruit" of all who follow him through history.

Antiochus III was very powerful and conquered all around him except the Romans. He would not have had problems with the Romans if he had not hired Hannibal. He died in the east. His son Seluchus IV hired a smart Greek called Heliodorus who was a financial genius, but narcissistically evil to the core, and he murdered Seleuchus. There now comes into history Antiochus IV who was a very famous general who had been trained in Rome. His pleasure loving and murderous lifestyle was too much even for the Romans, so he was moved over to Athens where he became very popular as a general. It was here he heard that his brother had been assassinated.

He resigned as a general in the Athenian empire and borrowing an army from the ruler of Pergamos, another of his group from the Rome military school, he invaded Syria. When they saw him the populace welcomed him and Heliodorus left for exile carrying a large amount of money.

Antiochus IV, who called himself Epiphanies("god like in the flesh"), is said in this passage to have waxed strong towards the south, towards the east and towards the pleasant land. To the south is Egypt and in 169 BC the country was run by two of the least efficient generals of all time. They planned an invasion of Syria but Antiochus made a pre-emptive strike which no one had done in the last 160 years. He got through the northern defences and went down to Memphis. He now headed towards Alexandria but the Romans did not want Egypt being controlled by the Seleucids. A Roman general met him in North Africa. He was another classmate from Rome and said to Antiochus he was not to cross the line drawn in the sand. Antiochus knew he couldn't fight Rome and in great frustration agreed not to cross the line.

Antiochus now turned back and headed through the land of Israel, and he was really upset as a result of the Roman rebuke. The Ptolemy's had not paid much attention to the Jews. They were in effect autonomous. However when Antiochus Epiphanes rode past Jerusalem that day he became determined, with satanic fervour to destroy the independent religion of the Jews and to try and force upon the Jews the Hellenistic culture and demonic religion that he practised. As we saw in a previous section, he used the political desires of a corrupt Jewish high priest to begin his plan to eliminate Jewish independence. This was to be a declaration of war against God, which is what we will see characterize satanic men. They despise pure and true faith – thinking in their arrogance that they are superior to all!

**Verse 9** - Antiochus Epiphanes went also into a war against the Parthians to the east, and fought against their king Mithradites. He reconquered a great deal of the Persian empire with the exception of the Tigris Euphrates valley and southern Media which was being held by Timarchus. In 165 BC he moved east conquering as he went. He was successful in the east. He then went back towards "the pleasant land" which is Israel.

He went in to deliberately Hellenize the people and mock/change their religion. He was a victor in the east and couldn't understand, liem all narcissists whay the Jews were not impressed with him. There was a group of Jews who practiced Greek culture but he disdained them, and his relationship with them was not successful through his arrogance and even caused them to rebel against him in the end. He placed significant taxes on Israel. In 167 BC he made a golden statue of Zeus Olympias, which in fact was a statue of himself with a beard, and he demanded that the Jews worship this "god" as everybody else did. This statue was called in scripture the first "Abomination of Desolation". It is as if Satan uses this man as his "dry run" for later attempts to destroy God's people – Jesus draws attention to this man's work as an example of what the later satanic men will do, (?even to the 3 ½ year time frame for them?). Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14.

The Greeks placed this idol statue in the Holy of Holies of the Jerusalem temple and when the priests argued with them the Greek soldiers killed the priests. They stopped the legitimate sacrifices from that day, and brought in a thousand pigs which they slaughtered. The blood of pigs was all over the Temple. Other Jews in the city complained, and conducted a "peaceful protest march" with all the families and their children running through the streets, and a thousand children were slaughtered, plus many others, and their blood was mixed with the pigs and priests blood. It was evil carnage.

Under the Egyptians the Jews had had a high degree of autonomy but this outrage generated a war of independence with the most famous of the Jewish leaders being Judas Maccabaeus. The revolt proper commenced when a Seleucid army leader entered a village near Jerusalem. He sought out the priest who was Judas' father of the house of Asmonaeans, and ordered him to sacrifice a pig. The priest drew a knife and sacrificed the officer. This action was a sign for his five sons to draw weapons and dispatch the troops that had accompanied him.

Further forces were sent against them but were all eliminated. After three and a half years of fighting the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple and cleansed it, offering Levitical animal sacrifices for the first time in three and a half years. The cleansing was celebrated with processions of candles through the streets and the lighting of candles in all of the houses. This started on what we now call Christmas Day (25 December) and went through to January 1 and became the first celebration of the Festival of Lights, or Hanukkah. It is still celebrated by Jews world wide today. Thus commenced a period of independence for the Jews which lasted until they came under Roman control when Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC.

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In the next five verses these events are amplified. It is again in a typical Jewish format with the principle story told and then retuning afterwards to amplify. In verse 10 the word “it” relates to Antiochus IV who became powerful. The host of heaven were the believing Jews who were slaughtered in the Temple. Some of them were also killed in battle by the armies of Antiochus. In 161 BC Judas himself was killed and was succeeded by his brother Jonathan.

The words “stamped upon” talks about suppression of Judaism. Antiochus banned circumcision, he banned the Sabbath. There was forced worship of the gods including Bacchus. In verse 11 it says that he magnified himself “even to the prince of the host”. This he did by installing in the Holy of Holies a statue of himself as Zeus to replace items which represented Jesus who is the true “prince of the host” – King of kings and Lord of lords.

The daily sacrifice, representing the death of Jesus on the Cross, was stopped by this “little horn” and the desecration of the Temple by Antiochus is also mention in this verse with the phrase “and the place of the sanctuary was cast down”. In **verse 12** the host is the army of the Seleucids. Zion was on one side with the Temple and on the other side of the valley was a fortification. There was constant fighting in the valley in between.

The phrase, “against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression”, relates to the Jewish apostasy which caused a lot of the problems. The Greeks were supported by many of the Hellenistic Jews. Some of the believers were so lacking in the truth that they were willing to trample the truth. They became apostate to biblical faith and traitors to their own people, and they were dealt with harshly when the Maccabees restored the Temple and Jewish Government.

The little horn “cast down the truth to the ground”. This was accomplished by the banning of the Levitical sacrifices ; “and it practised, and prospered” shows the initial success of the Hellenistic subjugation policy on the Jews. In verses 13 and 14 we are told, “Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”

The saints or “set apart ones” here are angels talking one to another. They ask “How long is this oppression going to last? The reply that question was 2300 days, 6 years 3 months and 20 days. The sanctuary was cleansed on December 164 BC so the time takes us back to 170 BC to when the trouble covertly began. As noted previously, that was the year that Menelaus, a corrupt Jewish official, wanted to be high priest, but he had to get rid of his rival Jason. He went up to Syria and offered to rob the Temple for them. This he did and as a result he was made the High Priest. He was Hellenistic and willing to hand the Temple over to the Syrians. A general from Antiochus came down and received the money 2300 days before the Temple was cleansed at the end of the war he unleashed. The atrocities began shortly after the bribe produced the new “high priest”. The war rages for just over three blood soaked years. [For further details see Josephus, “The Antiquities of the Jews”, Book 12 Chapter 5]

### **THE MAN OF SIN IN ACTION Daniel 11:36-39**

The detailed prophecies of the first 35 verses of this chapter contain over 130 prophetic statements all of which have been fulfilled in history. However from verse 36 onwards no commentator has been able to coincide both the prophecy and past history. This is because the statement in verse 35, “the time of the end”, indicates a complete break in the sequence. The events described from this verse onwards relate to “End Times”. Most of the great figures of the past considered this to be future, with Calvin relating it to the Roman Catholic Church, and Luther and Jerome identifying him with the future Antichrist.

Jerome in his commentary on Daniel said that not only did he believe this was a reference to the Antichrist but also the Jews of his day also considered this to be so. Earlier he had pointed out that Antiochus was merely a fore-shadowing of the later Antichrist. There was an expectation amongst the early Church fathers and Jewish commentators that Satan would indeed do his worst before the end came, but through the centuries this viewpoint was attacked by liberalism and watered down in many places. Remember the words of Dr David L Cooper, the Hebrew scholar, “When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, lest you create nonsense”. This passage from Daniel does indeed, we believe, give us a picture of Satan’s last great attempt to wipe out the people of God.

**v 36 “And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done.”**

This is a king who does his own will, not God’s will, and who at a certain point in time sets himself up as an alternative to the Biblical God. This is paralleled in **Revelation 13:14-15**, “*And he deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.*”

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**v 37-39 “Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. 38 But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. 39 Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.”**

It should be noted that the word translated “God” here is Elohim which is a word translated for both the true and false gods. If the word had been Jehovah then the identity of the person would have clearly been a Jew. It would therefore be legitimate to translate “God of his fathers” as “the gods of his fathers”. This means that this man rejects all traditional religious ideas that his people have ever held, and follows after his own arrogance.

The “desire of women” as understood in a Jewish context of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC had more to do with the women desiring to be the one to bring forth the Messiah. It is not a reference to sexual preference for males or females on the part of the Anti-Christ. With Satan’s past track record, with characters who were fore-runners of this man, we could expect him however to be immoral in any, and possibly all ways. With the Hebrew construction the noun after the word translated “desire” is subjective not objective, so it is better translated, “he rejects the one desired by women”, that is, the Messiah. He is deliberately opposed to God and God’s revealed Plan for mankind.

In context this means that the Antichrist considers himself God, and therefore has no regard for his people’s traditional gods, nor for the Messiah of Israel, Jesus nor any other god. He considers himself superior to all; the replacement of all. This supreme arrogance, couched in philosophical words no doubt, is the sign of his satanic origins. He is the ultimate narcissist, and proves to be the ultimate fool, for he is not God, and never can be as a creature. It is of interest that Antiochus IV, while he became very proud, and considered himself a god, as Alexander the Great did also, never got to this stage in his obsession of being the only true God, “God Almighty”. This last satanic man will go all the way in satanic arrogance, and all the way in his hatred of God and God fearing people.

In verses 38 and 39 this future ruler however does acknowledge the “god of forces”, and a “strange god”. It is clear that the Antichrist is in league with Satan and makes allusions to Satan, but in words that foolish genuine believers could initially think he was meaning the one true God. We see him reported as using Satan’s power in 2 Thessalonians 2. It appears that he might be indwelt by Satan, thus worshipping the Antichrist, which occurs in the Tribulation, actually is tantamount to worshipping Satan. It is only when he actually sets up his statue and demands worship that all people realize that he is claiming to be God, and true believers realize that he is indeed Satan incarnate!

Again there is also no evidence historically that Antiochus “divided the land for gain” even though the history of his reign is well documented. It would appear that in the last half of the seven year period Anti-Christ drives out the Jewish people from the land, divides up the land of Israel, and sells it for gain to his supporters. The surviving Jews of this invasion gather in and around the city of Jerusalem and fight until the time the Lord arrives to deliver them. The bulk of this prophecy is therefore still to be seen occurring in the Great Tribulation period.

### **THE TEMPORARY VICTORY OF THE WILFUL KING                      Daniel 11:40-45**

**v 40-43 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.**

It is noted that the “time of the end” is again mentioned, reminding us that the time frame for these events is the end of history, not the days of the Seleucids. It is also the end of the Great Tribulation period, close to Jesus return. It is a reminder that the Anti-Christ does not have total world rulership, and that military struggle will be a major feature of this period. Satan has always had difficulty getting his people to work together because pride and arrogance is their hallmark characteristic. This will not be different in the last days, any more than it was for Antiochus or Hitler.

Again the Kings of the North and South are mentioned. In the second and third centuries BC these related to Syria in the north and Egypt in the south, but if the Anti-Christ’s power base is Western Europe, the only “northern” power left is either Syria, or Turkey, or Russia, and a “southern power” would be an African/Egyptian group. Only when this man is revealed will this be made clear. Many have compared this battle to the King of the North’s invasion of Israel which is given in Ezekiel 38, 39. However the battle in that passage does not include the king of the south. There are a number of possible timings for the Ezekiel passage, but a date for it in the Tribulation is not considered likely due to the clean up period required. We expect Ezekiel 38-39 to be fulfilled “any day soon” post September 2020 with the Abraham Accord. The present passage of Daniel however is clearly in the Tribulation and relates to the last “Anti-Christ” figure.

Another question to be posed is who is the “he” referred to in verse 40. Looking in context it appears to be the Antichrist of verses 36 and following. Here the Antichrist repels both the northern and southern approaches of armies and overpowers them. He enters Egypt and North Africa as well as the Promised Land but does not take southern Jordan or



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Jerusalem. Southern Jordan is the ancient area of Edom, Moab and Ammon where believing Jews had fled to when the statue of the Antichrist was erected in the middle of the Tribulation period, before this final invasion begins. We have already seen this in **Matthew 24:15-16** "*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains*"

By this conquering sweep through the nation groups to north and south of his power base (which looks to be Europe) the riches of the Antichrist are greatly increased. He has increasing prestige, but increasing distractions also, and he runs out of time to destroy the Jews, because of the rebellions against him in conquered territories, and rejection of him in other places of what he believes is his sphere of influence. Narcissism is the constant theme of the satanic and it is always self-defeating, for Satan cannot control his own people. It is a reminder that the Anti-Christ, while styling himself the "world ruler" has limited ability to control all of the nations of the world, and cannot in the end succeed at all. He fails to rule over the entire world consistently and many believers survive in many countries to welcome the Lord's return.

**v 44-45 "But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. :45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him."**

Here we have the culmination of the military conflict of the last years of the Great Tribulation period with what is referred to else-where as the Armageddon campaign that terminates with the return of Jesus at His Second Advent. The Antichrist is busy in the Mediterranean Area, and hears of the armies of the "Kings of the sun rising" as well as another attack from the north. He responds with great fury. To "make away" means wholesale slaughter. He is immensely strong and determined to destroy all who oppose his power grab for the heart of the world. The general military headquarters of the Antichrist for this series of battles is set up between the Mediterranean and Dead Sea not far from Jerusalem. Jerusalem is attacked and partly taken but the Lord intervenes (Zechariah 12-14) and delivers the people holding out there.

In Revelation 19 we see that the evil armies are destroyed by the Lord, the Antichrist and False Prophet are caught here, and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Jesus himself completes the slaughter of the heathen armies of evil world wide at his Second Advent. The time of the Gentiles has come to the end with the arrival of the King of the Jews to set up His kingdom on earth.

**(b) The Descriptions of the Anti-Christ given to St Paul and St John in the first century AD.**

### **2 Thessalonians 2:1-10**

**2:1 Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.**

Chapter two commences with the Apostle Paul reassuring the worried Thessalonians about the return of Jesus for His church (referred to as the Rapture). He undertakes to correct a misunderstanding that had arisen in the minds of the believers concerning the distinction between the coming of Jesus for the Church and the "Day of the Lord", when he returns to deliver the Jewish and Arab fighters at the end of the Great Tribulation period. The Christian believers at this time were suffering such severe persecution that it was easy for them to think that they were already in the first part of the Day of the Lord; in the form of the Tribulation Period, but they were not.

A crucial question arises in verse 1 concerning the small word that Paul uses: "concerning" (Gk. *huper*). The problem is whether he is beseeching the saints "about" the coming of our Lord, or "by" the coming of our Lord. If the first is the meaning, then the passage seems to teach that the Rapture and the Day of the Lord are one and the same event, since the following verses clearly deal with the Day of the Lord. If the second is the meaning, then Paul is appealing to them on the basis of the false view of a "prior Rapture", that they should not think they were in the Day of the Lord. Notice the concern of the Church and the answer to the question emerges logically as we see and hear what Paul is saying. The Thessalonians were not in fear that the Day of Jesus' return for the Church was at hand. That would have meant release from their sufferings. Paul's readers were afraid that the Day of God's wrath had begun – he tells them "NO – not now".

He had covered the Rapture of the Church in his previous letter to the Thessalonians in **1Thessalonians 4:13-18** "*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words."*

On the basis of the logic above and the previous teaching on the Rapture in the first letter, we understand Paul to be saying in verse 1 here, "I appeal to you on the basis of the truth about the Rapture that you should not fear that you are

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in the Day of the Lord. The Rapture must take place first. You will be taken home to heaven at that time and will thus escape the horrors of the Day of the Lord". The expression, "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him" seems to refer unmistakably to the Rapture, not the Second Advent. That is the time when it is believed church age Christians will be gathered to meet Him in the air, opening the door for Abraham's children to be centre-stage in the unfolding drama of redemption once again. Satan's malice shifts from world wide Christians to the Middle East.

The Greek word "episunagoge" is used twice in the New Testament, once in this verse and the other in Hebrews 10:25, where Christians are commanded not to forsake the assembling of people together as the manner of some is. The "assembling together" here also appears to refer to the Rapture. He therefore now again raises the question of the Rapture in relation to the Church because false doctrines have been spread about the Rapture in relation to the Church.

**Verse 2.** The Thessalonians were confused and worried regarding the false rumour that was being circulated in Thessalonica that the Church was already in the Tribulation period and hence the Thessalonians had missed out on the Rapture. Paul was not clear as to how the rumour and false doctrine was being circulated, but he is clear it is false. It may have been demonic, by gossip, or by a forged letter purporting to have come from Paul himself. Whatever the means of bringing this to the Thessalonians they were now concerned that the Day of the Lord or Tribulation period had already arrived. Paul wants to assure them that he hasn't missed out on the Rapture either, but that false doctrine has been spread amongst them. Their concerns are groundless: the rumours false.

One of the major areas of dispute in the Church is that of eschatology or future things. Jesus himself warned of this in **Matthew 24:4-5**, where he told His disciples *"And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."* We need to be very clear on our doctrine including the truth and reliability of the Word of God and the Character of God which is its basis.

From passages such as the study of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week we have seen already that it is clear that the Rapture of the Church is prior to the time referred to as the "Day of the Lord". We should also remember Ephesians 4:14 which says *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive"* and grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord. We tend to forget Bible truths and need to constantly rehearse doctrines. On matters like this subject we must be clear, and on the nature of the Anti-Christ the believers of the future days need to be absolutely certain of the truth, or the deception that will surround them will lead to their deaths.

**2:3 Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; 4 Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. 5 Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? 6 And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. 7 For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. 8 And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: 9 Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, 10 And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. 11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: 12 That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**

**Verse 3.** The Thessalonians are commanded not to be deceived by any means in relation to the time of the Tribulation and the revealing of the Antichrist. Paul clarified that the man of sin, or the Antichrist, will not be revealed unless the "falling away" takes place first. This "lawless" one has been seen three times in Daniel in 7:25, 8:25, and 11:36. He is also called the "son of perdition", the one who would reign, cf. John 17:12. As to his character, he is the "man of sin" or lawlessness, that is, the very epitome of sin and rebellion. As to his destiny, he is the "son of perdition"; and as such he is doomed to eternal judgement.

The man of sin has been given an intriguing variety of identifications down through the years. He has been equated with the Roman Catholic Church, various Popes, the Roman Empire, the final form of apostate Christendom, Judas reincarnated, Nero reincarnated, the Jewish State, Luther, Napoleon, Mussolini, Hitler, and the embodiment of Satan. We know however from this passage that we as Church Age believers will **not** know who he is to be. Let us not waste time speculating; the people at the time will know by studying these passages before us and hearing the Holy Spirit at that time. They are the believers of that day when this last great satanic world ruler makes his play.

The "falling away" or apostasy appears to refer to a wholesale abandonment of biblical Christianity; a positive rejection of the Christian faith by the remnant of mankind. The Greek word "apostasia" is used only twice in the New Testament. It is used here where it is translated "falling away". The other place is in **Acts 21:21**, *"And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs"*. Here the word is used with the preposition "apo" and translated forsake.

**Verse 4.** This person, who is from the Old Roman Empire area, and is the Antichrist, is excessively proud and exalts himself above God. He has the exact characteristics of the character of Satan as shown in **Isaiah 14:13,14** *"For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the*

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*mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High.'*

He is an active opponent of God, although in the early years he will be clever enough to hide this fact. Anti can mean two things in the Scripture, against, or instead of. Here we can see both facets of the character given. He is indwelt by Satan and manifests Satan's character. He not only assumes that he is above the true God but also above all other gods. **1 Corinthians 8:5-6**, says *"For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and lords many,) But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him."*

The reason he is referred to as being "above all other gods" becomes clear when we reflect upon the fact that the gods of the nations are demons, and that the "Angelic Conflict" is way more important to understand than most think! **Leviticus 17:7, Deuteronomy 32:17**. This becomes particularly clear in Paul's words in **1 Corinthians 10:19-21**.

*"19 What say I then? that the idol is any thing, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?*

*20 But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils.*

*21 Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils".*

As we have seen above, at the turning point of the Tribulation period the Anti-Christ sets up his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem and proclaims himself as the one true God. It is as "Lord of the demons" however that he sits in the Temple in Jerusalem in the Holy of Holies portraying himself as God. This is the ultimate and final "abomination of desolation"; for it is an abomination when Satan pretends he is the Creator Saviour God. The fact that the Antichrist does this requires the rebuilding of the Temple before hand, as does his covenant with the Jews which commences the Tribulation period. As we have seen before Daniel 9:27 states *" In the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation."*

As we have also seen above, the prototype fulfilment of this prophecy occurred in the second century BC when Antiochus Epiphanes, the Greek king of Syria, installed a statue of Zeus in the Temple in Jerusalem and made the people worship it. It was eventually removed around Christmas Day in the Maccabean Wars and the Temple was cleansed resulting in the Festival of Lights festival which occurs around Christmas time and is still called Hanukkah.

The erection of the statue and its implications for a yet future time are given in **Matthew 24:15-21**, which we have also seen above notes, *" When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."*

The sight of this happening at a specific point is the marker for the mid-point of Daniel's seventieth prophetic week, and is therefore a sign for the believing Jews to flee to the mountains of Edom, Moab and Amon where the Lord will provide for them until His return at the Second Advent. It is also a world wide sign for believers everywhere to flee to the wild and secret places of their lands and hide until the Lord's return three and a half years later. As we have seen above, for Jews in the land of Israel who do not do this, they must face Anti-Christ's invasion of the land, and they must gather in and around Jerusalem and fight to the death there, for the Lord himself will deliver them there.

**Verse 5.** Paul refers back to what he had taught them when he was previously in Thessalonica, and encourages them to remember what they had been told at that time for it is the truth. Paul had held face to face teaching in Thessalonica with the believers there for a relatively short time of between two to six weeks and had taught a wide range of doctrines. Paul used to tell the Thessalonians these things when he was still with them. However, with contradictory teaching being given to them that seemed to accurately describe the fierce persecutions they were then enduring, they had forgotten what the apostle had said. Remember, Abrahamic Faith is "Bible centred" believing faith, that knows and applies truth!

**Verse 6.** Here we are introduced to the "restrainer". Paul confirms with the Thessalonians that they know there is a restrainer, and that the restrainer is preventing the full emergence of the Antichrist and his total declaration of war upon the Jewish people. In this verses and the next we have the Greek word "katecho" translated with two words "withholdeth" and "letteth". The word means to "hold down" or "hold fast". The restrainer was preventing the full and open manifestation of the man of sin, and was the power that would continue to restrain him until the appointed time.

This brings us to the third great unanswered question in this chapter. The first is, "What is the apostasy?" The second is, "Who is the man of sin?" and the third is, "What or who is the restrainer? In the first part of verse 6, the restrainer is described in an impersonal way, i.e. what is restraining. But then in verse 7 it is a person – "He who now restrains". Seven of the more common views as to the identity of the restrainer are:

- 1) The Roman Empire,
- 2) The Jewish State, or Michael their prince/angel,
- 3) Satan,

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- 4) The principle of law and order as found in human government,
- 5) God,
- 6) The Holy Spirit, and
- 7) The true church as indwelt by the Spirit.

There are two most likely meanings of this phrase; the first is the present ministry of the Holy Spirit which ends with the departure of the Church, and the second is the work of Michael, the Arch-angel who protects Israel, who at this terrible time, is pulled back from his present total protection role. Remember, final clarity of the meaning of this awaits the time.

**First Explanation:** The Holy Spirit's present permanent indwelling the individual believer of the Church Age initially seems to fit the description of a "restrainer" more completely and accurately than any of the others. Just as the restrainer is spoken of as Something and Someone in this chapter, so the Spirit is spoken of in John 14:26, 15:26, 16:8, 13, 14 as both neuter (the Holy Spirit) and masculine (He). Verse 12. As early as Genesis 6:3, the Holy Spirit is spoken of in connection with the restraint of evil. Then later He is seen in this same role in Isaiah 59:19b, John 16:7-11, and I John 4:4.

It is by the indwelling Spirit that believers are the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13) and the light of the world (Matthew 5:14). Salt is a preservative, but it also hinders the spread of corruption. Light dispels darkness, the sphere in which men love to perform their evil deeds (John 3:19). When the Holy Spirit indwelt Church leaves the world, 1 Corinthians. 3:16), 1 Corinthians. 6:19, the restraint of lawlessness that the presence of the Spirit Filled Church provides will be much reduced. The Holy Spirit will of course **still be active** in this last period, just as He was in previous Ages, as many are led to faith in this period, and that work of salvation is always the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's work continues in the Tribulation as it did in the previous age to that of the Church, the Age of Israel. As we see this fact, we can see that there is no removal or withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, just a return to the Spirit's work under the Age of Israel, so the second option to explain this passage must be examined more closely.

**Second Explanation:** The archangel Michael is the protector of Israel, and the restrainer of the demonic forces. He is the general of the angels who, later in this same time frame, expels the demons finally and fully from heaven. Revelation 12:7-13. He is the one who Daniel is told withstands the "prince of Persia" from his anti-Semitic malice. Daniel 10:12-21. Michael keeps watch over Israel even today, but in that terrible day he apparently steps back and lets Satan attack all Jews who have not responded to the truth by that point. Remember the casualty numbers given in Zechariah 13-14; over a third of the population of Israel are spiritually saved and physically delivered by the Lord, but two thirds perish. At a certain point however he moves again with power; he "stands up" and judges the evil ones. Daniel 12:1.

**Verse 7.** The mystery of iniquity or lawlessness is already at work even as Paul writes these words. A tremendous spirit of disobedience to God was already stirring beneath the surface within the Roman Empire of Paul's day. This is the satanic attack on the plan of God, and within a few years of this letter the malice of Satan would burst forth in Rome under Nero, and then for a further 260 years persecutions would sweep at times through the Empire's churches.

The origin of the word "mystery" goes back to secret societies in ancient times, where the doctrines of those societies, were only known to members. A modern example could be the Free Masons. In the New Testament the word "mystery" is normally associated with the doctrines of the Church Age that were not known to Old Testament believers. The restrainer is seen again as a person rather than a thing by the use of the personal pronoun "He". In addition the person is seen to be taken out of the way at a point of time.

As war is going to be declared on the earth in the form of the many judgements recorded in John's Revelation, all the "Ambassadors for Christ" (Christians) will be called back home beforehand. This is the so called "rapture" of the Church. It is also of note that the Advents or Coming of the Holy Spirit always follow the Advents of Christ and that after the Second Advent the Holy Spirit will return to permanently indwell the Millennial saints. Joel 2:21-32. In the Tribulation the ministry of the Holy Spirit will apparently revert to the Old Testament pattern, as this period of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> Week is in effect the last seven years of the Jewish Dispensation.

**Verse 8.** Subsequent to the removal of the restrainer(s), the Antichrist will be revealed. The Holy Spirit will step back in his operation after the departure of the church, to the Jewish Age, for the Jewish Age re-starts in the Tribulation period. By application the Church will not know the identity of the Antichrist, as it does not apply to the Church, therefore speculation as to his identity by us is futile and time wasting. In this verse, the apostle skips over the career of the Antichrist and describes his ultimate doom. It almost sounds as if he will be destroyed as soon as he is revealed. But that of course is a foreshortened view. He is allowed to conduct the reign of terror described in verses 9-12 before he is brought down at Jesus coming to reign.

We saw above the political structure at the time of the emergence of the Antichrist described in **Daniel 7:23-25**. *Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces. And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. And he shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."*

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Here we are told of the emergence of Anti-Christ's attempt at a One World Government, which is centred in the political union of the nations, divided into ten regions. It is from out of this international group that the Antichrist rises to a position of prominence. From what we see in 2 Thessalonians 2 prior to the Rapture we in the Church today may see a One World Government structure established, and may even see it divided into ten regions, but we will not be sure of the identity of the World Dictator, the Antichrist, as he is able to emerge fully only after the Church has gone.

The lawless one is said to be killed by the breath of God's mouth, a concept which is found in **Isaiah 11:4**, "*But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*" This clearly is related to the Lord Jesus Christ as earlier in the chapter the person who is referred to is the Messiah as seen in **Isaiah 11:1-2**, "*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD*"

This will be fulfilled at the Second Advent when the Antichrist will be captured together with the False Prophet and thrown alive into the Lake of Fire as stated in **Revelation 19:20**, "*And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.*"

**Verse 9.** The emergence of the Antichrist is according to the workings of Satan. He comes as part of the Satanic plan to try and destroy the plan of God. The great struggle upon the earth has always been between Satanic deception and the plan of God. Here is the last one of Satan's major attempts to set up a structure to thwart God's plan, but without avail. This action is accompanied by Satanic power, signs and lying wonders, but it is brought down by the power of Almighty God. Satan's ultimate deception is of himself; in that he thinks he is superior to God and able to win against Him.

Moses warned the Jews that the presentation of a sign is not necessarily from God. He said that any such manifestation should always be tested against the Word of God. In **Deuteronomy 13:1-3** Moses wrote, "*If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*"

These signs and wonders in the last days are satanically inspired and are created to deceive and not to bring glory to God. The phenomena consist of "power, signs, and lying wonders". In these categories could be placed manipulation of the media, miracles, and perhaps even a universal form of speaking in tongues. Many miracles are from Satan, some of which occur through demonic activity. In 1 Timothy 4:1 we read, "the Spirit expressly states that in the latter times some will depart from the faith giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons". Believers need to be very careful in their analysis of what they are seeing in all years till the Lord's return, and discern from where all "signs and wonders" are coming. We walk by faith and not by sight, and that means God's Word is to be more real than things seen today.

**Verse 10.** Satan has a policy of deception. Satan is a deceiver of the nations as seen in **Revelation 20:2-3**, "*And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season*".

It is of note that the Greek verb translated "deceive" in this passage is in the subjunctive mood indicating that the deception is potential and by application, if a country has a strong government based on Biblical principles, they will not be deceived, and that if individuals have a strong hold upon biblical truth, they will not be deceived. Those not deceived, who follow the instructions of the scriptures through this time, are alive to welcome the Lord's return to earth!

In **2 Corinthians 2:15-16** we are told "*For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*" The gospel for the believer is a sweet aroma whereas for the unbeliever it is the smell of death. This relates to the triumphal procession for a returning victorious Roman general coming back to Rome with prisoners of war. These prisoners would be led in triumph through the streets of Rome to the "Field of Mars". When they got there they were slaughtered by the general populace. During this procession it was common practice for the people to throw scented flowers under the feet of the soldiers and their prisoners, which to the victors was a sweet smell, but to the prisoners, it was the smell of their coming death.

These people are perishing because they do not receive the love of the truth. This is reinforced by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:22, "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.*" The Antichrist will unscrupulously use every form of wickedness to deceive the perishing people. They are deceived by the miracles of the Antichrist because they want to be. Remember, the unbelievers of the Tribulation period receive extensive evidence of the Lord's power and Gospel. Those who reject the truth do so willingly, vehemently, and persistently.

**Verse 11.** Because of this God gave them strong delusions that they should believe a lie. In **Romans 1:28** Paul says, "*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those*

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*things which are not convenient". That they should believe a lie returns us once again to **1 Timothy 4:1**, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."*

Because of their rejection of the truth the restraint of their evil is removed and they believe the ultimate satanic lie. Rejection of the truth often enough will result in a person who is then unable to become a believer, for they have rejected the basis of conviction of their falsehood. A Biblical example of this is the Pharaoh of the Exodus. God actually will send them (allow to come) a working of error that they should believe the lie. The lie, of course, is the Antichrist's claim to be God, which God allows to occur. These people refused to receive the Lord Jesus as God manifest in the flesh, but they will accept the Lie. When Jesus was on earth, He warned men, "*I have come in My Father's name, and you do not receive Me: if another comes in his own name, him you will receive*" (**John 5:43**). So now they receive the man of sin who comes in his own name and demands worship as God. "Light rejected is light denied." If a person sets up an idol in his heart, God will answer him according to his idol (**Ezekiel. 14:4**).

**Verse 12.** The unbelievers will believe a lie so that they will be self deluded. They will find pleasure in the pursuit of unrighteousness and will not only commit evil but also encourage others to do likewise. This is paralleled in **Romans 1:32**, "*Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.*" These people know that because of the righteous judgement of God those who continually practice evil are worthy of death. They however encourage others to share in their evil practices so that it becomes the norm and acceptable or legally tolerated behaviour by society and the government. As such they try and assuage a guilt complex through public acceptance.

### **Revelation 13:1-8 - The Apostle John's Vision from the Lord**

#### **THE GENTILE (Old Roman Empire area) DICTATOR (ANTI-CHRIST) PORTRAYED.**

**13:1 And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy.**

This beast is the dictator of the Revived Roman Empire and emerges from the depths of the Gentile (Western) nations at some point early in the Tribulation period (Daniel's Seventieth week). He emerges, as it were "from the sea" (In Jewish thought this always meant a gentile), and before he emerges there is no clue to his coming, his plans, or identity. He just emerges from the sea of gentile humanity with suddenness, power, and violent malice. The images used to express aspects of his character, power and plans, make it clear he is the same person of whom Daniel and Paul spoke. He is a blasphemous man, speaking evil of God and God's people; with undiluted malice towards all who stand for the Lord.

The ten iron and clay toes of the image give us the political context for the emergence of this man of sin. Revelation 17:8-13, Daniel 2:31-45. We also have him described as the little horn of Daniel 7:8, 24-27. He is the "king that shall come" of Daniel 9:26,27, and the "man of sin" of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. He is called "the beast" because he is demon possessed, or satanically possessed, and thus possesses a thought pattern unlike any man that has gone before him, but is like a wild and murderous animal. Revelation 9:11, 11:7, 17:6. This is a man without compassion for any other being; a mind that is totally given over to Satan. Hitler and others, who can be seen as precursors, had their weak points and their soft moments, but this man has none at all, except the ultimate one - narcissism.

**13:2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority.**

We have images here that are drawn from Daniel's descriptions of the empires in the past. The leopard of Daniel 7:6 – spoke of the speed, malice and violence of the Graeco-Macedonian Empire who conquered the known world in 13 years. The leopard is a loner, a solitary killer, and is not seen until it moves out to kill. Alexander the Great was truly a "man alone", who in addition to speed, absolute confidence, and ruthless malice, actually believed himself to be a god. A number of the elements of Alexander will be seen in this last demon controlled "beast" of a man.

The second image is the bear of Daniel 7:5, 17, and this represents the Empire of the Persians and Medes, with Cyrus the Great conquering the known world in 25 years. The bear was an image of careless destruction and violent tearing of flesh. The Beast/Anti-Christ will literally tear apart all that has gone before him. His extensive and all pervasive administration will lumber along through the world, like a bear, tearing apart believers in the one true God wherever they are found. The ponderous violence of the bear is a good picture of pedantic administrative systems that will be used by the Anti-Christ to control finance, commerce, religion, and the movement of people. His purpose is the elimination of all believers in the first half of the seven year period, and then to eliminate the Jews in the second half. He will fail in both.

The lion of Daniel 7:4 represents the Chaldean Empire of Nebuchadnezzar. This was the greatest of the world empires as Daniel saw them in his visions. There was a violence driven nobility about this empire. It was fierce, but noble and cultured above all that would follow it, with engineering wonders and mechanical marvels at the heart of its great cities. No city would rival Babylon in culture, comfort, and style until the modern age. The Anti-Christ will be an aesthete who values his creature comforts, and will live in magnificent comfort and luxury. He will present himself as the most cultured

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of all men, and the one who those who worship pleasure and success will aspire to be like. He is the ultimate status symbol for those who worship success and self rather than God.

The image of the beasts John sees here are backward from the order of Daniel 7 because, while Daniel was looking forward, in history, John is looking backward, as he lives in the heights of the power of the fourth empire/beast. Each beast of history gives something to the image of the Anti-Christ, who is a combination of the greatest evil of each empire that has gone before, without any pretence of godliness. Cyrus of Persia, and Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon appear to have been believers, but this man will believe he is god like, and he will demand worship, as Nebuchadnezzar did in his madness, but will not repent as Nebuchadnezzar did. Daniel 3:1-8, 28-30, 4:34-37.

Nebuchadnezzar was deceived into punishing the three Jewish Magi, and Darius was also deceived into punishing Daniel by Anti-Semitic courtiers, Daniel 6:4ff, but both men honour their Jewish leaders in the end. The Anti-Christ will deceive Jewish leaders into thinking he is their friend, and then turn on them all and attempt a genocide that is more thorough than Hitler's "Final Solution". The dragon, which is Satan, gives his power to the Antichrist, and so the malice is undiminished, and he is not distracted by any foible or weakness of man, but he will still fail. As we have seen in earlier passages, Satan just cannot get his people to cooperate because narcissism doesn't, and it is his fatal weakness!

**13:3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast.**

The phrase, "as it were wounded to death", means that real death is involved, and a truly miraculous resuscitation is involved here. The beast is a satanic counterfeit/alternative to Jesus as the legitimate object of worship. He has many characteristics that make him the alternative object of worship for human beings who do not want Jesus as their lord. The Anti-Christ is born-again of an evil spirit, Satan is his Father, he is able to do wonderful miracles, and the greatest of these is that the Antichrist is literally raised from the dead at a crucial point; possibly just before he makes his move and sets up his statue in the temple at Jerusalem. Also a counterfeit "Second Coming" to rule the world can be seen here, and it appears to be associated with his demand to receive worship from all mankind also.

The term "all the world" is qualified in verse 8 as unbelievers, as they do not include those whose names are written in the Book of Life, who will not worship the beast, but will in many cases suffer martyrdom instead. The "Beast" does not have things all his own way, and many believers escape his administrators and murder squads, but only those who have used their time since accepting Jesus after the rapture of the Church, and really have become knowledgeable in the scriptures. They must be able to avoid all open commerce and avoid travelling in places where the administrative network of the Beast will catch them. The greatest vigilance and preparation by believers will be required to avoid being noticed by the murderous system of this man.

"One of the heads" refers to Antichrist as one of the rulers of the ten world regions, as seen in Revelation 17. "Slain" is "sphazo", the very word used for the death of Christ in Revelation 5:6. It appears he is assassinated by someone for his blasphemies, and then miraculously is raised from the dead, possibly on world wide web-cam, so that all the world sees his resurrection and is amazed by his power, and the unbelievers then believe he truly is a "god" (possibly an extra-terrestrial sent to help the earth, and therefore an object for worship). Whatever will occur will be seen as a resurrection, and it will open up his total grab for world power-influence, and all other rulers will stand aside for him; at least for a time.

**Daniel 11:36-45** tells of his last months and there is eastern rebellion and rejection of his rulership, and many of the Arab States are suspicious of him from the beginning and reject his claims quite early on. Whatever the extent of rejection of him, the vast majority of mankind is overawed by this miraculous event and follow after him, and are prepared to worship him as their "god"; their saviour, sent from the other side of the universe to solve the world's problems, in return for proper worship. It is the Arab people who stand with the Jews in the end, and they alone stand as a group for truth until the end, when Jesus returns to deliver them, and rescue all believers world wide from the malice of the previous years.

Believers need to remember that it is possible for Satan to produce miracles and appear to bring people back from the dead. Power alone is not the evidence of anything except power alone! Satan has power and is well able to fool mankind with it. Those who have rejected truth will embrace the satanic lie. It is never gifts or power manifestations that indicate the nature or origin of any person or group; it is only the fruits of their lives that prove the true origin of the teaching and the miracles! Matthew 7:13-23. The fruit of this man's life is death and destruction to all who love and serve the one true God, but his doom is settled and sure.

**13:4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? Who is able to make war with him?**

Unsaved people are frightened by his power and see no human way to resist him, and there is no human way to resist him. Those who have rejected the power and truth of God are left without hope when they face the power of Satan, for only God can defeat him and his Anti-Christ figure. Unsaved men and women face the full consequences of their own rebellion against God when they have to bow their knee to the ultimate rebel against God. This satanic figure uses well tried techniques to get a worship system going in the Great Tribulation period (the last half of the seven years). He uses the ancient Roman concept of Emperor Worship to unify his world wide Empire/Confederacy. He possibly uses the unbeliever's expectation of extra-terrestrial life to fool many, by claiming he is from beyond the stars himself.

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The concept of divine-emperor worship originated in Asia Minor (modern Turkey) where the people had been released from previously violent and tyrannical rule, and so they were genuinely grateful to Roman power. All dictators of the Empire thereafter built on this gratefulness and expanded the usefulness to the Empire of the emperor worship cult. The first act of emperor worship took place in Pergamon in 29 BC where the citizens erected the first known statue to a Roman Caesar. In the last years of the first century the worship of Caesar became an official government requirement. Initially the edict was not taken overly seriously but under Domitian in the latter days of John the Apostle, every Roman subject had to sacrifice a pinch of incense to Caesar and received a certificate to prove they had done so. Persecution was launched against all who failed to follow the administrative requirement, and the efficiency of the administration in an area determined the efficiency of the persecution. This principle may apply during the Tribulation Period.

This Emperor Worship was very awkward for both Christian and Jew who as a result became directly persecuted as traitors to the Empire, and disturbers of the peace. All the individual citizen had to do was burn a pinch of incense to a statue of the Emperor and say, "Caesar is Lord". Such an act was seen rightly as blasphemous by all genuine believers, but for the Roman pagans, refusal to do such a simple thing clearly meant some deep and sinister motivation, and a rejection of all the good things the emperor did for the empire! Some Caesars such as Nero and Caligula, started to believe that they were God in the flesh. As a result many refused to sacrifice to these deluded men, and even though they were good citizens, whole families were fed to the lions as traitors.

A modern example of this sort of worship would be Adolf Hitler. As he emerged from obscurity in the early 1930's, he cultivated an image of god-like power and appearance, having artists painting him as the German saviour, and speaking of him as such. By use of terror he eliminated most crime (except by his own Nazi Party people), eliminated unemployment and restored German prestige, and so was almost worshipped as God by a wide spectrum of the German people. They paid terribly for their self delusion, but he had great satanic power, and all the plots against him failed. The Lord ensured the German people had to face the full consequences of their evil worship of Hitler; there was no easy way of escape or quick surrender possible. Just so it will be in the end of the Great Tribulation; people will either bow to God or bow to the Antichrist. The Lord will ensure they have no third, fence sitting options.

Satan always tries to get man to do something for salvation; be it salvation by good works, salvation by ritual, or salvation by self improvement. Under satanic doctrines, man by his own effort is supposed to solve his own problems, and this will become the religious mantra of the final religion he launches. Satan is the father of narcissism – self worship and self sufficiency, although he will likely use the "extra-terrestrial" lie/tool to assist in his rulership of earth through the beast.

God's way for mankind is for God to solve man's problems through faith in Christ. Christianity is not a religion but a relationship of man with God through the person and work of Christ; it is by grace and faith. The people who enter the Tribulation period are there because they have rejected Jesus while the Church was upon the earth. Many will realise they were wrong and will repent in this time and be saved, but most of these will be quickly rounded up and executed by the godless powers that rule in that day. The "Beast" simply takes godlessness to a new height of evil. The religion of the Tribulation is a masked form of Satanism, which is the source of all godless religion, and it is based in self centeredness.

As a result of this satanic resurrection miracle, the unbelieving world will be deceived into worshipping both the beast, and ultimately, Satan himself (who naturally works behind the scenes). No one will be able initially to openly "wage war" with him because he will be known as the "god of forces", and he has all the military and political power, but this will change through time. Daniel 11:38, 39. This will all change by the end and there will be open rebellion against him. Satan is self centred and so his followers are all self centred, and as such do not make good allies, as they all have their own agendas. In the end all mankind will see that Anti-Christ cannot rule the entire world due to this narcissism. He simply cannot unite people, as his modus operandi is self centeredness!

Worship means acknowledgment of worth, and the worth which people acknowledge in the beast is twofold:-

1. His uniqueness - "Who is like unto the beast?"
2. His might - "Who is able to make war with him?"

Mankind should worship God and recognize Jesus for His uniqueness, and what He did, is doing, and will do for us. Those who have rejected the truth about Jesus are forced to follow right through to the end with the alternative system, and it is terrible indeed. The only protection against falsehood is to know and follow the truth! Those who reject truth cannot complain when they must live the lie of Satan and that is what the Great Tribulation is about; mankind faces the starkness of the two alternative belief systems.

**13:5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.**

The Antichrist will be given the ability to give great moving speeches. As an orator he will be the ultimate politician, inspiring people to believe he is someone he is not. In a world that sets its value on "Image" this man will manipulate the media like none before him and present himself as the ultimate leader of mankind; so good that he replaces God. He is able to do what a lot of people have been trying to do over the centuries to put the Roman Empire together again in real power. Charlemagne in 800 AD, Napoleon in the 1800's, and Hitler in the last century, have attempted to unite Europe but have not succeeded for long.



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The nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty was written originally regarding the Roman Empire. No one could put him together again and the Antichrist will succeed for no longer than Adolf Hitler and have a worse catastrophic result. He will for a time unite all the ten regions of the earth, but this will unhinge due to his over reaching arrogance and self centeredness. Fortunately this evil man will be the last of Satan's men to try this before the Millennium. Hitler's great evil of the "Final Solution" with its death camps lasted for exactly three and a half years (42 months – as had Antiochus' time frame), and the Anti-Christ will have, for the third time in history, the same time frame to exercise his powers, but as we have seen in Daniel, he cannot even hold things together that long. Daniel 11-12.

**13:6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.**

We have a three fold attack against God and God's people described here:

- [a] to blaspheme the name of God
- [b] to blaspheme His tabernacle
- [c] to blaspheme those that dwell in heaven.

The attack is against the Lord Jesus Christ himself by blaspheming his name. The attack is against Old Testament saints and present Israelites, represented by the tabernacle. He will directly attack the temple by setting up his statue there. The attack is also against the church; who are those who by then dwell in heaven. He insults God, the memory of past saints and the abode of the Lord, and the saints in heaven. His insults reach the heavens, but they have no impact at all, except to guarantee his doom.

**13:7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.**

He was permitted within his area to move against the saints/tribulation believers and martyr them. They lose their lives by the thousands, but win eternal crowns of glory. He builds further evidence for his being sent to the Lake of Fire. It is instructive to note that the tribulation believers, who rejected Christ as Saviour during the Church Age, are still seen as "saints" and in no way lose eternally. They inherit eternal life and win eternal rewards for their courage. No matter how long people serve they are rewarded by the Lord Jesus. Matthew 20:1-16. As we have seen above, many believers from this time do survive by rigorous application of the Scriptures into their life, but vast multitudes are martyred.

Anti-Christ is also allowed to have power over the world's political structures. Other political leaders give way to him after his "resurrection" and he is able to exercise ruling power over nations far from his power base and get them to support his war upon the believers in God and the Jewish people in particular. All nations and races initially appear to submit to his ruling authority, and he possibly argues that he alone can solve the world's great pollution and atmospheric problems that stem from the Lord's judgments upon the earth and the sea. This verse relates to Daniel 11:33-35.

**13:8 And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.**

Those who are unbelievers, and have rejected the one true God, will all follow the beast and worship him, but believers will not, and John reminds us that all believers are part of the divine plan from eternity past. This is John's way of reminding us all that the Lord is God indeed and the beast, Anti-Christ, powerful as he is, is unable to upset the eternal plan, for he is a creature of space and time himself. He pretends to be from another dimension, and have supernatural powers, but he is "under the sun", a creature of this creation himself. The Lamb of God is the creator, and so there is no doubt about where the victory will be found.

The book of life is referred to in Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 17:8, 20:12, 15. The book of life originally has the names of all members of the human race, but at death, if the person has not believed in Jesus, their name is rubbed out of the book of life. Therefore, at the end of time, only those who have accepted Jesus as Saviour, or those who have not reached the age of accountability, will remain in the Book of Life. They alone are secure for eternity with Jesus and they alone are the victors, but the Anti-Christ and his followers are doomed to be inhabitants of the Lake of Fire forever, for they have wilfully chosen to remain outside God's plan for their lives and will not bow to God's authority.

The unsaved world will accept the lie because they have already by that time finally and fully rejected the truth. John 5:43. When people reject truth, they open themselves to distraction, delusion and deception. We are also told that Antichrist comes, "with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish", because, "they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved." 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11. From this comes a principle; when we reject the truth, we will in time automatically accept what is false in its place. Every moral choice made by people open and close doors of opportunity later – each choice limits options for the subsequent choices that can be made. Satanic narcissism multiplies opportunities for distraction, deception, and distortion of thinking and emotion, and guarantees later destruction.

The exception to this false worship is the believer whose name is written in the Lamb's book of life which is the record of those who have put their trust in Jesus Christ for eternal life. The Bible speaks of those whose names are "blotted out"

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of the book because of their unbelief and rejection of the truth. Every person initially has their name written in the book of life, Exodus 32:32-33, Psalm 69:28, because Jesus died for all mankind. 1 John 2:1-2.

When one dies without faith in Him, her/his name is blotted or "smeared/sponged out" of the book of life. The language used describes the way a scribe removed a piece of text from a manuscript with a sponge. This removal is the result of their rejection of the truth and leads to their eternal condemnation. John 3:16-19; Revelation 20:15, 21:27. It is only rejection of Jesus as Saviour-King that eliminates eternal life from each person. Through his work for them they are, through his grace, in the book of life, but failure to accept him by faith leads to their elimination from the book on their death. They are now left in the consequences of their evil choices in Hades awaiting the final judgment.

### **13:9 If any man have an ear, let him hear.**

"If" is a first class condition, meaning, if and it is true, he has an ear. "Hear" is in the aorist, active imperative. It is a direct order to hear at a point of time [aorist tense], you must do the hearing [active voice], it's a strong order [imperative mood], and eternal life rests upon obedience to this command of God. Mankind must concentrate on the message and apply it to their life or face the eternal consequences. This also confirms that there will be many who become believers in the Tribulation, but many will be martyred, although multitudes world wide will welcome Jesus at his Second Coming. Mankind is instructed to listen and pay careful attention to the Word of God. Those who do not know the Word of God in that day will not survive, as they will not recognize the "signs of their times", and do the right things to survive.

### **13:10 He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.**

The word "sunago" means "to bring together" rather than "ago" which means to lead. This is incorrectly translated. The first phrase should be translated, "if he is for, or practices, captivity he will go into captivity". If they kill by the sword they will be killed by the sword. The armies which enforce this order of Antichrist by killing the innocent will themselves be killed at the Second Advent of the Lord. This present world, dominated by narcissistically satanic leadership is not just, but the Lord will bring Justice the only way it can be – by the total 100% elimination of evil from the planet.

This period is a time when believers who know the Word of God will find comfort resting in the promises of God and trusting in him. Some will go into captivity and imprisonment, others will be killed immediately. I suspect that the Beast/Anti-Christ will utilize the same sort of death camps that Hitler used in Germany, as Satan reuses old ideas, rarely inventing new ones. The satanic inspired political forces already have three evil policy planks in place that kill, and will kill increasing millions annually; with abortion on demand, drug legalization and euthanasia accepted in many places with suicide no longer illegal, and soon to be encouraged. Satan has no time or use for the drugged, alcoholic, frail elderly, children and mentally ill – they are just "cost centres" to the satanic. Remember, only biblically based compassion provides care – Satan has never been in the "care" area, except as a tool to bankrupt nations and bring them under more centralized control!

Here we see that whatever God has determined, will come to pass, but believers trusting in the Lord will be able to relax in obedience, and many will be kept through this time in hiding, and will live to see Jesus come. We are told this directly in the phrase, "Here is the perseverance and the faith of the saints." John's statement goes back to the message of **Jeremiah 15:1-3**, where God warns of the destruction of Judah. Though people had rejected the teaching of Jeremiah for years, when the crisis came they would come to him asking, "where shall we go?" To which God told him to answer, "Those destined for death, to death; and those destined for the sword, to the sword; and those destined for famine, to famine; and those destined for captivity, to captivity."

In other words, the die was cast. God's will would be done. But in this was also comfort for those who had been faithful. There would be death for the disobedient, but life and success for the obedient. In the Great Tribulation, those who quickly learn, and obey the Lord's words relating to this time, will be delivered in their hiding places world wide. This is a time when the salvation message needs to be followed by serious and intense study of the Word of God, so that the believer knows to prepare to hide, and is able to do so effectively from the evil religious and political authorities. The survivors will be the underground believers, and those that remain hidden will survive to welcome Jesus.

### **Notes**

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## **SECTION 7 Satan is Directly behind the Anti-Christ**

### **(a) Ezekiel 28:1-19 A portrait of Satanic Arrogance**

**1. The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:**

The arrogance of man is the pathway of Satan, and pride always goes before a fall, as it did before "the fall". When people start to believe their own publicity they fall into foolishness, and when men believe they are gods they fall greatly into danger from the real and only God. The king of Tyre has become a man who considers himself above the correction and contradiction of mortal men, and he is about to fall under judgment. It is this same pride that would later fill Herod Agrippa I, who would make the same error when he dealt with the descendants of the people of Tyre and Sidon. Acts 12:18-23. God is not mocked by such foolishness, and if he has not judged such people he will; it is only a matter of time. This king before us in Ezekiel's prophetic word is simply a pale preparation for the Anti-Christ later.

**3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:**

The words of Daniel to Belshazzar later come to mind here. Daniel 5:18-30. Daniel is a ruler of the kingdom, and especially over the province of Babylon, and so he would have been well known to the exiles, and his grace and favour as well as his great wisdom were respected and he was admired by all who knew him. Daniel 1:19-21, 2:48-49. Daniel was wise and in his godly wisdom he had humility and reality guiding him. Arrogance blinds the fool to the reality of what they are really capable of, and able to complete. The satanic can be depended upon to over-estimate its intelligence!

Daniel's wisdom had been ignored by the last of the Judean kings on their visits to Babylon, and his advice regarding not rebelling had been disdainfully rejected by both Judah and Tyre. They have joined in the alliance to oppose Babylonian might, and have likely spoken to one another in terms of Hiram and Solomon, but the two men who sit on the thrones of both places are no mighty men. In their rebellion they are fools and arrogant self-deluded ones at that. Nebuchadnezzar suffered from that same arrogance, but he was a genius and had the power, and he will crush the rebels. Even as a genius, Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance was challenged and corrected by God, and he had seven years of severe physical and mental illness to correct him. Daniel 3:1, 4:26-37. The great king did finally bow before the Lord God and acknowledge him as Lord of all, and most importantly Lord of his own life.

Nebuchadnezzar went through three steps to genuine salvation; the first was his recognition of the power of Daniel to interpret dreams, and so he acknowledges the God of Israel as one of the gods. Daniel 2:47. Secondly he went back into even more arrogant self centeredness than before. He had "nodded to God", but not truly recognized his Lordship over him. Daniel 3:1ff. Finally it is his dream of being chopped down that leads to the reminder that he, like all kings and poor people alike, will rise or fall according to the divine plan and power. Daniel 4:10-18. Our destiny is not in our own hands, and it is only the mental illness that lowers him to the state of an animal that corrects, converts, and finally delivers him from his polytheism to the worship of the one true God. 4:34-37.

Daniel was the interpreter of dreams, even those not told to him were revealed to him, with their interpretations! Daniel 2:1-19. Daniel had the greatest of all wisdom, and in the economic area the king of Tyre has had great wisdom to make great wealth. He has great abilities to make money, but he has no life wisdom. Great success in one sphere does not mean that the individual can transfer that ability into another area. The Anti-Christ believes that he has enough power to rule the world, and he nearly achieves that, but he goes further and believes he can genuinely defeat God's people and God's Plan, and even pretend he is a "god". In this he makes a classic "category mistake"; he transfers logic from one sphere to another where it does not belong at all. He is not God, only a demon possessed self deceived man.

Once again we are confronted with the heart of the lie of satanic thinking! Great wealth does not mean great God-given wisdom, nor does it mean great holiness, nor does it indicate God's blessing at all. Great economic success just means that – great economic success, for which there may be many reasons. This self centred (read Satanically inspired) king of Tyre has received great wealth, but God is not there in it at all, indeed he has insulted and arrogantly opposed God and his plan. The King of Tyre has been lucky to inherit a great empire and has used it well, but he isn't the reason for his success; good "luck" has been with him, good weather has smiled on him, and good trading conditions have prevailed. All this can change in a millisecond! He has, like his true master Satan, set himself up against God to replace him, and that is dumb, because the king of Tyre cannot control the weather, or anything else about trading conditions. Isaiah 14:12-21.

Read the three linked proverbs in Proverbs 18:10-12 carefully and see their application to the heart of this issue, then see Isaiah's commentary on the mental attitude sin behind the king of Tyre's actions, and those of the "prosperity gospel" preachers and oligarchs of today. From the wealthiest man of his age, Solomon, we have the condemnation of those who consider wealth as anything of spiritual significance at all. Wealth is to be used for the Lord, and if we have it we rejoice in it and use it fully for the Lord's work, but we do not deceive ourselves into thinking that it makes us superior to anyone else spiritually. The king of Tyre lifted himself up and so showed thereby the source of his worldly wisdom.

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When people lift themselves up in pride they betray who their lord really is; when women and men humble themselves before the true Lord-God, they show true wisdom. James 4:6-10, 1 Peter 5:5-11.

**5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;**

They had increased their wealth with business acumen and worldly wisdom, but there was no spiritual content in it, for their hearts were lifted up in arrogance and pride, rather than being respectfully appreciative before their maker. They would not give their maker credit, but took it all to themselves. This remains the central sin of rejecting mankind today, and will be until the end. It is not that they do not believe in a creator, but that they believe they are here to replace him! Unsaved mankind prefers the picture of the divine watchmaker, who has wound up the universe and left it to us. They do not want personal accountability, for they prefer personal licence. Because they have chosen the path of arrogance they will finally have to confront the true God of all. It is this chosen path of independence from God that is the hall mark sign of satanic involvement with the character of the individual.

**7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8 They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.**

The Chaldeans were, as has been noted above, even more cruel than the Assyrians of old. The Assyrians took many prisoners from the fall of Samaria, over 27,000 by Sennacherib's own account, yet from the sieges of Jerusalem far fewer survive, and from the last one only 745 people live to tell the tale. Jeremiah 52:30. Their cruelty is the reason for their own judgment fifty years later. Before they fall themselves, they will bring this cruelty to the other nations that have abused Judah in her plight. As we have seen already above, the Romans, and their descendants will be even more cruel still than the Chaldeans; both in 70 AD, and the Great Tribulation still to come.

The prophet records their drawing of their bright swords, and their murder of the beauty of Tyre as they hack through people, clothing, furniture and cloth. The nation of mainland Tyre is brought down to the pit of Hell, and their people disappear as thoroughly as if they had sunk without trace in the sea. Psalms 88:4-7, Proverbs 28:13-18. Like corrupt Judah, their only hope is repentance and restoration by God to their place amongst the nations. This city will rise again, populated by more and more mixed peoples as she develops and rebuilds, but finally her paganism will spell her end. Judgment is certain for all who think they do not need God, nor have to answer to God, or even think they are god....

**9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.**

They have claimed to be gods, and the Lord, through his true prophet asks them, "will you in that day say to the people about to slay you 'we are gods'?" Then they will see that they were just frail men all along. It is always a source of amazement that so many wealthy and powerful people forget that they must leave all this behind at death, and as they leave this earth they are baffled and annoyed that all is lost to them. We are all tasked with delivering the Lord's message to his foolish creatures, that they are mortal and must give account to their creator, and that their only hope is to accept his terms for life and blessing. Leviticus 26:41.

Tyre had been blessed through their association with Israel under Solomon and could have taken advantage of this blessing and served the Lord as their God. They had tasted of the truth through their contacts with Israel, but had stayed within their pagan net. Their death will be according to the pagan rules they chose to live by, and these rules are cruel, for Satan's team have no solidarity amongst them, only similarity in cruelty. The Anti-Christ acts the same way as this ancient king and shares the same fate. Satan is a poor and cruel master, for his logic is flawed at its start point; he is simply not a match for the real Creator God!

The awful fact that Satan's followers ignore, is the fate of all those in the past who have stood with or for him. There is no fellowship or loyalty in Satan's camp; he abuses his own and always destroys them. Many select the broad pathway of worldliness because it promises more fun than the narrow path of holiness that the Lord calls us to, but the promises of Satan are deceptions and lies. **Matthew 7:13-23**. There is no fellowship on earth or in hell amongst Satan's people, for self is their god, and so friendships are purely self centred and end being associations of mutual abuse. Satan hates mankind, and that hatred is so deep he always abuses his own unto death. Look at the dying of Adolf Hitler as a recent example of how Satan "allows" his servants to end their miserable lives, taking millions with them.

Nothing physical, financial, or political, can prolong the life of a dying man. We are in the maker's hands alone as we advance through this life. Nothing can keep us safe in this dangerous world, except God's power and walking in the safe place of his will. All people can have financial and political success for a time, either from their own abilities, or even compliance with Satanic plans. Success of any sort indicates exactly that, success; nothing more. Just as a miracle may be worked in Satanic power, so success may be gained in evil, as wealthy mobsters and corrupt politicians testify to daily. All their success is but for a time however, no matter how great it appears to be.

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We are to be discerning of all acts of power, and issues of status flowing from wealth, power or political connections. We use the discernment of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and the fruit analysis of the lives of the people involved, in accordance with Matthew 7:13ff, and then our assessments will be safe. Our enemy is a dangerous “roaring lion”, and he is a man hating liar. John 8:44. His hatred of mankind will know few boundaries in the Great Tribulation Period.

**11. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.**

This passage we enter into here is a glimpse into the very heart and character of Satan himself. The king of Tyre is not Satan, and these verses are not clearly all literally true of this last king of Tyre, but they are true of the satanic source of his self centeredness. In this man's self absorption we see the sin of pride so well illustrated, and this is the heart of Satan's rebellion and that of all after him who follow him in rejection of the legitimate claims of God over their lives. These words give the believers of the entire Tribulation period their clues as to the identity and policy of the Anti-Christ who will fully fulfil these words in their days. He will be like the king of Tyre here.

Notice the first phrases. “Thou sealest up the sum, full of beauty and perfect in wisdom”. Now note carefully these words, for this king was an amazing man, and the perfect Hollywood idol and darling of the “jet set” of his day. He was wise in the things of this world, a brilliant conversationalist, handsome and his clothing all made by the best tailors. He looked and sounded and acted as a great king, with greatness written all over him. He was a marketing manager's dream. He looked the part he claimed to play, but it was all still built upon the body of a limited man. Unless he accepts his “creatureliness” he is doomed! It is this rejection of the obvious “creatureliness” of his nature that betrays all of Satan's men through history. In their narcissism they think they are “special” beyond all bounds of common sense.

1. The first phrase means to be perfectly made in the best geometric proportions. The king, and Satan himself, is compared to a wonderfully constructed building that obeys all the rules of balance and proportion in its construction. This very phrase reminds us that He is “made”; he is not the maker, but the one who has been made! He is perfect in all proportions because his maker is perfect and all he makes is perfect. Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31. He will not glorify the maker, only try to take glory for himself.

2. The person of the king, and the person of Satan were both perfect in beauty. Satan is Lucifer, the “Star of the Morning”; he was the most beautiful creature God made, but the last point is the key; God made him, he was not self made! It is the devious self absorption that characterizes all whose hearts are with Satan in hatred of God.

3. The king of Tyre had great wisdom according to the standards of mankind. He had education, wisdom and knowledge of trade and seafaring, but he did not have “all wisdom”, he just thought he had. This was a day when a person could read all the books and have knowledge of all things known by man, but wise men and women recognized that they knew only what was “known” to that point. True wisdom, and great knowledge will always have humility at it's heart, for every true scientist recognizes what they don't know is far greater than what they do! Both this man and Satan erred in this point; for they did not recognize that humility was logical and right!

**13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.**

This twelfth verse makes it very clear that this passage refers well beyond the king of Tyre to the one of whom he is an example; Satan himself, and Satan's final “man of sin”. It was Satan who was there even in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:1ff, 2 Corinthians 11:5, Revelation 12:9, 20:2. He was there well before Adam and Eve, and he was the “cherub who covered the throne”; he was the leading arch angel! He had the honour of service as the leader of the angelic host and he rebelled to try to seize power from the one who made him and gave him his dignity!

This is Zedekiah and the king of Tyre's sin, for they have been delivered from Assyrian domination by Babylonian power and placed on their thrones by Nebuchadnezzar's grace and favour, and yet they will rebel! The glory of the appearance of Satan is described in terms of precious stones that shone with brilliance. The beauty of his voice was like a pipe organ, and his appearance as of the most amazing thing. Satan specializes in form and show, and he does it very well, for his policy is deception, and the better the packaging the more thorough the deception. Like the king of Tyre the Anti-Christ of the end days will be this marketing manager's dream man, and he will have more wisdom and power than any man before him. He will thoroughly fool all who are open to deception, yet he himself is deceived in his own ability.

**14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.**

Satan had the most important position of all the angels, and had been set there by God himself. He was made and positioned by the creator for glory, but Satan wanted that glory for himself, and would not give it properly to the one who gave him all things that led to glory. The demand of the Lord is for humility and acceptance of reality on the part of his creatures. This is not a difficult thing, nor is it inappropriate. Why does a creature seek glory and honour for them self and

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not for their maker who gave them everything? It is baffling, and only has its explanation in the pride and arrogance of a self centred man or woman.

Satan's role and place was most glorious, and he knew the holy perfection of his maker and was the guardian of the throne itself, yet he sought to sit upon the throne! His rebellion was not the fault of his maker, for he was made perfectly. The fault was "found in him"; it emerged from within the depths of his being. Once again we are reminded that Satan was "created" and owed his worship to his maker, but put his energy and free will into replacing his maker rather than honouring him. Just so the rebellion of mankind is without logic or excuse and will bring eternal judgment.

This is why the entire person and work of the Anti-Christ is so pathetic; a mere man pretending he is a god, under the deception of satanic thought! Only the power of God can cause mortality to put on immortality. Satan can carry out a resuscitation, but only God can completely destroy death and decay and resurrect, and lift men and women into eternity itself in glory. The great evil of Satan is repeated in his servant the Anti-Christ, and in lesser, but equally foolish ways all the unsaved rebel against the reality of their creation. They insult grace, mercy and love and there is no hope for them.

**16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.**

The king of Tyre was a "wheeler dealer", just like Satan remains one to this last day. He deals in selfishness and evil, in deception and lies, and makes merchandise of people for his own ends. Satan created the first violence from the religion of Cain, who would not accept the need to bring a blood sacrifice, for he believed the fruit of his labours was sufficient to bring to God. He rejected the truth that the sin of his life was significant, and rejected the need for a sacrifice for his sins, yet he murders his brother. He worshipped himself and what he could do without God's help! He hated God and so he hated the servant of God, his own brother.

This is the satanic blood-less "liberal" religion that leads to all violence, just as it leads to the first murder. Genesis 3:17-21, 4:3-8. Satan mocks the blood sacrifice system that God instituted and yet he is the author of murder; but he never sees the contradiction in this. It is always other people's fault, never his own! This was Hitler's weakness and it will be the Anti-Christ's weakness also. They magnify themselves and so they despise all who bow their knees to God in truth.

Though Satan had the highest position in heaven he was removed from his place because of his great sin of pride. Pride destroys all who follow its deadly lie, and is the main, if not sole, reason for unsaved mankind being in the Lake of Fire with Satan and those angels who followed him. Revelation 20:11-15. Final judgment will occur, but in the meantime all who follow pride will experience being cast down by their maker at some point, for that is his last appeal to them to repent. It is only in defeat that they might repent, but they seldom do.

For Nebuchadnezzar it was mental and physical illness that changed his heart, Daniel 4:23-32, and for others it is sickness, defeat in war, or dying itself. All human beings at some point face their mortality and have that last opportunity to repent, but Satan remains staunch in his rebellion to the end, and so does the king of Tyre and the later Anti-Christ. No logic will shift them from their fondly held lie; their arrogance makes them bitterly resistant to the truth. Isaiah 14:9-20. They hate the truth and will not embrace it even though it is staring them in the face.

**18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.**

The Lake of Fire in Revelation becomes alive with fire from the very source of Satan himself. This verse explains the ultimate justice of God, and the ultimate in justice from God, in that Satan's own motive power leads to his eternal judgment and everlasting death. He is burned up from within himself, rather than being "zapped" from the outside by God, he is destroyed from within himself. Rebellion pollutes the life and the soul and all that is around the person who has rebelled, but finally rebellions implode upon themselves because you cannot release great evil without it turning on the people who have set it loose. The "terror" of the French Revolution, and the Nazi Tyranny are examples of this.

Most of the great evil rebels and tyrants of history die by the very evils they have unleashed from within themselves, for there isn't any other outcome, given the evil powers that they let consume them. Satan's end is full and final in the Lake of Fire, and he is eliminated from creation forever with all who followed his deception. Is the Lake of Fire forever? The answer here, from this passage alone is both "yes" and "no". This should not surprise us if we have read 2 Peter 3:10ff and Revelation 21, for this earth and indeed the whole of this "Space-Time" creation, of which the Lake of Fire is a part, are imploded at the end of the Millennial Kingdom, and there is a completely new creation. And yet this is not the whole picture, for the Lake of Fire does not disappear; in some way John, in Revelation 21, identifies that it enters the new creation.

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Time and space are dimensions of this present creation, and the glimpse John gets of the next creation indicates by his poetic language that this is a new dimension altogether; which is what we should expect anyway. Hell exists until it is emptied into the Lake of Fire, and it burns until time ends, and the entire old space-time creation dissolves in “fervent heat”. Satan is eliminated, with those who follow him “forever”; that is “until time ends”. But are they gone, never to be heard or thought of again? Are they the detritus of the old creation? 2 Peter 3:10-13, Revelation 21:1, 4-5, 22:3-5.

Hell and even the Lake of Fire initially appear to be confined to this present creation, and even possibly to this earth itself. The new heavens and the new earth, are exactly that, completely new. There is a new Jerusalem but it is not in any physical relationship to the geography of this present earth, for this present earth is gone, replaced by a new one. If you sketch the description of the New Jerusalem from Revelation 21 you will see that John is describing a structure, if that be the right term, that is more akin to a space station than anything known then or even now.

The only hesitation we have in all this is John’s reference in Rev 21:8 to the Lake of Fire, as if, like a “black hole” in our own universe, it still exists in some way as a reminder to the choices that fallen angels and men once made, and that those choices are indeed eternal, and suffer eternal punishment, but without causing any distress to believers in the new heavens and earth. Revelation 21:4-5. There is a mystery here and we don’t fully understand it now, nor can we until we see it with eyes that are beyond this present space-time world. Beware speaking of things in eternity in terms of space and time.

ALL WE KNOW HERE IS TEMPORARY. Even our so called “scientific principles”, where correct, only certainly apply for this universe at this time in the “Time-Space” bubble/universe we presently inhabit. Time itself is a creation and it “ends”, as does the earth and all who rebelled upon it! We need to get a strong biblical grasp of the words of Peter and John and Ezekiel and stand in holy fear and trembling before the facts of the temporary nature of this all too solid, read “fragile and doomed” world! We now know about “black holes”, advanced quantum physics, and molecular biology, and yet we do not apply it. The actual mass of the entire universe we see could fit in a suitcase if compressed! What we presently see is a space-time universe and it will be folded up and put away. 2 Peter 3:10-13.

All that is solid to the touch is simply atoms in arrangement. There is actually very little mass – most of this universe is dynamic energy in arrangement. All will implode at the end and the universe and all that is part of it will be gone in a moment, and only those, who through the gift of eternal life, have gained their place in the next world will enter it by the grace and mercy of the creator. We need to preach this truth more powerfully than we have to date. Remember, the entire matter of the universe when compacted would fit into a suitcase of infinite weight! Is this what John sees glowing in fire? Revelation 21:8, 27. We simply cannot think clearly about these things this side of eternity.

This fact of science needs to be remembered when we look into the night sky and observe the apparent solidity of the earth. Pride and arrogance are always ultimate foolishness. All that we see is a temporary arrangement of atoms. For a creature to try to replace their creator is to lose logic, one’s mind, and one’s eternal destiny! There is no logic to such rebellion; pride and arrogance alone produces this evil stupidity. All who persist in this evil are rightly judged eternally by Almighty God.

(b) **MATTHEW 24:3-6** [MARK 13:3-7, LUKE 21:7-9] see HARMONY 74-20

**3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?**

The previous statement of our Lord and the shock about hearing that the Temple will be destroyed leads the disciples to ask three questions...

1. What is the sign that the temple is about to be destroyed?
2. What is the sign that the Second Coming is about to take place?
3. What is the sign that the end of the age has begun?

The Matthew account reports the answers to questions two and three while Luke completes the picture with the answer to question one. He does not answer the questions in the same order that they were asked answering first the third question, the first question second, and the second question he answers last.

**4 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. 5 For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. 6 And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.**

The two areas He cites as indicators of the end of the age is the rise in the number of false messiahs. In Jewish history Jesus was the first to claim that he was the Messiah. Since Him many Jews as well as Gentiles have claimed to be the Messiah. The history of the Church Age is littered with false Christ’s. Jesus then says that there will be wars and rumours of wars, hot wars and cold wars. He says that this is going to be a characteristic of the Church age. Believers are not to be afraid of events that are unfolding, but look unto Jesus the author and finisher of their faith. God is in control of history as a whole as well as our individual lives, and the faith of believers at this time of history, although tested, will come through if they hold firmly to the Word of God. We face the same challenge as we confront the upcoming Iranian invasion of the Middle East, for it will look overwhelming initially.

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Wars and rumours of wars have abounded in the years since World War 1, and more have died in the multiple wars of this last century than in all the wars of mankind previously in history from the beginning of time. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century alone some report that over 12,000 people have claimed to be the Messiah, Jesus Christ, or God, They have used such names as Divine Father, Divine Mother, The Messiah, The Christ, the Master of Masters, the God of Gods. Many have been masters of the occult and using this medium have influenced and exercised control over many lives.

Some examples include:-

David Koresh from Waco in Texas who thought he was Jesus Christ and a spokesman for God. He died with his followers in a fiery siege in April 1993. Maitreya who announced his arrival in 1982 with newspaper advertisements appearing around the world announcing "The Christ is now Here". Not only claiming to be Christ he was also said to be the 5<sup>th</sup> Buddha, the Imam Mahdi of the Moslems and a god of the Hindus. He was to bring his message inwardly and telepathically and lead the world into the Age of Aquarius. The false Jewish Messiah - Menachem Schneerson a 90 year old Rabbi from Brooklyn was widely proclaimed to be Messiah in the year before his death in 1994. Lady Messiah - Maria Devi Khrystos from Ukraine claimed to be a living god, the reincarnation of Christ. She forecast the end of the world in November 1993. When it did not happen the Ukrainian police announced with sarcasm, that the End of the World had been cancelled. Most of these false Messiahs have died without too many followers, but the trend is unmistakable; there are more and more claiming this status.

(c) **MATTHEW 24:7-8** [MARK 13:8, LUKE 21:10-11] see HARMONY 74-20

**7 For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. 8 All these are the beginning of sorrows.**

As explained above the combination of world war combined with famines, earthquakes and diseases on a world wide basis was predicted by our Lord as the prelude to the Tribulation period. The facts speak for themselves in each of these categories regarding the last 100 years.

## EARTHQUAKES

The Tribulation period will be characterised by many great earthquakes. It could therefore be expected that the incidence of major earthquakes would increase as the return of the Lord approaches, and that is what appears to be happening as we advance into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with more destructive quakes per year as we advance. Be careful of statistics here, as the measurement of earthquakes has changed over the years and there is a difference in the Richter scale and the actual destructive power released, as that depends upon depth of the fault that moves and the nature of the soil/rock.

The major region for earthquakes is the Pacific Ring of Fire, with another earthquake line running through the Middle East, Iran and Burma. About 80% of earthquakes occur around the Ring of Fire, with 15% in the Middle East, and the remaining 5% scattered throughout the rest of world. There were more major earthquakes reported in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century than in the previous 5000 years. Of the 14 worst earthquakes known in recorded history, 11 occurred the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a major earthquake each three years. Now at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century there appear to be many major earthquakes every year.

## FAMINES

The incidence of famines and the world population explosion are two sides of the same coin. Even allowing for miracle strains of staple crops, which increase yields substantially, the war against the world population explosion is not being won. The population explosion is best shown in a tabulated form by date as to when the population of the earth passed each successive one billion mark: At the time the table was written it was thought that the 6 billion mark would be reached in 2000. In fact it was reached in 1999.

Date	World population in billions	Time gap since last billion
1800	1	4200 years
1930	2	130 years
1960	3	30 years
1975	4	15 years
1988	5	13 years
2000	6	12 years
2010	7	10 years

The current world population is doubling every 35 to 40 years.

2. Food Production. The following facts are pertinent:
  - (a) To improve nutrition, food production required quadrupling between 1975 and 2000.
  - (b) To maintain the present poor nutrition, 10-20 million hectares of new farm land has to be developed annually.
  - (c) Most of the good arable land in the world is under pasture or being tilled at the present.



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Famines and food production are related to weather conditions, which most meteorologists agree are in an unstable and unpredictable state, but paradoxically they are affected even more by poor food distribution, and wastage in transportation and through corruption and greed of the wealthy. They are also manufactured by politicians for baffling reasons – for example the push for the elimination of dairy and beef, even though these protein sources can be “grown” on land not suitable for cereal crops. The problem is not only overpopulation, or under-production; it is wastage, corruption, greed, and poor distribution. All these facts can be used by Satan’s man in the end to centralize control.

The thinking person seeing major increases in world population, and the food production-distribution data, must come to the conclusion that famines are inevitable. In fact, as early as the 1980s, we saw increased famines, especially in Africa, generating such efforts as Band-Aid and Sportaid. With the so called “Greenhouse Effect” people are being encouraged to afforest land: whilst population expansion requires increased arable land to be brought into production. The new so called, “Carbon Tax” is another very flawed “human viewpoint” method to solve earth’s problems.

In the Tribulation period the Anti-Christ can be expected to use the “facts” of famine to obtain the power to “solve” the problem, when it’s source is man’s greed, of which Satan is the source! The “Carbon Tax”, and other so called “solutions”, will simply make the food production-distribution problems worse and create carbon millionaires. Satan wants this to occur in the last years before the Tribulation, as the increasing hopelessness of unsaved mankind makes it more likely for them to give their power over to the Anti-Christ. He claims to be able to solve the problems, “given the power and resources to achieve the solution”. Chaos has always suited the satanically guided politicians, as they care not at all for the suffering of people they don’t know, but they can use the chaos and death to increase their power. As one politician observed, “Covid-19 is too good a crisis to waste...”

In 1975 the World Food Conference in Rome stated that the annual famine toll in that year was 57 million, or 156,000 every day of the year. Those starving in 1975 were three times the numbers who were starving in 1970. In the Food Conference in Manila in 1978 it was stated that one baby in three will never reach the age of five because of malnutrition. The United Nations states that we are in the grips of the worst food problems the world has ever seen. The only disposable food left is in countries such as Europe, the United States and Australia. Ninety percent of the world’s food is grown in areas where a 5% change in rainfall would render them less productive. Droughts are often predicted by these experts who calculate the “models”, and yet often we get floods in the area where drought was predicted.

Yet beware of such “facts and figures” as are produced by agencies like the UN that is working to centralize power in the hands of fewer and fewer people. They will prepare the way for the Anti-Christ to finally come and seize all power he can, but the problems will not be solved. Only the arrival of Jesus as King can solve the problems of this fallen world; the resolutions of fallen men and women will do nothing except produce more hopelessness, and open the door for the Anti-Christ. Remember, all is still in God’s hands and in the end there earth will be restored to productivity.

## **DISEASES:**

Whilst the scourge of smallpox has been removed from the world, many other diseases have become more resistant to medicines and have staged a counter-attack. New strains of old diseases have emerged such as AIDS, SARS and Bird/swine Flu, Malaria, which are causing world-wide concern. The Bird flu originating in East Asia could become another pandemic if/when the virus jumps species, as we see with Covid-19. These retro-virus bugs may be the diseases that decimate the population in the Tribulation period.

As early as 1976 there was a meeting in the United States between leading American and British medical experts, where great concern was expressed about the reduction in the effect of antibiotics because disease causing organisms were increasing their immunity. Their immunity in large measure was put down to the overuse of antibiotics both in medicine and enhancement of livestock such as chicken and beef. 50 years later this has continued to be a major, but under-reported problem and is now affecting operations in major hospitals.

In 1965 it appeared that by using DDT, malaria was on the way to extinction. However, by the 1980s drug resistant malaria is back on a rampage in Africa, Asia and Latin America, with 120 million cases a year. In India there were 40,000 cases of malaria reported in 1966. This increased to 430,000 in 1972 and further escalated to 5.8 million in 1976. By the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century new and powerful strains of malaria are drug resistant and once bitten by an infected mosquito a person is doomed to life long debility and eventual death.

It is expected that unless populations are curtailed, some of the world’s biggest cities infrastructures could collapse within 20 years. By 2025 Mexico City could have a population of 37.5 million, Shanghai 36.1 million, Beijing 31.9, and Sao Paulo 29.6. Such concentrations of people are ungovernable except by “Police State” or “epidemic” techniques. This will be Anti-Christ’s technique in all places he gains power over, in the East, West and Americas.

Only the Arab nations of the Middle East will keep their cities under control and their populations stable enough to maintain order without using the Anti-Christ’s “help”. Actions by Arab Governments over the next few years will set the stage for the Middle East to become a place of stability, whereas population explosion in the East, and migration of troublesome “refugees” into the West, will undermine the old Roman Empire’s descendants further, preparing the way for eventual dictatorship. The waves of “economic migrants” into America and Europe will increase the opportunities for

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power grabs by ruthless politicians. The seeds of the West's final ruthlessness are already sown. The Anti-Christ simply reaps them.

### (d) Matthew 24:9-14 The First Half of the Tribulation Period

**NOTE – This section and the next repeats from Section Five earlier, but is repeated here, with slight variation as it provides context for the other passages discussed in this section.**

**9 Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. 10 And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.**

Faithful believers will experience great personal testing during the Tribulation. The nations will conduct a bitter hate campaign against all who have accepted the Gospel after the Rapture of the Church, and are true to the expectation of Jesus return. Not only will they be tried in religious and civil courts, but many will be martyred because they refuse to recant their new found faith. While such testing situations have occurred during all periods of Christian testimony, this will be the most intensified pressure ever in history during the Tribulation period. Under the great pressures many will become apostate rather than suffer and die. Family members will inform against their own relatives and betray them into the hands of their adversaries.

**11 And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. 12 And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.**

The False Prophets in this verse should not be confused with the false Messiahs of verse 5. False prophets claim to be spokesman for God. They can be detected in three ways: Firstly their prophecies do not always come to pass, secondly they speak against the Scriptures, and thirdly their teachings always lead away from worship of the one true God. The mention of false prophets adds confirmation to the fact that the Tribulation is primarily Jewish in character. False prophets are associated with a nation of Israel. In the Church the danger comes primarily from false teachers, 2 Peter 2:1, although we have many claiming the gift of prophecy today, nearly all falsely. Reflect - Not many prophets are needed today with a completed canon of Scripture!

The most recent example, was the foolish old false prophet in America who "prophesied" the Rapture for May 2011, and was proven false, but destroyed the faith and finances of many foolish people who followed him rather than check out their Bibles. Increasing numbers of false prophets and teachers prepare the way for Satan's man of sin, because they help the enemy mock true doctrines by lunatic predictions made by false prophets waiving their bibles. Another feature of this trend to rejection of the Bible and biblical norms for behaviour is that iniquity, or evil, shall expand and become normal, and family and friendship ties will mean nothing to those who follow after the evils of that day. As a result acts of love will be brave and rare, but there will be many more acts of selfishness and self centeredness.

**13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**

This verse obviously does not mean that the men's souls will be saved at that time by their enduring, for salvation is always presented in the Bible as a gift of God's grace received by faith in Jesus death and resurrection. Neither can it mean that all to endure will escape physical harm. We have already learned that many believers will be martyred. There is a firm promise here for those who hold their faith in Jesus firm until the end of the period. It is a general statement to those who stand fast during persecution, encouraging them that they will be delivered at Jesus Second Advent, but they must stand for truth and do all that is ordered by the Word. Many will die as a result of just one error in application of the Word. This is a time when you must understand the biblical teaching and apply it thoroughly.

**14 And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.**

This verse is often misused to show that Christ could not return for his Church at any moment because so many tribes have apparently not yet heard the gospel. This difficulty is removed when we realize that this passage refers to his coming at the end of the Great Tribulation. This promise applies to the seven year Tribulation period; the last prophetic week of Israel. It is a promise that even though persecution is at an all time high, the Gospel message of salvation for that time will get out around the whole world. In the Revelation passages above we discovered that evangelism in that day is achieved by the 144,000 witnesses, and the two witnesses who speak in Jerusalem through the worst of the Great Tribulation until their martyrdom and resurrection. There is even a mighty angel who delivers a world wide message Revelation 7, 11, 14. Unsaved people are left without any excuse for their evils through this period.

Note that this verse refers to the "gospel of the kingdom", not the gospel of the grace of God. We know that up to and just after the resurrection of Jesus the "gospel of the kingdom" was given to Israel because the kingdom was potentially imminent at that time. Once however the offer had been rejected, and specifically after the stoning of Stephen, the "gospel of grace" came into focus through the Church Age. It should be noted that both the gospel of the kingdom and

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the gospel of grace have as their basis faith. The “gospel of the kingdom” relates to the time when the kingdom is imminent which it was at the time of the ministry of the Lord Jesus and will be again in the Tribulation as he is about to return as the King. However in the Church Age we know that there is a seven year Tribulation to follow the Rapture of the Church thus the kingdom of heaven is not imminent at the time when Christians carry the message. The 7 year Tribulation period may be led into by a period of time that involves a number of months of chaos after the departure of the Church. The time frame is at least seven years, probably longer by a number of months.

As believers of both the Church Age and the Tribulation period we live in what the Bible refers to as the “Devil’s world” and so we are not going to be popular. John 15:18-27. Society will tolerate almost everything on the basis of “live and let live”, but they will not tolerate Biblical faith as this challenges them. Part of the satanic deceit is the use of false prophets to divert the unbeliever from the truth and confuse the ignorant believer, but they are all without excuse, because evangelism continues through this whole time period.

The truth continues to be told through the Tribulation period, and many are saved. Even though this will be a period of great apostasy with evil abounding, God is not willing that any should perish 2 Peter 3:9, and so all have opportunity to be saved, and all will see by the end that God is absolutely fair. The evangelistic opportunities of this worst of times demonstrate that all seeking members of the human race are provided with opportunities to hear and accept God’s plan for their lives.

**(e) Matthew 24:15-28 Second Half of Tribulation [MARK 13:14-23] see HARMONY 74-20**

**15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)**

As we have seen above, the “abomination of desolation” is mentioned also in Daniel 8:13,14 which state *“Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”*

The saints or set apart ones here are angels talking one to another. They ask “How long is this oppression going to last? The reply that question was 2300 days - 6 years, 3 months and 20 days. As we have seen above, the first fulfilment of this prophetic word came under the assault of Antiochus Epiphanes. The sanctuary was cleansed on December 164 BC so the time takes us back to 170 BC to when the trouble began with the crooked high priest Menelaus who corrupted the Temple and faith of Israel for monetary gain and power under the first “anti-Christ” figure. He literally opened the door for the control by evil of the Temple. Antiochus Epiphanes may be seen as Satan’s first “dry run” at the later Anti-Christ.

When Jesus said these words this prophecy had been fulfilled in the period above, yet he clearly encourages the disciples to see that the Maccabean war was only a “dry run” and the later Anti-Christ figure would go far further than Antiochus Epiphanes, but the time frame and other details would be identical. The period of 2300 days was fulfilled exactly under this first satanic man of sin, and will be again. The final assault on the Jews in the Tribulation period may also be led into by a similar character to Menelaus appearing and deceiving/betraying his own people. Only at the time will the believers see all the facts and understand this – until then humility, and obey your orders. Daniel 12:8ff.

**16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:17 Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: 18 Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. 19 And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! 20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:**

As a result of the appearance of the “abomination of desolation”, believers are urged to take immediate action, and flee the city of Jerusalem. Believing Israel flees the land to the Arab nations in the east of Israel. The emphasis is on the greatest urgency. They must run and run quickly and immediately and there are three consequences if the abomination of desolation occurs at a difficult time. Three warnings are given for believers who see the day approaching to take action in prayer and in planning through the days leading up to the events unfolding.

1. It will be difficult for those who are pregnant or who have to carry small infants.
2. It will be difficult if it happens in winter.
3. It will be difficult if it happens on the Sabbath because of the lack of public transport on that day.

For each of these things there is an action that can be taken by believers who see the day approaching to ensure they can get away at the time in any of these conditions. Couples must ensure they do not fall pregnant through these days. They must have an “escape pack” ready for all seasons, so that without delay they can flee and have a good chance of survival with well prepared clothing, physical fitness, and emergency medical rations for winter or summer. They must be able to operate without public transport and know all escape routes well away from guarded main roads that can be watched in Sabbath Days in Israel. Those who plan, on the basis of biblical warnings live, those who don’t die!

**21 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. 22 And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect’s sake those days shall be shortened.**

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It is at this point that Satan inaugurates his final attempt to destroy the Jews once and for all. He does this because he knows what the basis of the second coming is. If he is able to eliminate all the Jews then Jesus return is in vain because as King of the Jews he will have no people to reign over and there will be no Jews to take over the Promised Land as God had promised the nation Israel. So the setting up of the abomination of desolation marks the beginning point of Satan's final attempt to destroy the Jews, once and for all. It is also a period of worldwide anti-Semitism, and intensified executions of all believers in the One True God. In verse 22 however, we see that Israel will survive, and the days will be cut short so that they will survive, because if the days did not get cut short everyone would die and Satan would win. This doesn't mean the plan of God changes (is cut short), but that the satanic plan is "cut short" – he simply runs out of time to achieve his goals – due to his constant side tracking with his and his team's narcissistic schemes and plots.

**23 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. 24 For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. 25 Behold, I have told you before. 26 Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.**

The Jews leaving the land are directed to head eastwards into Jordan and retreat into the mountainous area around the borders of Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The armed forces of the gentiles will know where they have gone and will send down propaganda experts to try and encourage the Jews to come out of the mountainous area where they have sought refuge. The techniques used by the attacking armies also include false prophets who will perform miracles. These miracles will be so spectacular that they will convince the unbelievers that Anti-Christ is indeed the powerful one, and will greatly impress any believers that witness them.

In this passage Jesus tells his disciples very directly that he is warning them about these future things. He directs specifically that the people of that day should not believe what the propagandists say because Satan will lay many traps, and if the believers do not remember Jesus words and remain hidden, they will be killed. The Lord's message is that his words must be more real to the believers of that day than the observable miracles of the false prophets and evil workers of Satan's Anti-Christ. They will be mighty, but they will be wrong, and they will be judged by the Lord's Second Advent. Believers must remember the biblical principle that power and spiritual gifts are noting except manifestations of power! The key issue is their source, and by their fruits they are seen and known to be of Satan's team. Matthew 7:13-23.

**27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. 28 For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.**

In verse 27 Jesus reminds the disciples that his Second Coming will be seen by all. It will be a "glorious appearing" for all those waiting for Him, and one that no one on the earth will be in any doubt about. Acts 1:6-11. All false prophets will announce false appearances of the Lord, but the real one will silence all the falsehoods, for there will be no doubts He has come, for the evil workers will be dead. There will be no doubt when Jesus returns – but there will be deception of evil right up until that earth changing event.

In verse 28 the corpse or carcase referred to is apostasy or corruption, and the eagles or carrion birds, are the inevitable judgment of God. The whole world system, political and religious, has been arraigned against God and is in God's sight a corpse. The eagles or vultures typify the judgments of God that will be unleashed on this system in conjunction with the Second Advent.

It is extremely important for believers to know Scripture in detail so that they can discern the signs of the times. We have the mind of Christ given to us in writing. 1 Corinthians 2:16. Jesus Christ knows the whole of history, both worldwide and personally. We should rely on Him for protection but also need to obey His word and live in fellowship with Him. We need to weigh everything up against the Scriptures to ensure we are not being led astray, especially by signs and wonders. We walk by faith and not by sight.

In the Tribulation period there will be many signs, as the dispensation has reverted to that of the Jewish age. The Lord said that the Jews look for signs, and with the demonic activity signs will abound, from both the source of God and the source of Satan. Discernment, based upon Bible doctrine, will be the only safeguard against evil in that day.

### (f) Daniel 12:4-13 The Sealing of the Prophecy Until the End

**4 But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased. 5 Then I Daniel looked, and, behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river. 6 And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? 7 And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished. 8 And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? 9 And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end.**

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The signs that will abound in the “end times” are given to Daniel. The first of these is World Travel - The period since the last World War has been the age of travel for the common man. Prior to this period it was only the rich who could afford to travel or had the leisure to do so. We are now able to travel to all corners of the world for a fraction of the cost that our ancestors had to spend to travel to another city in their own country.

The Second Sign is the Knowledge Explosion - There is no doubt that in the last twenty to thirty years there has been a great knowledge boom. Knowledge was said to be doubling every ten years in the scientific area in the year 2000, but by 2010 this is halved and the total knowledge of mankind is doubling every five years. 97% of all the scientists that have ever lived are said to be alive at this moment. A prominent scientist of the eighteenth century could boast that he knew all about science. Today people are highly specialised in one area of science and can claim expertise for a very limited subject area and time.

Knowledge could also be gauged by the number of books that are published bearing in mind that books were very rare at the time of Daniel. Around the year 2000 Russia published 90,000 books annually whilst the U.S.A 85,000, West Germany 45,000 and Great Britain 35,000. Unfortunately with this secular knowledge explosion the knowledge of the Scriptures appears to have declined. The knowledge explosion is better referred to as the “opinion” explosion, with more and more to distract mankind from the reality of the scriptures. This has multiplied by the “blogs” of the internet that contain weird and strange opinions as if they are truth. These “trolls” spread misinformation – but that is the normal satanic modus operandi. Expect it!

The third feature of the end times is the mixture of travel and desire for human rather than godly knowledge. This is the concept of people traveling to and fro in a frantic searching for human knowledge. What occurs is that people learn more and more about things, but they know less and less about their world and their place within it under their creator. Daniel says that this will occur but it is not until the very end that answers to these prophecies will occur.

Daniel now asks the question of the angels beside the river as to how long it will be to the end of these wonders. The answer is that it will be three and a half years from the scattering of the people (the abomination of desolation being set up and the people fleeing to the hills) to the end. Daniel again asks the question but he is told that the book is sealed till the end of the age. Only at the time will people know the full meaning of all these verses, and until then there will be confusion as to the significance of the days mentioned in the various passages.

Prophecy is something that will encourage people under the great pressure of the last days of man before the Lord returns. It is very encouraging in the fact that it shows that God’s plan is going to work; there is not going to be a nuclear winter and the extinction of mankind. It also reinforces the fact that the Word of God can be taken literally and is totally reliable, but in these prophetic areas there are clues that will only exist at the time of fulfilment to assist those people understand fully. The book of Daniel is a critical and foundational book when understanding the Scriptures involving eschatology such as the Olivet discourse, Thessalonians and the book of the Revelation.

**10 Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand. 11 And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. 12 Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days. 13 But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.**

The contrast between the two groups of mankind is now given. The time of the end will have a two fold result; it will result in the purification of the saints, but will also show very clearly the wickedness of evil man’s hearts. In addition the wise shall understand and the wicked will not. The believer will understand the prophecy and its implications while the unbeliever will not. The command of Scripture is clear and constant – walk in the Spirit and the Word and be safe!

Daniel is now given a new time frame within this period. It is of 1290 days, or three years and seven lunar months, from the setting up of the abomination to its destruction. It is clear from Scripture that the second half of the Tribulation is 1260 days or 42 months as given in Daniel 7:25, 12:7, Revelation 11:2, 12:6, 12:14, 13:5. In total we are given a period of 1335 days in verse 12. This is another, at this point confusing time reference, like that to 2300 days above on page 89.

Why the extra time frame? In fact why the extra two and a half months? Daniel does not explain these different time periods but reminds us that we, at this point, and the disciples at his time, didn’t “need to know”. There is activity in this time that we do not have fully explained, for we do not need to understand these things. They will become clear only at the time. Remember the point made in an earlier section; the Lord has kept some details secret and others confusing, as Satan himself is then in the dark. Daniel 12:9-10. Only at the time will believers who know the scriptures see the correct interpretation of these passages. They are “sealed” for that time, and we cannot be 100% sure of anything at this time.

The tribulation period will be one of great contrasts. It will totally polarize society. There will be no sitting on the fence. Iniquity will abound. Prophecy to the believer brings great comfort especially in times of adversity and death. In 1 Thessalonians 4 we as believers are told not to mourn “like those who have no hope”. All believers have a guarantee of resurrection and eternal life through Christ who bought us all back to God. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming back. We do not have all the details clear, but at the time those who stand for Him have the encouragement that they will see the prophetic words fall into place. We can but echo one of the final phrases from the Book of the Revelation – “Even so come quickly Lord Jesus!”

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## **SECTION 8** The Blessings that come to the Arab Nations when they assist the refugees of that terrible Great Tribulation Period

### (a) Psalms 60:5-12

**1 O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased; O turn thyself to us again.**

Let us firstly get the historical context of this Psalm clear, and then see its prophetic significance for the last days. The adversity David faces here is military defeat and treachery on the part of his enemies. The events behind this psalm appear to be found in his Syrian and Mesopotamian campaigns. 2 Samuel 8:13-14, 1 Kings 11:15-16, 1 Chronicles 18:12-13. While David was with his army in the far north-east fighting the Syrians the Edomites took the opportunity provided and attacked the undefended southeast of Israel. They were relatives through Esau and should not have done this evil, but their descendants will be part of the relief of Israel in the last days, just as they stood with the Jews in 67-70 AD and died fighting in Jerusalem against the Romans.

The "scattering" spoken of in the psalm is reference to the scattering of the Israelites before the Edomites and the terrible destruction they wrought amongst the undefended southern cities and townships. Joab was dispatched with speed with part of the army to fight them, and he met them in the Valley of Salt (Dead Sea area) and defeated them, killing twelve divisions (eleph's) of their army. As a nation the Edomites didn't recover from that defeat and were absorbed into David and Solomon's kingdom as a result, and through one of their number 900 years later will rule Israel... Herod the Great.

This psalm appears to have been written after Joab has left to fight the Edomites, but before the news of victory is brought back to David. David recognises that the Lord has allowed this treachery and defeat and turned away from Israel temporarily to enable evil to have a victory. This defeat is a judgement of God upon them as far as David is concerned; as he reads in the Mosaic Law he sees that they are worthy of such judgment. Whenever a nation is defeated in battle, or experiences major natural disaster, it is because of some level of disobedience within the people and David acknowledges that they have been disobedient and foolishly arrogant. Leviticus 26:1ff, Deuteronomy 28:1-2, 15ff.

David doesn't complain about the attack, he just weeps before the Lord at the loss of life and disgrace of God's people being in such a state where they couldn't defend themselves and win against evil pagans. He recognises the truth of the Mosaic Law; that discipline has come only because they are clearly guilty. He prays for the Lord to turn again and bless them through deliverance from the attacks of their brethren, the pagan Edomites, and he is in effect asking for total victory over their murderous army. These people were relatives, but had gone into evil over the years and were treacherous.

This event in David's reign has a strong parallel to the coming treachery of the Anti-Christ against Israel and the Arab nations in the Tribulation period. Consider the treachery of the Anti-Christ towards Israel as the mid-point of the Tribulation period arrives. He has sworn a treaty with Israel and for 3 ½ years he keeps his bargain, but only to seduce Israel into a false confidence. When he moves against them it is with evil, malice, and overwhelming violence.

The people of that day will sing this Psalm in their homes as they fully realise the extent of the satanic deception that they were foolish to accept. His betrayal is also against the Arab nations, for they share the Temple Mount and idolatry upon it is an insult to them also. The betrayal of the Arabs and the Jews appears to fully unite them both, and leads the Arab neighbours to the east of Israel to support and protect the Jewish refugees who flee the idolatry of that evil day.

**2 Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh.  
3 Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.**

David reminds himself of the creative power of God who made the universe of space and time and in whose hands all things are. It is always good when facing trouble and pressure from satanic enemies to remember the power of God, which is always well able to overwhelm any force that Satan can put up against us. David stabilizes himself in the truth of God's creative power, and is assured before he goes further, that the One who made the universe can sort out the Edomites and anyone else who treacherously deals with God's people.

The earthquakes that shake the land of Israel at times are the reminder of God's creative and destructive power. The Lord has made the earth and He breaks it up and reforms it at times. Man is a creature and the shaking of the earth reminds him of that fact. By remembering that we are but temporary residents of this space-time universe we are positioned in the right place to receive help from God and deliverance from the evils of the enemy. God's people will so position themselves in the Tribulation period and stand firmly for the Lord's truth against the devil's lies.

David reflects upon the fact that the people have suffered "hard things" as a result of their sins over recent weeks. They have been forced to drink the "wine of astonishment". They fear the Lord and are surprised about the things that have happened. They are guilty but shocked still. Nehemiah 9:29-38. They need to sit with their shock and let it work out to full repentance and then they will be delivered fully. It is a similar thing that is required in the middle of the Tribulation period. In the turning point of the Tribulation period the Great Tribulation begins with the setting up of the statue of the Anti-Christ and the people of Israel need to move quickly to obey the words of Jesus to flee from the political, economic and military power of the Anti-Christ.

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## **4 Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth. Selah.**

The banner of the army is the rallying point. The Lord gives us His banner to rally to; that banner is the truth of His Holy Word. Towards the end of the first three and a half years of the Tribulation the Jewish people recognize their Messiah and this prepares them for the actions required when the Anti-Christ sets up his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem; they are ready then to obey the words of Jesus after 2000 years of ignoring them. Bible Doctrine is our banner. If we walk in the "fear of the Lord" and obedience to His revealed Word we walk in a safe place.

If we have a holy fear of the Lord we will never need to fear any man. Psalms 19:9, 23:4, 25:14, 118:4-6. Fear of the Lord means a real respect for the truth about God's person, plan, and power. It is not servile fear, for the perfect love He has for us casts out such fear. Romans 8:15, 1 Corinthians 16:10, 1 Timothy 1:7, 1 John 4:18. The banner over us is His love; not our love for God, for that is unstable, but His perfect love for us. Song of Solomon 2:4, John 15:9-19, 1 John 4:7-19.

## **5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.**

David makes the deliverance very personal here; it's not about his people, it's about him. He feels his people's pain as his own and seeks deliverance for the people on the basis of his being beloved and able to ask for it personally. His people are to be blessed by their association with David. David is recognising that one believer may act as the SALT for his people, and that he may deliver them and bless them through their association with him. David wants his people delivered by the awesome power of God's right hand.

The "right hand" was the way of saying the absolute power of God. David is asking for total power to be expressed to produce the victory. He doesn't want God to hold back from judging and he himself will not hold anything back from God in obedience himself. This is our challenge and it will be the challenge of that later day when the Jewish believers in and around Jerusalem will obey the Lord their God and the Messiah whom he sent to them all those years before.

## **6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth. 7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;**

This passage has a parallel passage in **Psalms 108:7-13**. It appears that David sang of this situation twice around this time. He has what we now call a "word of the Lord" about the fate of his army and the victory it will gain for the kingdom. God has given him the assurance of rejoicing in victory. He will see the areas of Ephraim and Manasseh that have been pillaged restored and recovered fully to the kingdom. From the southernmost areas of Ephraim, Judah and Manasseh the enemy will be driven out. These areas that have been over run and their people locked up in their fortified cities will be free again, for the Lord has decreed these areas are his and the enemy will be put out.

The areas of life that the Lord has power over are declared "God's own places" and they will be protected by the Lord. When the areas of the Lord's work are over run by the enemy, we are to pray and then seek God's way to recover those areas. The Lord has said, "they are mine", and we will have the power and the plan to achieve their return. Let us advance with focused power and purpose through the life the Lord has called us to live. In the latter days all who hear the Word of the Lord will embrace these truths and walk in obedience to the Lord and be comforted with His Word; they will know that in the very mountains of Edom mentioned here they will find refuge and strength. The believers of that day need to advance into these areas with the same confidence that David's army had, claiming the promises of God as more real than their fears and the threats of the Anti-Christ's people.

## **8 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me. 9 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?**

The lands from where the raiders have come are now mentioned and they are placed under God's judgement. David hears God's verdict over the land of his grand-mother Ruth. Moab will become the wash pot of God, and their people will be "washed out" like dirty linen. The land of Moab will be cleansed of its evil people. This is legitimate "ethnic cleansing" because it is based upon the spiritual status of the people, with only the people who have actively and persistently defied the Lord being excluded from their ancestral lands. They will be replaced by those who assist Israel in the last days.

These countries have been cleansed through the centuries with none from their original inhabitants left to live in the ruins of their once great cities. They defied God again and again and they rejected God's work and ways, and so they were destroyed. The ruins of the ancient world are a warning to us all of how thorough the Lord is when He decides to judge a people. These places will be blessed in a future day for exactly the same reasons that they are to be judged in David's day; their attitude to the words and plan of God.

## **10 Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies? 11 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. 12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies**

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David is expressing confidence here, not doubts about the Lord's ability to judge the enemy and deal with them. He knows that the Lord will answer his prayers and cast away the enemy's power. God is with Joab and the army as it heads out to defeat the Edomites. He prays for the Lord's total victory, and recognises that the help of men is feeble and ineffective. It is through the power of God that the army of Israel will "do valiantly"; they will excel in their work and defeat the enemy thoroughly. The assistance of godly people is useful, but apart from the Plan and Power of God all such help from men is doomed to fail. By obeying the Lord the people of the Tribulation period and Great Tribulation period will eventually live to see the Lord tread down their enemies and they will join the final battle and see victory won.

God's people need to remember that adversity does not mean we are on the wrong path, it may mean we are on the exact path for us and the enemy does not like our success. Adversity means we pray for the Lord's assurance and strength, and then, when sure of our path forward, throw all our energy into the path ahead of us. The truth is that we are loved by God. We are loved by God without deserving it. We are recipients of His grace, love, mercy and forgiveness. Let us proclaim the love of God for man, and announce this good news to all who will hear it. This truth remains certain even until the last day of the Great Tribulation period.

When we ask for deliverance by the power of God let us ask for the full power of God to be exercised and let us not hesitate to express the full power of God in our own life and give over all our power to serve the Lord. Let's be whole hearted, not half hearted in our service. The army of Israel headed south to fight, and they did so with all their might. We are called to act with the same confidence that David and Joab's men showed here. They all fought like lions and were tough and committed to their tasks. Let us be 100% thorough and courageous. The courage of the people of the latter days will surprise the Anti-Christ, and in the power of Jesus they will find victory in the end.

When we visit the ruins of ancient civilizations in the ancient world we ought to bow our heads and remember the grace and the judgement of God. All these great places fell and were destroyed and our own great cities will themselves be destroyed by God for the same reasons the ancient ones were. It is man's disobedience that brings judgement upon mankind. Let us warn the Lord's people and preach the Gospel to the unsaved that they might be saved from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10.

## **(b) PSALM 102**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This psalm has been assigned to the group of seven "Penitential Psalms". (Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 130, 143). It is a prayer from a person suffering under the burden of past sin and persecution. How does such a psalm fit into this second group of the "Numbers Section" of the book of Psalms? As we go through it we will see that it is a perfect psalm to sum up the Saviour-Deliverer role of the Lord in His return to the earth to recover His people.

This is the Psalm that recalls all the suffering of the Israelites in their dispersal and recalls the Lord's care over them even though under divine discipline. It is a Psalm that reminds them of the Lord's care, and that the Lord will hear their cry and answer it in the right time for the deliverance of the saved remnant of His people, and for their entry into the Millennial Kingdom. It is another Psalm that will be sung through the dark days of the Great Tribulation, as it speaks of the hope to come of the Lord's return.

Its structure has been well explained by Dr W G Scroggie as follows:

1. Personal section - A prayer about man's frailty  
Verses 1 – 2 His cry to the Lord  
Verses 3 – 11 His condition as a sinner in need of deliverance.
2. National section - His consolation as a member of God's people in their distress  
Verses 12 – 17 The near prospect of deliverance.  
Verses 18 – 22 The far prospects of the kingdom's establishment and their glorying.
3. Personal section - His Eternal confidence in the Plan of God for Eternity  
Verses 23 – 24a His lingering fears.  
Verses 24b – 28 His steadying faith in God and His Plan.

### **Psalms 102:1-28**

**1 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.**

**2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.**

The context of this psalm needs to be remembered. It is to be sung to the Lord upon His throne in Jerusalem after His great victory over the forces of evil at his Coming. It is a reflective psalm that sings of the cry of the history of Israel in light of their initial rejection and late acceptance of their Messiah. The anguish here is not a new thing, and sums up the emotion of many of the psalms, and it sums up the emotional power of a people who realise that their suffering through



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the centuries has been as a result of their rejection of their Messiah, as Zechariah had foreseen, Zechariah 12:10ff. Psalms 18:6, 27:9, 31:2, 39:12, 56:9, 59:16, 69:17, 143:7.

All of us who have walked a few years through the pressures associated with the service of the Lord have felt the emotions expressed here and uttered these prayers ourselves to the Lord from our place of distress, and regret at past failures. We have cried for the Lord to hear us, and felt that we were speaking to the ceiling at times. We have asked for the Lord to reply to our prayer quickly because we do not believe we can last another day. How much more powerful are the prayers of those who have come out of the Great Tribulation period? They have experienced such deliverance as people write books about and never cease to tell of the greatness of their God.

All of us have uttered these things under great pressures, and all of us have recognised that we have indeed lived until the next day, and the Lord has heard us, but we have to wait for His answer to be seen in time. We have learned patience and learned that our timing is not the Lord's timing, and seen that the Lord is the Lord of time and space, as well as inhabiting eternity. Isaiah 55:8-9, 57:15, Acts 1:6-8.

**3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.**

**4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.**

The great despair of the people of Israel under divine discipline through the centuries has been extreme at many times. Their years and their goods have literally "gone up in smoke" in the pogroms against them, and many believers in Jesus through the same centuries have shared their fate. Many Jews, Moslems, and Christians were murdered by the evil crusaders at various times and had their goods pillaged and their families torn asunder. Great evils have been unleashed against God's people in the Church, amongst the Arab peoples, and amongst the Jewish people, and many times the evils were unleashed by those wearing a cross upon their chest. Let us all weep for the evils done by all in the name of satanic religious activity, for Satan's hand is seen in the fruit of the evil works done. Matthew 7:13ff.

Satanic hatred has been strong through the years and will never be stronger than in the Great Tribulation period. Satan's rule over men has been deceptive and malicious, but by the day this psalm is sung directly to the Lord these days are gone forever. The psalmist recalls the great suffering of the people of God and their psychological and physical despair at times. He recalls the terrible price that that individual believers have paid for their faith at times, and the even more terrible price that Israel has paid for their lack of faith through the centuries. Remember the passage in Zechariah 12:10-14 which we have seen earlier.

The level of depression and anxiety expressed in these verses is something that many of us have experienced at times in our walk with the Lord. These emotions and experiences are not evidence of being out of spiritual fellowship, although they can be at some times, but are more normally indications of the great pressures associated with great areas and times of service. Those serving in the most important tasks in the Plan of God will endure the greatest pressures in their walk, but they will always have the greatest power and comfort available to them.

SUFFERING for the believer may be due to divine discipline, but it is more often associated with service and the pressures associated with the ANGELIC CONFLICT. Many have experienced great extremes of emotion and physical and psychological pressures in their service for the Lord. Paul details this level of pressure himself as he tells of his early ministry, and at this time he is yet to experience his greatest time of pressure! 1 Corinthians 11:23 -33, 12:7-10, Acts 27:21 – 28:6, Hebrews 12:1-15.

**5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.**

**6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.**

The physical effect of worry and stress is often weight loss through lack of appetite. The physical appearance of the sufferer changes and they literally shrink before our eyes. Their fat is absorbed and then their muscle, and finally all that is left is a skeleton with large lifeless eyes staring into space. None can forget the photos of the Nazi Concentration camp victims, and Japanese prison camp survivors, whose bodies were destroyed by the evils of those places.

All these great sins against Israel and the Church are recalled in this day and mourned over, and the judgement of the enemies of God recalls all the enemies from the beginning of history and this psalm remembers them all and honours the memory of those who died so terribly at the hands of evil men and women. It is collective mourning for generations of disobedience and death. The psalmist also recalls the plight of those who had to flee into the wilderness places with stolen food and like the cormorant eat away from the sight of others, and like the owl, hide by day and scavenge by night. The people of God have been hunted like animals at times, and they have needed the protection of the Lord in all things. **Hebrews 11:32-40.**

**7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.**

**8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.**

Like the sparrow that hides just beyond the reach of the hunter and is ready to quickly fly away whenever danger threatens, so the people of God who have survived at times, have done so through their hyper-vigilance to danger. They have had to be like the sparrows and be ready to fly away at a seconds notice. The enemies of the truth have unbridled

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hatred towards God's people and rebuke and reproach God's people constantly. They hate and abuse God's people, and are "sworn enemies"; determined to do anything they can to hurt believers and hinder their work for the Lord.

We must understand the extent of the hatred of those who serve Satan, for their determined hatred of the Lord and His people is why their judgement is as severe as it is. Refer to the BTB study JUDGEMENT – GREAT WHITE THRONE JUDGEMENT, HELL AND HADES. God is absolutely just and fair in the eternal condemnation of the lost, for they have not just refused the free offer of God's grace, they have trampled the BLOOD OF CHRIST shed for them and they have hated the believers and murdered them when they could; whose only crime was to love the Lord their God and who offered them God's mercy, grace, hope, and love.

**9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping.**

**10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.**

There is recognition on the part of the psalmist that the suffering of the people of God is in the hands of God. It is the Lord who lifts us up and the Lord who casts us down. If we have sinned against the Lord we are "cast down" by the Lord, and for Israel this process of DIVINE DISCIPLINE was very carefully spelled out in Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30. The New Testament makes it clear that the sinful believer is disciplined also, if they persist in sin without confession. **Hebrews 12:5-11.**

While in the midst of discipline however the believer may still claim Romans 8:28, and through REPENTANCE and CONFESSION OF SIN, actually obtain that promise and be blessed. God specialises in turning the curse of sin into the blessing of grace, but only as we deal with our sin and forsake it, and walk in holiness of life. The challenge of every age is to keep short accounts with God, but in these last days all believers need to walk very close to the Lord indeed.

**11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.**

**12 But thou, O LORD, shall endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.**

All mankind are born to die. We are born into a race with the curse of sin over us as a result of the FALL OF MAN, and we are born in sin, and that means we are doomed to grow old and die. Psalms 39:5-6, 109:23-24, 144:3-4. We presently strut upon the stage of life when young, feeling invincible, but as the years advance we "groan in this body". 2 Corinthians 5:2-4. Old age is ugly, painful and debilitating for most of us. The psalmist remembers the curse of sin and death at this time in the psalm. He is writing for the day when the singers stand before the throne of the Lord. As they sing these words before the throne of the Lord, they are remembering the pain of the past, for all of this is about to be gone forever.

In the Millennial Kingdom men and women live as Adam and Eve could have lived, and all entering this kingdom will apparently never grow old. They live and reign with the Lord for the full 1000 years and then enter eternity with their Lord. Revelation 20:5ff. The days of aging and sickness and death are over when the Lord reigns in Jerusalem. All this changed forever on that day and this psalm forms a hymn of reflection as to how things were, and contrasts this with how things will be under the rule of the King of kings.

**13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.**

**14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.**

What a great day it will be when this is sung before the actual throne of the Lord, for the "day" is truly come when the Lord is sitting on His throne. The Lord has "arisen" in power as the King over Jerusalem and has destroyed all the armies besieging the city and murdering its people. He has had full and final mercy upon the city and its people and their time of favour has begun. The "set time" is come. Remember there is a plan by God for mankind and for Jerusalem as the capital of the world, and that time has come at this point.

The PLAN OF GOD is certain and all the saved can now see and celebrate that. Even today the stones of that city are precious and her dust is bottled for people to take away to their homes on the far side of the world. There is no city on earth that is like Jerusalem for generating passion, and in that day its stones will really be precious, for all the roads and pathways will lead to the throne of God. Psalms 79:8-10, 137:4-6. Daniel's prayer for Jerusalem is well and truly answered in that wonderful day. Daniel 9:15-19. These words are certain and the hope in these verses will fire the hearts of those who hide from the Anti-Christ in the mountains of Jordan, Israel and Arabia.

**15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.**

**16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.**

All the foreign nations will have fear of the name of the Lord in that day. The "heathen" as such are all destroyed by this time, but those who had been heathen and have been saved through the Great Tribulation period now recognise the truth about the Lord and worship God as they ought to. All the leaders of all the peoples who have survived the terrible days of evil in the Great Tribulation are now worshipping the Lord and glorying in the Lord who has been their deliverer as well as Israel's deliverer. Evil is cast out and all can rejoice in a new beginning for mankind. Revelation 19:1 – 20:5.

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The Lord himself builds up the city of Zion again and rebuilds that mountain top as it will be through the Millennial Kingdom. The surviving people of the city are involved in the clean up after the battles and it may take years to complete that. The Lord supernaturally rebuilds the Temple area and city His way after the earthquakes of the last years have flattened the buildings and changed the topography totally. The Lord may use the skills of men to achieve this, or he may simply and supernaturally deliver his Temple for the Millennial Kingdom as he wishes it to be in a millisecond. Ezekiel describes the Millennial Temple (Chapters 40-46) and so we can surmise that it is awaiting "delivery" in heaven in some way yet to be seen.

**17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.**

**18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.**

From that point onwards, until the end of human history upon the earth one thousand years later, all who are needy have their advocate in the Lord Jesus as the King over all, and He fully and thoroughly is their advocate, and none face injustice ever again. God has never despised the prayers of the weak, the poor, or the downtrodden, but in that day they will have an open door to secure immediate justice from the Lord Himself. From the next generation of people, for the entire thousand years of the Millennial Kingdom, there is an entire population that knows what the earth was meant to be, and are able to worship the Lord in purity, truth, and with open and unmitigated joy. Refer to the BTB study again on the MILLENNIAL KINGDOM.

**19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;**

**20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;**

The Lord has been watching the entire drama of redemptive history being worked out. The Lord has been an active observer, has answered prayer, and delivered His people all through man's history, and its culmination is reached in this day. We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses even now, with our behaviours observed and our actions applauded or sighed over by our saved ancestors, relatives and friends who have gone ahead of us into heaven. **Hebrews 12:1-3.** We need to remember this truth as we walk carelessly through this world. We are playing out a great drama, and we all have a part in it to play, and we are watched by angels and men of the past, as well as the present.

The Lord has called us to serve Him in truth, with power and focus, and we are urged to do this in light of the fact that the Lord sees every action and the saints of the past, and the angels appear to also be able to watch key events in our life. Now don't let a pagan be ridiculous about this fact, for this doesn't mean we are observed going to the toilet! What is being observed is active work for the Lord done in His power. I suspect that whenever believers walk in Holy Spirit power their actions are played live in heaven for all to see, and that every time we are filled with the Holy Spirit the crowds in heaven who have an interest in us cheer. Only in heaven will we finally know how this works, but I imagine my saved ancestors looking on and the angels looking on and cheering every great work God does through me, and that brings great joy to me.

I suspect that the reality is even greater than I imagine it. Read the Hebrews passage and be encouraged and challenged! This is a major encouragement to those in the Tribulation period, for through that entire seven year period believers will need to be encouraged, and knowing that as they win little victories of faith as they hide day by day, their godly martyred friends are watching them in heaven and cheering them on will be an incredible encouragement.

God hears our groaning also and He releases us from the "bonds of death" that otherwise hold us in chains to our mortality and our sicknesses and depressions. The Lord wants us free of doubts, anxieties and fears. John 10:10. His perfect love for us casts out any fear when we rest within its reality. 1 John 4:17-18. As the song says, "The Steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies are renewed every day. Daniel 6:26. Let us walk in freedom and serve the Lord with Holy Spirit power and laugh at death's scary face, for we have the assurance of Dying Grace now, and the abolition of death's power in the Millennial Kingdom. The victory of the Cross and Empty Tomb are only half complete at this point, but after Jesus return the victory is complete indeed.

**21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;**

**22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.**

These verses make it very clear that the "kingdoms" (plural) of the earth are in view here. The Lord is King over all the earth at this point, and the psalmist prophetically sees this from his vantage point over five hundred years before the First Advent of the Lord. The Lord has lifted up all the saved people of the earth and brought them into His kingdom. Psalms 9:13-14. The psalmist sees that all the nations will gather together to praise the Lord in that future day, and all will honour the name of Jesus as their King and Lord. Zechariah sees this also, and in Zechariah 14:16-21, he records that all the people will come up annually to Jerusalem and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles together. Also refer to the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 66:20-24.

Today we have unsaved people trying to achieve world unity and internationalism, but this is a satanic operation, attempting to do what only God can do before the Lord does it. When unity is achieved by the Lord it is achieved because of His judgement of the evil men and women who sabotage all unity today. There can be no unity and genuine peace between nations until the Lord eliminates evil and rules in righteousness. Man alone is not capable of this, and he certainly isn't capable of it with satanic and demonic assistance, for Satan's hatred of mankind gets in the way every

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time! Refer to the BTB studies on ANTI-CHRIST (WORLD RULER), RETURN OF OUR LORD, NIMROD – INTERNATIONALISM, PEACE, and WAR.

## **(c) Matthew 3:7-10**

## **The Testimony of John the Baptist**

### **1 In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,**

The synoptic narrative begins with the baptism of John which is the time period as given by Peter in Acts 1:22, “from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us.” Matthew does not indicate the date when John appeared as Luke does in chapter 3 [below]. It was some thirty years after the birth of John, precisely how long after the return of Joseph and Mary to Nazareth we do not know.

John appears on the stage of history. This dramatic event calls for a vivid imagination on the part of the reader. There he is as he comes forward, makes his appearance. His name John means “Gift of Jehovah” He is described as “the Baptist,” or literally, “the Baptizer”, for that is the rite that distinguishes him. Baptism (mikveh in Hebrew) was a Jewish ritual, and its demand was seen as a challenge to the Jewish people to hear and obey the Lord’s servant.

The Jews had proselyte baptism for the Gentiles who accepted Judaism. Baptism was also used to reflect a major change in a person’s life, and for women to end their period cycle, it was used monthly. In a Jewish “worst case scenario” John here is treating the Jews as Gentiles in demanding baptism at their hands on the basis of repentance. At best he is demanding a total repentance from past life style and attitudes and a preparation for total change of life and faith.

He was “Preaching in the wilderness of Judea”. This was a harsh country. It was the rough region in the edges of the Jordan Valley and stretching down towards the Negev desert. There were some people living here scattered over the barren cliffs. Here John came in close touch with the rocks, the trees, the goats, the sheep, and the shepherds, and the snakes that slipped before the burning grass over the rocks. People had to be serious about the Word of God to come into such a place to hear John.

He was the Baptizer, but he was also the Preacher, heralding his message out in the barren hills at first where few people were, but soon his startling message drew crowds from far and near. People had to express strong interest in the Word of God and the messenger to hear John; they had to walk for more than a day down rough roads to find him.

### **2 And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. 3 For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.**

“Repent ye”. Many have said that this is the worst translation in the New Testament, but if we pause and fully explore John’s words we will understand them. The trouble is that the English word “repent” means “to be sorry again”, as it comes from the Latin “repenitet”. John did not call on the people to be sorry, but to completely change their mental attitudes (metanoeo) and conduct. The Vulgate has it translated, “do penance”, and Wycliff has followed that. The Old Syriac has it better: “Turn ye.” The French (Geneva) has it “Amendez vous.”

This is John’s “great word” (F F Bruce) and it has been hopelessly mistranslated. The tragedy of it is that we have no one English word that reproduces exactly the meaning and atmosphere of the Greek word. The Greek has a word meaning to be sorry “metamelomai” which is exactly our English word repent, and it is used of Judas in Matthew 27:3. Judas felt sorry for what he had done but still died an unbeliever. John was asking much more of his hearers than this, and as we all, Arab, Jew, and Gentile, face the last days of our era we need real life change – not emotionalism.

John was a new prophet with the call of the old prophets: “Turn ye” (Joel 2:12; Isaiah 55:7; Ezekiel 33:11), “For the kingdom of heaven is at hand”. This was a startling comment that John thundered over the hills and it re-echoed throughout the land. The Old Testament prophets had said that the kingdom of heaven would come some day in God’s own time. John proclaims as the herald of the new day, that it has come, it has drawn near. How near he does not say, but he evidently means very near, so near that one could see the signs and the proof.

The words “the kingdom of heaven” he does not explain, because this was a phrase that the Jews of his day understood to mean the coming Kingdom of Messiah. The other Gospels use “the kingdom of God” as Matthew does a few times, but he has “the kingdom of heaven” over thirty times. He means “the reign of God,” or the Millennium as we know it, not the political or ecclesiastical organization which the Pharisees expected.

“For this is he that was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet”... This is Matthew’s way of interpreting the mission and message of the Baptist. He quotes Isa 40:3 where “the prophet refers to the return of Israel from the exile, accompanied by their God”. He applies it to the work of John as, “a voice crying in the wilderness” for the people to make ready the way of the Lord who is now near. He was only a voice, but what a voice he was. He can be heard yet across the centuries and his message will be understood by the generation of Jews who finally respond as Zechariah says they will. Zechariah 12:10-14.

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In the phrase “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, Make straight his paths”, we have two verbs both of which are in the imperative mood. Prepare is in the aorist active while make straight is in the present active imperative. The order to prepare is answered by acceptance of the means of salvation, which occurs at a point in time (aorist), while the order to “make straight” is the equivalent of staying in fellowship with the Lord, and is in the present tense showing continuous action. Jewish people are ordered to become believers in Jesus as their Messiah, and then as believers to walk closely with him in daily obedient fellowship, for only then will they survive the terrible days of the Great Tribulation period.

**4 And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.**

Matthew introduces the man himself and draws a vivid sketch of his appearance and his diet. Would such a rough figure be welcome in any churches nowadays? He dressed as a true prophet of the Old Testament and his dress was a challenge to all who saw him to recognize the need to repent, just as the people of Elijah and Elisha's day saw the need and repented. It was a warning of God's judgment if they did not repent.

In the wilderness his dress was not a matter of significance, for it was the dress of the rough herdsmen also. It was however more than a matter of necessity with him; he wore clothing that did not require funds to make; it was available freely amongst the poorest of the people. He owed nothing to men, and all to God. It was the dress of the original Elijah as shown in 2 Kings 1:8, rough sackcloth woven from the brushed off hair of camels.

**5 Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, 6 And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.**

The voice crying in the wilderness attracted a lot of attention. Many left the cities and went to see the phenomena. “And they were baptized” by John there. The word baptize is in the imperfect tense to show the repetition of the act as the crowds from Judea and the surrounding country kept going out to him as shown in the imperfect tense of (exeporeueto) There was a constant stream of people arriving, repenting, and demonstrating that by being baptized.

The word “river” is in the correct text, “river Jordan”. They came “confessing their sins” (exomologoumenoi), each one confessing before he was baptized, “making open confession” (Weymouth). It was a never to be forgotten scene here in the Jordan. John was calling a nation to a new life. They came from all over Judea and even from the other side of El Ghor (the Jordan Gorge), Perea. Mark adds that finally all (the majority of the population of) Jerusalem came.

The word confession has the basis of saying the same thing ‘Homologeo’ with the prefix “ex”. It is in the middle voice which shows that there is benefit from confession. People had to publically confess the truth of John's message before he baptized them. It was an open and dangerous act he was calling them to and this is the standard for all conversion and repentance until the end. The believers of the Great Tribulation are required to separate from all they have known and make the dangerous act of commitment to the Lord Jesus as their Messiah. They must have this active and tough faith also; a faith that moves them to walk into these same mountainous and rough areas to follow their newly recognized Lord. We need faith that says, “Amen” in shoe leather, and heads out to obey the Lord's Word.

**7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?**

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two rival parties who rarely united in common action. A subsequent example is in Matthew 16:1. A strong reaction to what was happening made them for the moment forget their differences. John saw the religious hierarchy coming for baptism. John clearly grasped the significance of this movement on the part of the Pharisees and Sadducees who had followed the crowds to the Jordan. He had welcomed the multitudes, but right in the presence of the crowds he exposes the hypocrisy of these religious unbelievers.

He is not very complimentary calling them offspring of vipers. Jesus will use the same language to the Pharisees in (Matthew 12:34; 23:33). Here John deals with what is false religion and hypocritical ritual. He makes it clear that these religious leaders, who are not regenerate, need to be born again before they can be baptised. They are doing religious things for appearance sake, but their hearts are far from the truth. This must change before John will baptize them. Ritual without reality is meaningless, deceptive and devious. The present tense of the word “come” in this verse shows that the religious leaders kept on coming for baptism, and he kept telling them to repent first.

Broods of snakes would often be seen by John in the rocks, and when a fire broke out they would scurry to their holes for safety. This was his very real picture of these people. They are dangerous and they are cowardly; they do not care for truth, only appearance and they will deceive/bite others. Their rituals have no meaning in eternity, they simply deceive people in time and they destroy the unwary. “The coming wrath” was not just for Gentiles as the Jews supposed, but for all who were not prepared for the kingdom of heaven.

No doubt the Pharisees and Sadducees winced under the sting of this powerful indictment. He is telling them that they will suffer the Lord's judgment because of their unbelief. These men hearing these words, and their children, did indeed suffer this in the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Those of the “Latter Days” will perish for the same reasons as their ancestors did; the Anti-Christ doing what the Romans did 2000 years before. Deliverance is also by the same way;

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repentance and salvation through acceptance of the genuine Messiah. Acceptance of the reality of Jesus person and work delivers godly Arab and Jew at this time. Rejection of the truth leads to further deception and death. It is action that is required, to genuinely express faith in Jesus. Fake religion will be swept away by the Anti-Christ, replaced by worship of himself – Satan and his followers, and unless the stupid religious people find real faith in Jesus they will be swept away by the very forces who have deceived them.

### **8 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:**

John demands proof from these men of the new life before he administers baptism to them. “The fruit is not the change of heart, but the acts which result from it”. It was a bold deed for John to challenge as unworthy the very ones who posed as lights and leaders of the Jewish people. The Lord will repeat this challenge and apply it to all people who claim to be believers; Matthew 7:13-23. God’s challenge to us all is to be genuine – there is nothing else that delivers.

### **9 And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.**

John now touches a sensitive spot, their pride in their ancestry. The leaders of the Jews felt that the “merits of the fathers,” especially of Abraham, were enough for all Israelites. They thought that relationship to Abraham was enough to save them, but the fact was they were coasting down hill towards hell itself. They were not living as their father Abraham had lived, and so their fate would be different, unless they truly repented and changed their lives.

John made clear that a difference existed between him and the religious leaders of the time, saying that God could make better descendants of Abraham from the stones that littered the area around Jordan than they were. The stones were a sign of the regenerating and delivering power of God. John was referring especially to the days of Joshua where the Lord had ordered a stone altar to be placed in the river Jordan and on the West Bank of Jordan as a sign forever of his deliverance and the importance of their faith and holiness.

The stones at the Jordan are seen in **Joshua 4:5-8** *“Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel, out of every tribe a man: 5 And Joshua said unto them, Pass over before the ark of the LORD your God into the midst of Jordan, and take ye up every man of you a stone upon his shoulder, according unto the number of the tribes of the children of Israel: 6 That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? 7 Then ye shall answer them, That the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the LORD; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. 8 And the children of Israel did so as Joshua commanded, and took up twelve stones out of the midst of Jordan, as the LORD spoke unto Joshua, according to the number of the tribes of the children of Israel, and carried them over with them unto the place where they lodged, and laid them down there.”*

### **10 And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**

The axe lies at (pros, before) the root of the trees. It is there ready for business and it will cut the “tree of Israel” down as a result of their rejection of the truth. Within forty years of this date the nation falls to Roman power. The prophetic present occurs also with “is hewn down” and “cast.” This shows that judgment is near and that the judgment is sure unless there is a national repentance and genuine spiritual revival. The entire Tribulation period is a judgment upon unsaved mankind, and all who do not truly repent of their evil ways and change their lives will suffer final judgment with the Anti-Christ. The axe lies before the root of all living things, ready for the Lord to take it up and cut down any who will not bow before Him.

### **11 I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance. but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:**

Note the change in tense of the two occurrences of baptizo in this verse with the present active indicative showing John was baptising at the time and the future active indicative showing the future baptisms to be performed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Here we have two types of baptism, the real and ritual baptisms with John’s water baptism being a ritual whilst the two baptisms performed by Jesus Christ being real identifications [see doctrine of Baptism]

The word “unto” is the Greek word “eis”. The meaning of eis was in a transition at the time of the Lord in the Koine Greek. The word en was used as a preposition in but it was gradually changing and becoming by rather than in. In modern Greek eis means in but in this time of transition eis meant “because of”. It is also used in Acts 2:38, “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”. Here again the word translated for is the word eis and means to be baptised because of the remission of sins, it is an outward evidence of a completed action.

John recognises that Jesus is “Mightier than I” and as the humblest of servants John felt unworthy to take off the sandals of the Coming One. “After me” is a technical idiom of a herald, a person who preceded but was far inferior in station to the king who arrived behind him. Remember the translation “Holy Ghost” is simply a reflection of one of the KJV

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translators preferences. There is no word in the Koine Greek for Ghost. The word Pneuma from which we get pneumatic and pneumonia originally meant air which is a reality but invisible; it was the word for "spirit".

**12 Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.**

Here we see the picture of the separation of believer and unbeliever specifically in relation to entering into the kingdom of God, the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus. Believers only enter the Millennial Kingdom. Remember, all unbelievers have had maximum opportunity to accept the Lord through the Tribulation period, and if they have failed to do so by the day of his Second Advent then they are eliminated from the earth as being unworthy to remain upon it.

In the ancient world much of the threshing took place in open sided shed like constructions set in a windy area with open walls orientated to the prevailing winds. The winnower would stand in the shed with his winnowing fork and throw the grain up many times into the prevailing wind. The wind would blow the chaff out of the shed while the heavier grain would fall back onto the floor. Eventually all the chaff was outside and all the wheat in the shed. The chaff eventually would be burnt as useless except as a fire starter, or for brick making.

The believers and unbelievers will be thoroughly separated at the coming of the Lord with the believers entering into the Millennium and the unbelievers cast off the earth eventually being subject to the unquenchable Lake of Fire. Revelation 20:11-15. The Lord's coming is a time of total and world wide judgment from which none escapes. All who have rejected the Lord's rulership over them are judged. All who followed after Satan and his man the Anti-Christ are removed from the earth in death.

### (d) Matthew 25:31-46 Judgment of Unbelievers on His Return

**31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**

This final section of chapter 25, deals with the fate of the Gentiles at the end of the Tribulation period. The picture here is of the Lord Jesus Christ who is called the Son of Man coming back in great glory to the earth with his Holy Angels. As far as Satan is concerned this completes his opportunity to deceive people, and he is then held in prison for the thousand year reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on the earth. Revelation 20:1-10.

The word "nations" in this passage does not refer to nations as a whole but refers to individuals in the Gentile nations. Just as the Jews have been split into believers and unbelievers in the previous section, so the Gentiles are similarly treated in this section of Matthew 25. Judgment is personal and individual, just as blessing is for the believers.

There are a number of places in the Scriptures where the word "ethnos" is used for people groups rather than nations, although it is translated as such as well, Matthew 6:31-32, 12:21, 20:19, Acts 11:18, 15:3, 26:20. Here the peoples of all the nations are separated, one from another on the basis of their decisions and actions towards the believers of Israel through this period. We retain our identity forever as separate people groups, created by God for glory, as as our true selves we rejoice with the Lord forever. Revelation 21:22-27.

And the Gentiles are separated with believers classified as the sheep going to the right hand, the hand of blessing, and the goats, the unbelievers, going to the left hand the hand of cursing. In the ancient world a King would raise his right hand for yes and his left hand for no rather than speaking all the time. In this way he would be able to give the judgment without wearing out his voice.

**34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

Jesus as King, first of all addresses the Gentile believers on his right hand. He calls them blessed and invites them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The Scriptures make it quite clear that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done but that we are saved by the mercy of God through faith. These people are not saved by doing these things, but these things are done because they are saved. It is extremely dangerous to do these things in the Tribulation as the authorities are constantly attempting to kill believers as Enemies of the State, and so all who support, encourage, feed and hide believers are killed also.

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These people referred to as “my brethren” appears to relate to the 144,000 Jews of Revelation 7:1-8, the subject of the previous section. The attitude towards those who led them to the Lord is what the Lord is referring to here. Their response under the pressure of the Tribulation is fantastic, for they have protected the witnesses, fed them, and given them drink, when any such actions may have cost them their lives.

Their faith has truly worked out in godly actions. **James 2:14-26**. The martyrs amongst them are shown in **Revelation 7:16-17** where they have been under great pressure *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”*

**41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

The goats are unbelievers. He calls them cursed, for they have rejected the truth about Jesus and have therefore refused to assist God's people through the dangers of the Tribulation period. They are cursed by their own evil decision making. The verb is in the perfect tense meaning that they were cursed in the past through their decisions, with the result that they will be cursed forever. They are destined for the Lake of Fire which was created for Satan, his angels, and all who preferred to follow them rather than serve the living God. These people, being unbelievers, were not able to do things of eternal worth and this was demonstrated by their negative attitude towards believers and specifically the 144,000 Jewish believers during this time. They face the consequences of their persistent evil eternally.

We see from this passage that the Gentiles are also spiritually active in the Tribulation. In Revelation chapter seven we have the 144,000 Jewish witnesses in verses 1-8 with the following verses focusing in on their Gentile converts. Faith must work out in action through this last terrible period of World History; those that express faith in words will do so in actions, and these actions are eternally rewarded. As unbelievers we were cursed in the past and remain cursed unless we are born again from above.

**John 3:18** “**He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**” In order to live with God forever you need a relationship with God through the Lord Jesus Christ, and a relationship which is real does not rest upon words alone. Believers through these last years of man's history before the Lord's coming will need reality in their faith. Hypocrisy has always been condemned by the Lord, but in these last days it will be judged fully and finally.

### Notes



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## **SECTION 9** The Specific Named Arab Nations To Be Blessed When They Assist The Jewish Refugees Of The Great Tribulation Period

### (a) Saudi Arabia

#### Isaiah 11:10-16 There is Hope for the Arab nations in the End Days

**10 And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. 11 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea.**

Just in case we missed it, the Messiah is identified again as the "root of Jesse"; he is Jewish, of the line of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah. Revelation 5:5, 22:16. He will stand as a flag, or ensign for the people of the world to be drawn to. He will not only be the hope of Israel, but he will be the hope and Saviour of all the Arabs and Gentiles who seek righteousness. Deuteronomy 32:43, Matthew 8:11-12, Luke 2:32. Even before the Age of the Gentiles begins their blessing is prophesied. Refer to BTB - DISPENSATIONS. He will make his resting place in the glory of his kingdom that is established on his character and in accordance with his plan. There is glory in the rest of God. We are all called to rest in the Lord's Plan, and to be at rest in his provisions, and live in accordance with his Grace. Hebrews 4:1-5, 9-11.

There will be a full and final re-gathering of Israel. This is prophesied well before their first re-gathering from Assyria and Babylonia under Zerubbabel and later Ezra and Nehemiah, which was only partial. There were tens of thousands of Jews in Iraq until very recent times. The last re-gathering some think may be under way in our very day, but it is neither full nor final, nor directed by the King ruling in Jerusalem! This present regathering cannot be the last, for the re-gathering here is spoken of by the prophet as the act of the ruling king and the Lord is certainly not ruling in our day! It is intriguing that the second and final re-gathering of the nation is prophesied well before the first captivity (586 BC), the first re-gathering (535 and 450 BC), and the subsequent second exile of the Jewish people (70AD). This second re-gathering is so important that it is foretold well before all the other events occur; the reason is not far to see, for the Lord's second re-gathering of his people occurs just before he sets up his kingdom fully; indeed it is his first act as king. This is the pinnacle of world history; the restoration of all things to be as they ought to be. Zechariah 10:10-12.

Notice from where the people are drawn. They are coming from places that the first dispersion under Assyria and Babylon did not scatter them, but the third and final dispersion after 70 AD, under Rome and her descendants, did scatter them this far. In the ages since we have seen Jews scattered to the far "island of the sea", even to places at the "ends of the earth" like New Zealand and Australia, and the islands of the South Pacific. It is only in most recent years that the Jewish people have reached the "islands of the seas" in their final dispersion. It is from these places that the Lord will recall them after his Second Advent. A number of these places are within the Arab world, and within the present borders of Saudi Arabia. It is clear that the people of Arabia have been hiding and protecting the Jews during the Great Tribulation period as they return in freedom and prosperity from the Arabian Peninsula.

**12 And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. 13 The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.**

The Lord will regather Israel from everywhere and will set up his flag to draw them to him. The people who are outcasts from the nation will be drawn to him and will find their identity in him, their Saviour and Lord. The two warring factions of the nation Israel, north and south; the entire twelve tribes are back together without war and hatred. The unity of Israel will be restored in that day. The regathering begins with repentance and mourning for what has occurred before. Zechariah 12:10-14, 13:4-6, 14:1-4. Enmity amongst brethren is a sign of Satan's work, never God's, for God will bring brethren together in love and respect, never force them apart in hatred. 1 John 3:1-6, 11-15, 18-23.

**14 But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. 15 And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. 16 And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.**

The changes that occur within the national relationships are extreme; for nations that have hated and persecuted the Israelites will assist them, or be spoiled by them. Those who sought their death will seek to aid them in that day. The Philistines (people of the Gaza Strip area) will carry them on their shoulders to ensure they are safe. The Edomites and Moabites will assist them, and the Ammonites and Egyptians will work with them. The old Arab enemies will all be their friends and supporters in that day. The nations of Jordan and Saudi Arabia are involved in this.

There will also be a total change to the geography of the lands and rivers around, so that the people will be able to return to the land of Israel over dry land without being blocked by rivers or seas. There will be a highway through Assyria

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(Northern Iraq) to bring the people back to Israel from the nations further north (the Russian and old Soviet Republics). The nations of the old Soviet Empire still have many Jews within them and they will need to return one day. Those who do not return to the land in unbelief in our days will return under the Lord's guidance and power in that day in belief and glory. It will be a time of deliverance like that of the days of Moses in the Exodus. This is the first of a number of millennial prophecies in Isaiah and Ezekiel that Daniel, Zechariah and later John complete. There is hope in the end, and the Lord will be victor over all who stand against him.

### **Jeremiah 51:63-64      There is Judgment for "New/Mystery Babylon" in the last days**

**63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates: 64 And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.**

Once the prophet has read the book aloud, he is to cast the book, weighted down with a large rock into the Euphrates River that runs through the city of Babylon. To throw a book away was an unusual thing in the ancient world, as books were the work of scribes and of considerable value. Such a gesture would get considerable attention. Once the book sinks from sight he is then to say the final words to the Babylonians and Jews who have gathered to watch the performance. Such words would certainly get back to Nebuchadnezzar or Daniel.

I suspect a copy of the book was made before this original was cast into the river, as Daniel had one to work from. Jeremiah and Baruch have had to work hard to make a copy before throwing this book away. Jeremiah sends several books to Babylon over the years, and then finally Baruch carries the last copy there of the entire collection after Jeremiah dies. These words came true for the ancient city of Babylon, for it decayed and fell into ruins over the centuries, and by around 500 AD it was no more.

Jeremiah's words are more applicable however to what Babylon stood for, as the satanic ideals of the Babylonian Economic-Religious system has never gone away, just migrated to other places in the world. This "Babylon Ideal" is also to be judged fully and finally in the end. The present rulers of Saudi Arabia are showing signs of rejection even now of the present satanic world order that joins political power to economic power and abuses the weak to enrich a few. The entire Arabian world totally separates itself from the satanic rulership of the Great Tribulation period, and will side with the Jewish refugees supporting them, fighting the Western Anti-Christ figure alongside them, in the last days.

They have by then fully rejected the New-Babylon-Rome power complex seeing in the economic policy of the Anti-Christ control that insults the Arab sons of Abraham, and seeing in the idolatry of the religious aspect of the New Babylon-Rome the evils of satanic religion. Both have been rejected by the Arab believers of those days and they then embrace a different expectation of the return of Jesus (Isa) than they presently have. Presently Moslem and Jewish students of history see things in their own theological framework, but events of that day allow them to shift to the biblical model, and realise that while their books were not necessarily wrong, they have been taught by their teachers things that were anti-Christian, and in fact incorrect because of that negativity.

### **Revelation 18:1ff      Commercial-Religious Babylon is judged**

Here, it is God who destroys the commercial centre of the world; the new Babylon-Rome. Babylon, in this chapter is revealed as both a city and a satanic system. The religious aspect of that system was described in the preceding chapter; this chapter concerns mainly the commercial facets of Babylon. Along with increasing spiritual apostasy, it is inevitable that there also be increasing materialism as man moves towards the end of history. Whenever men forsake the spiritual, they become preoccupied with the physical. Thus the two systems, religious and economic, depend on each other and Satan welds them together into the alternative to true righteous living.

The destruction of Babylon/Rome is so critical to the world economy that when it is destroyed in an hour the whole world will be plunged into chaos and mourning. This is only the prelude to the great earthquake that levels all cities and systems. It is said that New Rome/Babylon would be destroyed by the Lord God Almighty when the "day of the Lord" is near. The fall of commercialism and fake religion is a warning that the Coming of the Lord is very near indeed. Isaiah 13:6, 7. The modern inheritor of the Roman Empire, the new Babylonian Empire, is the European-American power bloc, and if all continues as it is today (2013) the Anti-Christ's Empire involves Europe and America, with its capital/centre either on the eastern Seaboard of the present USA, or in Europe.

Old Babylon may also be fully rebuilt in the last days, and this is possibly indicated by the prophecy that a temple will be built in the land of Shinar. In order for this to happen it would be reasonable to assume that a city would have to be rebuilt as a site for a temple. Zechariah 5:5-11. We know that Iraq had been rebuilding Babylon. Back as far as 1971 Iraq was stated to be considering a plan to reconstruct parts of the city of Babylon including a 90 metre tower, and a great deal of work was done by Saddam Hussein, but all that was stopped by the invasion and capture of Iraq by the Americans. Does their capture of the old Babylon actually indicate their inheritance of the "Babylonian Mantle"?

While the rebuilt city of ancient Babylon in Iraq may house a temple which will allow for occultic practices to be held there, it is considered that the tribulational commercial and even religious "Babylon" is more likely to be either modern Rome, or a New Rome-Babylon in the new world. In this regard it is of note that the European Common Market was

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started with the Treaty of Rome in 1963. In the world we see today however, the new Mega-Babylon is more likely to be the Eastern seaboard of the USA (centred in the Mega-cities of Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, New York) than anywhere else, as it is the centre of world political power, pornography and false religion, trade and commercialism, and centralized and dodgy finance for the fallen world. It is these four elements that make up the identity of the fallen "Mystery Babylon". Once again, we must wait and see, for at this point the enemy has not played his hand fully.

## **Revelation 18:1ff          Announcement of Doom**

**Revelation 18:1 And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.**

The phrase "after these things" notes a new commencement and introduces a new set of circumstances. In this chapter the Beast is not named once, nor the ten kings, for their judgment now begins with the actions of the elect angels under God's direction. The day of the Beast is drawing to a close and whatever he does now is irrelevant, for God is moving to deal fully and finally with him. As the day of truth comes the deception is proved powerless. John sees an angel having delegated authority from God and reflecting the glory of Christ. The angel's body is made of light and he is a very powerful angel. The angel foretells the doom of this entire wicked system and the demonic powers behind it.

**18:2 And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.**

Twice the angel cries, "fallen, fallen." The repetition fulfils the double portion of judgment, Revelation 18:6, as well as the reference to the two systems: religious and economic. This cry was anticipated in Revelation 14:8. The fact that Babylon becomes the habitation of demons and a place of perpetual burning, Revelation 19:3, suggests to some commentators that this may even be the entrance to what becomes the Lake of Fire. cf. Isaiah 66:22-24. It also makes clear that this judgment is yet future as I write in 2010, 2013, and 2021, for both the ancient city and the modern satanic complex of evil that can be referred to as "New Babylon" still stand, and the dominant power of the West remains unchallenged.

The word translated fallen is in the aorist tense which means that it happens at a point in time, suddenly. At the peak of power or glamour it collapses and becomes the habitation of demons. "Hold" is a garrison of demons whilst "every unclean and hateful bird" recalls Isaiah 12:21, Jeremiah 50:39. Here demons are called "foul/hateful birds".

The angel reveals that Anti-Christ's Tribulation "Babylon" is demonic which is emphasised in three phrases

- [a] It is the habitation of demons.
- [b] It is the hold or prison of every foul, evil spirit (cf. Ephesians 2:2; I John 4:6, where demons are called spirits).
- [c] It is the cage or prison, same word of every unclean and hateful bird. Matthew 13:31-32

**18:3 For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.**

"Fornication" deals with evil forms of religion gaining converts. The religious system appeals to their emotion and the lust pattern of evil mankind. Kings of the earth, the rulers, commit fornication with the satanic system. They embrace it as their own. "Emporos" is where we get the name emporium for a store selling trade goods from afar. Delicacies, "strenos", means wantonness or arrogant luxury, and reminds one of the attitude of the medieval church which bled the peasants dry to build the great cathedrals where bishops could live like kings. It is also exactly what we see after the world financial collapse in 2007 – 2012 where the powerful bankers continue to take millions in "bonuses" while their fellow Americans starved and lost their homes, and yet few raised their voices against the evil of it all. The "fruit" was satanic.

Mystery/New Babylon's connection with the rest of the world is to three areas: the nations who worship her (religious), the kings of the earth (political), and the merchants (economic) who provide them with luxuries while the poor starve. Babylon is legally charged by God with being unfaithful; this charge of fornication, or unfaithfulness to the Lord, is repeated in this chapter as in 17:2, Babylon is also described as intoxicating. That is, she feeds the addiction for luxury and sin of others. All nations drink of the wine of her unfaithfulness, and merchants particularly have succumbed to her delicacies (literally, luxury or careless ease) and become satisfied with their ill-gained riches. While many hold out against the satanic system, especially amongst the Arab nations, far more embrace her evils and celebrate them.

Just as the religious system had grown in the Great Tribulation period in proportion as it had been wicked (Revelation 17:4-6), so the commercial world will prosper as it too abandons God in an effort to accumulate the wealth of the world in these evil days. Corruption in both religious and financial sectors is great leading up to this end time and during it. We must guard ourselves from "entanglement" with any aspect of this world of corruption. 2 Timothy 2:1-10. It is the active separation of the believers through this time that delivers them. Only those who reject the Anti-Christ's system will be saved in the end.

**18:4 And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.**

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Before the judgment falls, God will call out his people in separation from the evil around them. Jeremiah 51:6-10 suggests that some of the Tribulation evangelists may attempt to turn the tide of apostasy in New Babylon, but to no avail. It doesn't matter that they fail, for in trying, they deliver the message, and that is what they must do, to warn the people. At times evangelism is not only for converts, but to ensure that the wicked have no excuse before the throne of God for their rejection of the truth. All the Arab believers in the one true God will stand shoulder to shoulder with the Israeli believers in that day, and they will all oppose the Anti-Christ's evil. They are all God's witnesses to truth in the midst of liars and murderers.

In these days they must leave this evil system to God's judgment and separate from it, and fight against it if they are able to. Separation is always from the world (Satan's cosmic system) unto God. Therefore, it is positive, and not a negative thing with negative results. "By their fruits you shall know them". Matthew 7:13-23. The fruit of God's work and God's Word in the life is always a positive engaging with other believers and a protective attitude to all who love truth and wait for God's intervention. If people have a negative attitude permeating their life they have not met and known Jesus. We separate from evil to enable the fruit of the Holy Spirit to be purely and completely seen by all without the cloud of evil around about.

In pronouncing judgment on Mystery Babylon, Jeremiah warned his people that were not supposed to be "at home" in the evil city, and he urges them to flee from the wicked city because God would destroy it. Jeremiah 51:6, 45 of Zechariah 2:7. Many of God's people had not returned from Babylonian Exile, but had stayed behind in Babylon for the money that could be made there. Jeremiah urges the people of the 480s as well as the Great Tribulation generation (both yet to come when he writes), to flee the evil city and return to God's path for them as fast as they can before judgment falls upon the wicked place.

All Great Tribulation believers world wide are given the command here, to flee the satanic system before its grip upon people tightens and there is no escape from within the police state controlled cities. Many cities today are so saturated with CCTV cameras that everyone can be watched, and with EFTPOS terminals attached to central computers the smallest purchase will identify every person instantly, making it impossible for those in the cities controlled by the Anti-Christ to remain outside his net without martyrdom. In today's world, if the "system" wants you tracked, and puts resources into tracking you, they can find you in a few minutes after you have used your eftpos/credit card. It is only the lack of co-ordination between CCTV cameras and bank-central computers that limits this, and already that coordination is being achieved in cities like London to "fight crime". All surveillance networks are being expanded with AI technology.

Even the presence of the righteous will not stay the judgment [cf Genesis 17:19] of God on the world in that final day before the Lord's return. Here there is a call to "my people", the believers, to flee from New/Mystery Babylon prior to the destruction of the evil state system, just as the smart ones had fled from old Babylon before the rebellions against the Persians in the 480s and 490s there that led to the deaths of thousands. While the order is specific to believers of the Great Tribulation period, it carries a general principle that we all need to heed. We must separate ourselves from all organizations, groups and places that are evil saturated. Obedient to the Lord's words in Matthew 7:13-23, we must identify and avoid evil. We must live and stand together with born again believers for there alone is safety.

In this last time all believers need to flee from the cities that are controlled by the Anti-Christ and get to the mountains and wild places where they can hide until the Lord returns. They must walk away from the wealth that can be made and seek the safety of the wild places of their land, for there alone can they hide and be safe. It is the readiness of the Arab believers to leave the newly built and luxurious cities of their lands, return to their nomadic ways in the desert, and there hide the other believers, Jewish and Gentile, that saves them all. Today all Arabs need to ensure that they remain able to return to the desert places of their lands quickly and sustain themselves there or fight from their cities, for Anti-Christ's hatred will be great towards them as sons of Abraham.

**18:12 The merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyne wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble, 18:13 And cinnamon, and odours, and ointments, and frankincense, and wine, and oil, and fine flour, and wheat, and beasts, and sheep, and horses, and chariots, and slaves, and souls of men.**

This focuses on the luxury trade that is at the heart of Satan's "Neo-Babylonian" system. None of these things can be eaten, and finally the people who have all the wealth are left starving to death surrounded by wealth they cannot use in their destroyed cities. They are judged by their own value system. There is a wide ranging trade in luxuries in the ancient world mentioned here, all with their modern equivalents:

[a] Gold Ivory and Thyine wood imported from North Africa for the production of valuable furniture

[b] Precious stones and pearls from India

[c] Purple dye from Phoenicia

[d] Silk and Cinnamon from China

[e] The other spices from Arabia.

[f] Slaves from subjugated people but in more recent times from breeding slaves/indentured workers.

[h] Human lives were those reserved for gladiatorial contests for the amusement of the populace and included Christians as well as slaves. "Ktenos" beast of burden rather than "therion", a wild beast or "zoon" a living creature which is also translated beast. "Probaton" translated sheep is used only here in the Book of the Revelation which

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has majored on "Arnon" or lamb. "Rheda" is a travelling (commercial) wagon rather than "Harma" which appears in Revelation 9:9 this being a war chariot with two wheels.

Two features regarding this list should be noted; first, most of the items are luxury items, and second, apparently these merchants will be trafficking in people as well as things. Slavery and indentured service by forced labourers, makes its return in the last days. We have this occurring in our world today, with slavery back in the sex trade, and indentured labourers being used in large numbers in the "sweat shop" factories of the American economy, Asia, the Middle East, and within Europe. Human trafficking is an evil from Satan's kingdom. Every item mentioned above now has its modern equivalent, and they are all associated with corrupt business and evil people who care for their own luxuries but not the well being of other people. Satanic narcissism is what is being judged by God, and all who join into this system receive a righteous judgment.

Our society is rapidly becoming more conscious of "resources" and even animals, than they are of human beings made in the image of God. James 3:9. Our value systems are starting to skew in the direction that we see here. It is an interesting twist of modern humanism, that it degrades and devalues the individuals worth, speaking only of "masses" of people, but speaking of "animal rights". There will always be slavery in the world until the Millennium. It is not legislation but regeneration that frees people. At the heart of Satan's evil systems from the beginning has been the satanic self centeredness that characterizes his rebellion against God. It is selfishness and callous disregard for others that characterizes all satanic systems. The abuse of others as "things" is his most visible fruit!

**18:14 And the fruits that thy soul lusted after are departed from thee, and all things which were dainty and goodly are departed from thee, and thou shalt find them no more at all. 18:15 The merchants of these things, which were made rich by her, shall stand afar off for the fear of her torment, weeping and wailing, 18:16 And saying, Alas, alas that great city, that was clothed in fine linen, and purple, and scarlet, and decked with gold, and precious stones, and pearls! 18:17 a For in one hour so great riches is come to nought.**

Here the international business system of the New Babylon goes down into total economic collapse. "Opora" meaning "full fruit" is normally associated with the full fruit bearing season of the northern autumn. This word is used uniquely here in Scripture emphasizing the uniqueness of the economic collapse of the satanic system. The normal word translated fruit is "Karpos". This picture of merchants mourning over a great commercial centre is taken from the description of the collapse of the great trading empire of Tyre in Isaiah 23:1-8, and Ezekiel 27.

Like the kings of the earth the merchants of the earth will stand afar off to watch the ascending smoke of New Babylon. Here Babylon is seen as a woman who was richly attired with all the trappings of wealth, of rulership and wanting for nothing and yet so vulnerable to destruction she didn't see coming, or pretended would never come.

The people have lusted in their soul and the production, or fully ripe fruit of their labours, has disappeared all of a sudden, and forever. This evil economic-industrial system is to be swept away. We must remember these verses as we try to bring biblical rationale to our own national economies today. We must see that there is no redemption for our world systems, only God's destruction. God will replace all we have built. Let us not be attached to any of it! **2 Peter 3:10-18.** It is only those who value spiritual things that are to be delivered in this time.

Those who are attached to the New Babylon see all they value disappear with her. The battle in these days is for what we call "traditional values", and by that we mean biblical values. It is the challenge to return to desert ways for the Arab people that will determine their fate as it will determine the fate of all people in those last dark days of mankind before the Second Advent. Only those who walk away from the city life of satanic compromise will survive those terrible days.

As they have been concentrating on this lust for power and riches it is a huge shock when it disappears. Again the merchants are seen weeping because a system is destroyed which made them rich and they didn't see that it was all an illusion, and that God's judgment is the only reality. It is intriguing to reflect that in a time when men's minds and souls cannot be pierced by the love of God or the fear of eternal judgment, men can still weep over the loss of their fortunes. It is why they are being judged. In life you can have the decking of wealth one day and be destitute the next because of change of circumstances. Material wealth is nothing; spiritual wealth is everything. Those who understand this truth take action, flee the evils of the Anti-Christ's system and live in the wild places, but those who value material things perish.

**18:17 b And every shipmaster, and all the company in ships, and sailors, and as many as trade by sea, stood afar off, 18:18 And cried when they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, What city is like unto this great city! 18:19 And they cast dust on their heads, and cried, weeping and wailing, saying, Alas, alas that great city, wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea by reason of her costliness! for in one hour is she made desolate.**

Here the transportation business world wide goes down into total collapse. The industrial-economic complex requires the financial computing systems and banking promises to ensure every one is paid and costs are covered. When the New Babylon collapses there is no economic security of transfer of funds, and so the world is at a stroke returned to a Stone-Iron Age economy. The Anti-Christ has built his entire system of economic and political control into a computer based system that depends upon the chip or tattoo upon the forehead or top of the hand of those who are part of the EFTPOS system he controls. All of this world wide web of economic control collapses in a moment and so no-one will be paid for

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any transactions they have done in previous days. Revelation 13:11-18. This is collapse of every aspect of the evil economy and only the barter system of the hidden believers still operates. It is in this that we see the clues for believers of this time to keep themselves safe; by gardening and storage of non-perishable foods.

Shipmasters - Here the transportation industry weeps -and for the same reasons. They are described as those - "who make their living by the sea." World trade is over for a time, and only will begin again when the Lord changes things himself. Yet the event that brings their grief is just a few brief moments in time before they will stand themselves before the judgment of God, and they can only think of "making a living" and not eternal life in Christ. These people weep for the temporal, and fail to see the eternal.

The kings in verse 10 in their lament say, "In one hour is thy judgment come", whereas the merchants in this verse 17 say, "In one hour so great riches is come to nought". Notice that their grief is totally self centred. By their own words they are condemned as self centred satanic servants. All those connected with commerce on the seas also lament over the destruction of New Babylon. The imperfect tense of Krazo shows that they kept on crying out. The merchants had good reason to mourn as they were now out of business with some accounts undoubtedly unpaid and therefore they will in a short time be bankrupt, but so will the entire trading world. This is economic collapse on a world scale, but that is only the beginning of God's judgment upon them, and His last appeal to them.

Their lament likewise is not for the city and its dead people, but for their wealth that had been derived from shipping goods to and from that great place, or using its banking advantages. All of this is now come to an end. The sight of the twin towers of the trade centre collapsing in an hour on 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 on the waterfront in New York was a graphic illustration and foretaste of this terrible scene, and the financial collapse 2007-2012, that was barely propped up by the US and EU governments, was a real indication of how fragile the world financial system truly is. What we read of here is the financial collapse of the entire centralized banking system of the world. The recent financial collapse has allowed even more of the world economic system to be corruptly centralized into the control of fewer people and institutions; we are in the place now where one person could be given enough power to control it all. That is the picture John gives us here. Advances in AI technology mean that fewer people control far more than ever before.

John stresses the fact that, the unbelieving merchants "became rich by her wealth." This chapter, along with James 5, is the greatest condemnation in Scripture of a materialistic and spiritually blind world. Christ warned against coveting the wealth of this world. Matthew 6:19-21. The majority of people of his own day, and this future day, rejected spiritual realities and devoted all their energy to materialism alone and for this they are judged; they reap exactly what they sowed and are without excuse before God.

Many people, when faced with a tragedy, or a massive change in life, fail to cope with the situation and become introspective or hysterical. These wealthy and wicked people are totally self absorbed in the whole catastrophe. The human cost to others is irrelevant to them; they only see their own pain and distress. In the believer's life problems are opportunities to re focus on the Lord, and get our eyes off self. The fruit of pressure for the genuine believer is prayer to the Lord; the fruit of pressure to the pagan or make-believer is cursing and blasphemy. By their satanic fruit you know them. Matthew 7:13-23, John 8:37-44.

For the believers of today and the final days of the Great Tribulation period the Lord will provide all our needs through the riches of grace in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 1:7, 2:7, 3:8-16, Philipians 4:19, Colossians 1:27. The believer is able to help people in tragic circumstances by pointing to the only solution to man's problems; and that is through relationship with the Lord by means of regeneration. There is grace in the midst of this last great judgment upon the system controlled by Anti-Christ because it rips away all the false trust of unbelievers in their wealth and for a last time for many of them gives them the opportunity to bow their knees before the Lord God. Arab believers take a leadership role in this time in pointing out the truth, and by their words and deeds in hiding the fleeing believing Israelis.

### **18:20 Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her.**

Here is the command to rejoice because this is divine judgement, and the believer can rejoice in all the Lord does. With violence at its heart there will be destruction of the new Babylon/Rome, and rejoicing over her destruction in heaven straight away. The reaction of the saints and angels in heaven is exactly the opposite to the wicked people of the earth. This shows the vast chasm separating divine viewpoint from unbelieving human viewpoint (cf. Isaiah 55:6-13).

We should note that the severity of God's judgment was pronounced on behalf of the saints, apostles, and prophets; all of whom had suffered persecution from this satanic organization and all that have preceded it. They both warned of the evils of worldliness and suffered persecution and martyrdom because of it.

When ancient Rome was sacked in the 400s by the barbarians after their acceptance of Christendom, Augustine from North Africa explained that the judgment was due to Rome's past sins, and a church too weak to avert judgment in its own time. He was only half right. Rome was sacked because of its state in spiritual apostasy, and the new/mystery Rome/Babylon will be destroyed for the same reasons. Rome in Augustine's day, even after its sacking, looked like the great imperial city still, but it was coasting down hill on its great past; there was no present spiritual or moral strength. The Anti-Christ's world will look prosperous and strong, but it is fatally flawed because it is built upon satanic narcissism.

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Their religion will have the trappings of the old forms of liberal Christendom, but will lack all spiritual power and moral force.

The message of the apostle to all believers is, "God has judged your case against the evil city". New Rome/Babylon had slain the saints, Revelation 17:6; so now God slays New Rome-Babylon. Here is the final answer to the plea of the martyrs in Revelation 6:9-11. The second half of Revelation 18:20 means that God has convicted Babylon/Rome by applying to that city the judgment of its own law courts against the earlier Christians. Exactly as they had judged, so they will be judged!

There is rejoicing by the prophets, apostles, and saints, because the destruction of New Babylon marks the near return of the Lord Jesus. The days are now very short to the Lord's actual return. The world weeps, for material things are the only things worldly people have. When these have been destroyed, all is lost. The believers of the last days ought to have the same attitude toward New Babylon as the saints in heaven have. They should have already come out from that system and not have been partakers of its evils and corruption for some time by the final day of its judgment. When they are fully separated in their hearts and bodies they will not feel the pain of the system's destruction.

**18:21 And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all.**

The millstone represents the crushing of things. The desolation will be complete and there will be tremendous shock around the world when they see that this powerful force in the world is no more. Babylon is pictured as a well used and worn out millstone being cast into the depths of the sea. Read also Matthew 18:6, Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2. The millstone of apostate religion and commercialism will be destroyed by Jesus, the "Stone cut without hands" (Daniel 2:45). In Jeremiah 51:63-64, the prophet is commanded to hurl a stone into the Euphrates and to declare that Babylon would sink never to rise again. That day has come for the evils of satanic commercialism and materialism in this day towards the end of the Great Tribulation period.

### **Isaiah 60:1-10**

As chapter fifty nine explained the Lord's coming as the final answer to the problems that the Jewish people have in the last days of the Great Tribulation period, so the chapter before us now explains the actions of the Lord on his arrival as the deliverer. There is a great deal to encourage worship then and now for all the people who love the Lord's appearing. These are actual instructions for all believers in the Arab lands where the Jews are hiding in those last days before the Lord returns.

**1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.**

This is the call of the guards of the believing armies of the Lord in and around the Middle East as they see the evidence that the Lord is coming back to the earth any day. As we have identified before, there is much to be done to ready the city of Jerusalem for the Lord's arrival and for the first sacrifices to be offered. From the chapters of Isaiah so far, it appears that the Lord's coming may first appear in the dawn hours of one day with the great judgment and elimination of the armies of the enemy, and possibly his coming will follow that dawn around the whole world just over twenty four hours, when he finally enters Jerusalem on the following morning.

This would mean that the defenders in the city have a day and a night of frantic preparation to clear away the bodies of the enemy, clear roads, road sides, and rubble so that the path to the Temple can be trodden by the Lord from the Mount of Olives exactly as he did 2000 years before, and enter this time through the ruins of the Golden Gate into the Temple to offer the morning sacrifice at 9am. It may be that the evening sacrifice is attended by the Lord, although the dawning of a new age would indicate that the morning may be the one. For the defenders there will be some guidance for their clean up time table as they will know how fast he is approaching from news reports of his progress and the judgment of the whole world before reaching the city of Jerusalem.

Remember, the great earthquake described in Zechariah 14:4, and Revelation 16:17-21 also occurs in this time frame to enable the defenders of Jerusalem to escape and prepare to meet the Lord. Does he touch the Mt of Olives and create the earthquake suddenly, and then continue his progress around the world over the next twenty four hours, arriving back at Jerusalem in time for the evening sacrifice? We cannot know at this point, but at the time it will be clear. "Need to know" principle applies. As we have seen above, when the Mount of Olives divides the surviving defenders of Jerusalem are to flee to the east, and then the Lord judges all the besieging armies. It appears that He then judges the entire earth, returning to Jerusalem for the morning sacrifice the next day.

It is a morning that is most likely envisaged in this verse. The people are called to arise from sleep and shine out the glory of the Lord. Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 5:8, 14, Philippians 2:15-16, Revelation 19:16ff. There is the sound of battle over the whole world as those who oppose the Lord gather to fight his heavenly progress and are defeated systematically and thoroughly until his final touch down at Jerusalem. As noted above, it may be he starts and ends in Jerusalem; that would make sense, but it is only guess work. Remember Daniel 12:9! There does appear to be time for the defenders of the city to re-enter it and cleanse the site for his coming back in triumph, but the details will be revealed on that day and not before.

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From this chapter's details it appears that believers are ready world wide to seize the news media and airline transportation for the Lord's return, which is expected, and that when he begins his progress towards the earth, that believers move quickly world wide to seize control of media and the airlines to ensure that Jews are returned to Israel for the coming of the Lord there, and that the defenders in Jerusalem are awakened with his first moves to assist them escape through the Mt of Olives, and then subsequently informed of events from the other side of the world so that they are able to prepare for the Lord's arrival back there to worship on the holy mountain – which is now cleared of all buildings by the great earthquake. Revelation 16:17-21. Do not worry where the Tribulation Temple is to be built, for it can be built to the north of the mosques, but on this last day, all the buildings of Jerusalem are flattened and the Millennial Temple will cover the entire site of the totally "earthquake remodelled" hill! When the defenders return to the city it is rubble covered – there are no buildings at all standing! The Lord provides his own perfect altar and temple.

**2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.**

There are two forms of darkness over the earth in these last terrifying days; the physical darkness that blocks the sun, and protects the believers, and also the spiritual darkness that is the wilful darkness that blinds men to the truth about the Lord. Amos 8:9, Malachi 4:1, Matthew 24:22, Revelation 8:12, 16:8-11, then Matthew 23:24, Romans 1:21-23, Ephesians 4:17-19.

The people are deliberately spiritually blind, but towards the end of the Great Tribulation period the sun is darkened and their terror increases with this. The believers are told to shine their gospel light, as this day is the last one for the unbelievers still alive at this time and it may be that some repent even at this late stage. The very physical darkness protects the believers from the attacks of the now terrified unbelievers. The offer of salvation still appears to be there, although the persistence of these unbelieving people is strong in their chosen evil. God's appeal goes out to the end, so that none can stand before Him and say they had no chance.

**3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.**

There are people saved by the gospel light shining out even in the worst of times. It is not clear to some commentators here whether this verse applies to the Lord, who draws all the saved Gentile nations to him after his return, or to the saved Jews who draw the Gentiles from around about to worship the Lord as he comes. There is witness here either way and people are saved, and subsequent verses indicate that it likely refers to the witness of the defenders of the city of Jerusalem, and possibly also those who are hiding in the hills and deserts of the surrounding Arab nations. Genesis 49:10, Psalms 22:27, 67:1-4, 72:17-20, 98:1-4, 117:1-2, Romans 11:11-15.

**4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.**

The people are told to look up and see the people arriving, possibly by plane, from other places to assist them in the clean up, and possibly also to be there for the Lord's arrival. This would indicate that there is enough time from the Lord's first appearance to his final touch down for people in various places, in Arabia and Europe at least, to catch flights to Israel in order to be there for the Lord's arrival, for his final destination is known from the scripture. Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:6-12. This is amazing given the great earthquakes world wide and the collapse of the cities of man, and yet the surviving believers are able to get the surviving aircraft flying from repaired runways to deliver the people to Israel.

Jewish people arrive from all over to be there for the glorious day and the forces of the Anti-Christ, who have been persecuting them until this time, are not able to stop them get there. The Lord's judgment upon the people and armies of the Anti-Christ must therefore be instant, so that the opportunity presents itself immediately for people to fly into the land the very day of the Lord's arrival, and none can hinder them. Believers knowing the Word are ready to spring into action.

This tells us that Jewish and Gentile believers survive everywhere, and at all levels of society for the flights to be able to take off from other countries and arrive in Israel in time for the Lord's arrival. It tells us that many in the airline industry are believers and they spring into action immediately they see the Lord's return is imminent. These people carried in this first of many air lifts may be the 144,000 witnesses spoken of in Revelation 7:1-12. Isaiah 49:18-26, 66:10ff.

**5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.**

Once the Lord is on the way, all the saved peoples of the earth start their preparation to head towards the city of Jerusalem. They come bringing gifts for the Jewish fighters there to restore their souls, and to honour them. They come also to worship the Lord with gift offerings to the Temple so it can be rebuilt in splendour after the ravages of the Great Tribulation period and the great earthquakes that have totally changed the topography of all lands. Isaiah describes it as like a sea of people flowing towards the city from all corners of the world with gifts in their hands.

Once again there is the evidence that the Lord has sealed many through this terrible period and even though possibly as many as 90% of the world's population perish in unbelief in this time, there is still what seems a multitude flowing towards



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the city to bless the Lord in his city and worship Him in his restored temple. The hearts of the Jewish defenders of Jerusalem will swell with pride and joy; they will be awe struck at the numbers who are coming and the great wealth that is being brought to honour the city, it's people and the Lord. Even though the Lord probably builds, or delivers the temple these gifts make sure that it is filled with magnificence. Psalms 96:7-10, 98:4-9.

**6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.**

The slower arrivals are mentioned here, and these arrive much later than the first day. The camel is still the best "vehicle" to travel the desert ways across Arabia and many arrive, with their Arabian believer protectors and supporters, bringing great gifts for the new Temple. This is another indication that the gospel makes significant inroads into presently Islamic areas before and through this period of the Great Tribulation. Many are saved in these places. Once again the work we are doing now may play it's part in this, for Arabic speaking believers can discover the teaching of the Word through the EBCWA CDs and web site all through areas closed to open teaching of the Word now. The seed of the words of "The Book" bears fruit throughout this period.

**7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.**

The last eight chapters of Ezekiel describe the restoration of the Temple and the function of the Millennial Temple. Ezekiel 41-48. The two areas mentioned for the animals from which the sacrifices are chosen are KEDAR and NEBAIOTH. Genesis 25:13 describes these as descendants of Ishmael and as wandering tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. The people of the United Arab Emirates, Syria, and North-Western Saudi Arabia are covered by these tribal areas. They all come with acceptance to the altar of the Lord, finding blessing through Jesus (Isa) the King of all kings that their ancestor lost to Isaac. All the old curses are removed in and through their fellowship with the Lord Jesus and Arab and Jew find true unity through Him. The peoples of this part of the Arab world clearly have a special and highly honoured place in the Millennium as the providers of the sacrificial animals for the Millennial Temple, and this great honour reflects their previous work protecting the Jewish and other believers in their midst and resisting the Anti-Christ in the last great battles.

**8 Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? 9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.**

The later arrivals to the land come in the clouds, by air, and by sea across the Mediterranean, or up the Red Sea port of Elat. They come in a steady stream to fill the land of Israel so that all Jews are brought back into the land through that time and they truly fulfil their destiny as the torchbearers of the Lord. The isles of the far seas where the Jews have been safe through the Great Tribulation now give them up for their return and they come back with all their worldly goods intact and more besides. No-one has lost any money and all bring their wealth with them, ready to be resettled in the land given to their fathers millennia before. The Lord establishes a new world economy based upon the wealth hidden from the Anti-Christ and his people.

**10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.**

These latter arrivals will be willing, volunteer labour for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. These walls will not be for protection, Zechariah 2:5,10, for the Lord is there and no additional protection is required. The walls will be rebuilt to give the visual boundary to the old city, and remind all of it's violent but glorious history. The rulers of other nations will serve Israel and will "minister" to the city of Jerusalem, providing all it needs for the life of its people. The city will exist as a centre of world worship and all it's inhabitants will be there to serve the Lord and his Temple, and meet the needs of the pilgrims. Zechariah 6:12-15.

As was done in the days of Ezra, so will occur again, but the king of Persia will obey the decree of the Lord rather than write one for the rebuilding of the Temple. Ezra 6:3-12, 7:12-28, Nehemiah 2:7-9. There is rejoicing then as all the saved peoples of the world rejoice in King Jesus and his Temple, which for the next thousand years stands as a memorial of his work of salvation. Psalms 30:5-12. The Lord truly brings light from the darkness, both physically and spiritually. The people of these terrible last days need to have light in their souls through the Word of God, for the sun darkens, many stars are seen to be extinguished, and most unsaved men see the end of all things. The pagans of this day awake each morning to what they see as a dying world, yet each believer awakens with doctrine in their soul, and hope of the Lord's coming. They are literally counting the days at that time.

The truth of God's word gives them the focus forward that they need to look towards the future with hope and confidence in the Lord's salvation for them and the world. There is hope for the Moslem world. Many today look out at the Moslem faith's growth and say that it will eliminate the church, but the Bible teaches that the Arab peoples will worship the true God and will honour Israel, and all nations will bow in Jerusalem in that day that Jesus returns. Even before the end the Tribulation temple will be built upon the Temple Mount in Jerusalem behind the now sealed Golden Gate. For this to

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occur there must be major changes in present Islamic thought and doctrine that we ourselves will probably see begin before the Church is removed by the Lord.

Let us look at the present world news and see it in terms of the scriptures rather than the other way around! Let us increase our work of spreading the truth about these last days amongst the Moslem peoples; especially the Arab peoples. They are people of one book and their own prophet tells them they need the other two. We hold these and need to share them, and the Holy Spirit will do the rest.

The Lord's arrival appears to take at least a twelve hour day and possibly longer than a 24 hour day, so there is time for the saved remnant of the nations to ensure all the saved Jewish people amongst them who wish can fly to Israel for the Lord's arrival there. At least, it would appear the 144,000 are able to get there. Believers seize control of media and aviation it would appear. The remnant is alive and well in spite of all the Anti-Christ has done in this time of great trouble. God protects his own through this time. The Anti-Christ is destroyed with his armies, and they are all awaiting the last judgment in hell.

Jerusalem is rebuilt, and the nation is restored after all the ravages of the war, and there is prosperity like never before in the land. There is an amazing Temple rebuilt there, just as the second one was magnificently rebuilt by Herod in time for the Lord to come to it. The Beatitudes are all applicable in that day, and all peoples of the earth follow their principles in law. There is no injustice in administration, for the Lord rules through his servants in that time, and there is heaven on earth as he promised from ages past. The earth is as it was created to be. Hallelujah!

**Ezekiel 27:220ff** – The peoples of the Arabian Peninsula have been associated with the great trading nations of the Mediterranean for millennia and their fates are inter-related.

**20 Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots. 21 Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants.**

Dedan were the peoples of Arabia to the east of Edom, and their fame was in the manufacture of horse cloths. The peoples of Arabia proper and as far east as Kedar (Arab Emirate States) provided the sheep and goats for trade with Tyre for manufactured goods.

**22 The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold. 23 Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asshur, and Chilmad, were thy merchants.**

The merchants of the places named were also in contact with Tyre and its agents in their ports and cities. Sheba and Raamah were peoples who lived in the area now known as Oman, and traded with India and beyond also and provided spices to the markets of the Middle East. Their specialty was spice, precious stones and gold. These were both found or grown locally, or traded for. The sailing trading partners of Tyre covered a vast area into the Persian Gulf and across to India and beyond, but also they controlled or worked with those who controlled the ancient caravan routes that went through the ancient trade centres of Haran, Canneh (also called Calneh, later Ctesiphon), and Eden on the Euphrates.

The great caravaneers of the ancient world were pleased to serve them, from the camel caravans of Arabia (Sheba), to those of what is now northern Iraq, the city of Sura on the Euphrates (Asshur), and those of Chilmad, a city on the edge of the desert on the caravan route into the high Steppes of what is now Russia.

**Ezekiel 28:1-10 - The prophesied judgment of the archetypal Anti-Christ (The Prince of Tyre) and the response of the Arabic Nations to his fall** - (This section is duplicated from an earlier section above, as its significance is such that the information here needs to be seen in this context, as in the earlier one.)

**1. The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God:**

The arrogance of man is the path of Satan, and pride always goes before a fall, as it did before "the fall" of Adam. When people start to believe their own publicity they fall into foolishness, and when men believe they are gods they fall greatly into danger from the real and only God. Herod Agrippa I would later make the same error when he dealt with the descendants of the people of Tyre and Sidon. Acts 12:18-23. God is not mocked and if he has not judged such people he will; it is only a matter of time. The Great Tribulation Period will see the ultimate test for mankind, and only those who deliberately walk away from all satanic deception and evil will survive the judgments that will come. To be filled with pride at this time is to be fit for judgment.

**3 Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: 4 With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures:**

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The words of God by the prophet Daniel to Belshazzar later come to mind here. Daniel 5:18-30. Daniel is a ruler of the kingdom, and especially over the province of Babylon, and so he would have been well known to the exiles, and his grace and favour as well as his great wisdom were respected and he was admired by all who knew him. Daniel 1:19-21, 2:48-49. He was a humble servant of the one true God and did not ever let his position of power and influence distract his mind from his service to the Lord. He saw eternal realities as the important ones and was obedient to God alone. This is the challenge for the Arab peoples through this last evil time; to reject the idolatry of Satan's men and stand for God against the pride based religious systems that control the rest of mankind.

Daniel's wisdom has been ignored by the Judean kings on their visits to Babylon, and his advice regarding not rebelling has been disdainfully rejected by Judah and Tyre. They have joined in the alliance to oppose Babylonian might, and have likely spoken to one another in terms of Hiram and Solomon, but the two men who sit on the thrones of both places are no mighty men; they are fools and arrogant ones at that. Nebuchadnezzar suffered from that same arrogance, but he was a genius. Even as a genius, his arrogance was challenged and corrected by God, and he had seven years of severe physical and mental illness to correct him. Daniel 3:1, 4:26-37. These foolish little kings are impressed by themselves and they have no reason to be, and they will suffer total judgment from God. The great king Nebuchadnezzar did however finally bow before the Lord God and acknowledge him as Lord of all, and most importantly, Lord of his own life.

Nebuchadnezzar went through three steps to genuine salvation; the first was his recognition of the power of Daniel to interpret dreams, and so he acknowledges the God of Israel as one of the gods. Daniel 2:47. Secondly he went back into even more arrogant self centeredness than before. He had "nodded to God" but not recognized his Lordship over him. Daniel 3:1ff. Finally it is his dream of being chopped down that leads to the reminder to him, that he, like all kings and poor people alike, rise or fall according to the divine plan and power. Daniel 4:10-18. Our destiny is not in our own hands, and it is only the mental illness that lowers him to the state of an animal for seven years that corrects, converts and delivers him from his polytheism to the worship of the one God. 4:34-37.

Daniel was the interpreter of dreams, even those not told to him were revealed to him, with their interpretations! Daniel 2:1-19. Refer to the EBCWA commentary by Dr Peter Moses on the book of Daniel as it will open up understanding of events at court through the period we have studied in the Ezekiel passages. Daniel had the greatest of all wisdom, and in the economic area the king of Tyre has had wisdom to make great wealth. He has great abilities to make money, but he has no life wisdom. The pagan people of the Great Tribulation period also have no wisdom, and they worship at the shrine of materialism and idolatry, and the Arab peoples alone, as a group, stand against such evils and wait patiently for Jesus to return. They must express the same faith as Daniel did and by doing so they select good company.

Once again we are confronted with the heart of the lie of the, so called present phenomenon, the "prosperity gospel"! Great wealth does not mean great God given wisdom, nor does it mean great holiness, nor does it indicate God's blessing at all. This self centred (read satanically inspired) king of Tyre has received great wealth, but God is not there in it, indeed he has insulted and arrogantly opposed God and his plan. He has, like his true master Satan, set himself up against God to replace him. Proverbs 18:10-12, Isaiah 14:12-21.

Read these three linked proverbs carefully and see their application to the heart of this issue. From the wealthiest man of his age, Solomon, we have the condemnation of those who consider wealth as anything of spiritual significance at all. Wealth is to be used for the Lord, and if we have it we rejoice in it and use it fully for the Lord's work, but we do not deceive ourselves into thinking that it makes us superior to anyone else spiritually. The king of Tyre lifted himself up and so showed thereby the source of his worldly wisdom. Refer to the BTB studies on HAPPINESS: EXPERIMENTS IN ECCLESIASTES, WORLD and the study on WORLDLINESS.

**5 By thy great wisdom and by thy traffic hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: 6 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God;**

They had increased their wealth with business acumen and worldly wisdom, but there was no spiritual content in it, for their hearts were lifted up in arrogance and pride, rather than being respectfully appreciative before their maker. They would not give their maker credit, but took it all to themselves. This remains the central sin of rejecting mankind today, and will be until the end. It is not that they do not believe in a creator, but that they believe they are here to replace him!

Unsaved mankind prefers the picture of a self made world, for then there is no accountability at all. If they are forced to accept a maker – they want him to be the divine watchmaker, who has wound up the universe and left it to us. They do not want personal accountability, for they prefer personal licence. Because they have chosen the path of arrogance they will have to confront the true God of all and He believes in accountability.

**7 Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. 8 They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas.**

The Chaldeans were, as has been noted above, even more cruel than the Assyrians of old. The Assyrians took many prisoners from the fall of Samaria, over 27,000 by Sennacherib's own account, yet from the sieges of Jerusalem far fewer survive, and from the last one only 745 people live to tell the tale. Jeremiah 52:30. The Babylonian's cruelty is the

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reason for their own judgment fifty years later. Before they fall themselves, they will bring this cruelty to the other nations that have abused Judah in her plight.

The prophet records their drawing of their bright swords, and their murder of the beauty of Tyre as they hack through people, clothing, furniture, and cloth. The nation of Tyre is brought down to the pit of Hell, and their people disappear as thoroughly as if they had sunk without trace in the sea. Psalms 88:4-7, Proverbs 28:13-18. Like corrupt Judah, their only hope is repentance and restoration by God to their place amongst the nations. This city will rise again, populated by more and more mixed peoples as she develops and rebuilds, but finally her paganism will spell her end.

**9 Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. 10 Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.**

They have claimed to be gods, and the Lord, through his true prophet asks them, "will you in that day say to the people about to slay you 'we are gods'?" Then they will see that they were just frail men all along. It is always a source of amazement that so many wealthy and powerful people forget that they must leave all this behind at death, and as they leave this earth they are baffled and annoyed that all is lost to them. We are all tasked with delivering the Lord's message to his foolish creatures, that they are mortal and must give account to their creator, and that the only hope is to accept his terms for life and blessing. Leviticus 26:41.

They had been blessed through their association with Israel under Solomon and could have taken advantage of this blessing and served the Lord as their God. They had tasted of the truth through their contacts with Israel, but had stayed within their pagan net. Their death will be according to the pagan rules they chose to live by, and these rules are cruel, for Satan's team have no solidarity amongst them, only similarity in cruelty.

Remember, there is no fellowship in Satan's camp. Many select the broad pathway of worldliness and materialism because it promises more fun than the narrow path of holiness that the Lord calls us to, but the promises of Satan are deceptions and lies. There is no fellowship on earth or in hell amongst his people, for self is their god, and so friendships are purely self directed. Nothing physical, financial, or political, can prolong the life of a dying man. We are in the maker's hands alone as we advance through this life. Nothing can keep us safe in this dangerous world, except his power and walking in the safe place of his will.

Human financial success is not to be considered spiritually significant. All people can have financial and political success for a time, from their own abilities, or even compliance with Satanic plans. Success of any sort indicates exactly that, success; nothing more. Just as a miracle may be worked in Satanic power, so success may be gained in evil, as wealthy mobsters and corrupt politicians testify to daily.

We are to be discerning of all acts of power, and issues of status flowing from wealth, power or political connections. We use the discernment of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God and the fruit analysis of the lives of the people involved, in accordance with Matthew 7:13ff, and then our assessments will be safe. It is the self centred "fruit" of Satan that proves his presence with the evil men of today and later days.

**EZEKIEL 28:11 – 19** (This section is also duplicated from an earlier section above – but it's significance is such that repetition is useful in this context also).

**11. Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 12 Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty.**

This passage we enter into here is a glimpse into the very heart and character of Satan himself and the character of his ultimate servant the Anti-Christ. The king of Tyre is not Satan, and these verses are not clearly literally true of this last king of Tyre, but they are true of the Satanic source of his self centeredness and the satanic source of the Anti-Christ of the last days. In this man's self absorption we see the sin of pride so well illustrated, and this is the heart of Satan's rebellion and that of all after him who follow him in rejection of the legitimate claims of God over their lives.

Notice the first phrases. "Thou sealest up the sum, full of beauty and perfect in wisdom". Now note carefully these words, for this king was an amazing man, and the perfect Hollywood idol and darling of the "jet set" of his day. He was wise in the things of this world, a brilliant conversationalist, handsome and his clothing all made by the best tailors. He looked and sounded and acted as a great king, with greatness written all over him. He looked the part he claimed to play.

1. The first phrase means to be perfectly made in the best geometric proportions. The king, and Satan himself, is compared to a wonderfully constructed building that obeys all the rules of balance and proportion in it's construction. This very phrase reminds us that He is "made"; he is not the maker, but the one who has been made! He is perfect in all proportions because his maker is perfect and all he makes is perfect. Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

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2. The person of the king, and the person of Satan, were both perfect in physical beauty. Satan is Lucifer, the “Star of the Morning”. He was the most beautiful creature God made, but the last point is the key; God made him, he was not self made!

3. The king of Tyre had great wisdom according to the standards of mankind. He had education, wisdom and knowledge of trade and seafaring, but he did not have “all wisdom”, he just thought he had. This was a day when a person could read all the books and have a knowledge of all things known by man, but wise men and women recognized that they knew only what was “known” to that point. True wisdom, and great knowledge will have humility at it’s heart, for every true scientist recognizes what they don’t know is far greater than what they do! Both this man and Satan erred in this point; for they did not recognize that humility was logical and right! Refer to the BTB doctrinal studies, ANGELS – SATAN – ADVERSARY, and also SATAN’S DESTINY.

**13 Thou hast been in Eden the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering, the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold: the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created.**

This twelfth verse makes it clear that this passage refers well beyond the king of Tyre to the one of whom he is an example; Satan himself. It was Satan who was there even in the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:1ff, 2 Corinthians 11:5, Revelation 12:9, 20:2. He was there well before Adam and Eve, and he was the “cherub who covered the throne”; he was the leading arch angel! He had the honour of service as the leader of the angelic host and he rebelled to try to seize power from the one who made him and gave him his dignity!

This is Zedekiah of Judah and the king of Tyre’s sin, for they have been delivered from Assyrian domination by Babylonian power and placed on their thrones by Nebuchadnezzar’s grace and favour, and yet they will rebel! The glory of the appearance of Satan is described in terms of precious stones that shone with brilliance. The beauty of his voice was like a pipe organ, and his appearance as of the most amazing thing.

**14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth; and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.**

He had the most important position of all the angels, and had been set there by God himself. He was made and positioned by the creator for glory, but Satan wanted that glory for himself and would not give it properly to the one who gave him all things that led to glory. The demand of the Lord is for humility and acceptance of reality on the part of his creatures. This is not a difficult thing, nor is it inappropriate. Why does a creature seek glory and honour for them self and not for their maker who gave them everything? It is baffling, and only has its explanation in the pride and arrogance of a self centred man or woman.

Satan’s role and place was most glorious, and he knew the holy perfection of his maker and was the guardian of the throne itself, yet he sought to sit upon the throne! His rebellion was not the fault of his maker, for he was made perfectly. The fault was “found in him”; it emerged from within the depths of his being. Once again we are reminded that Satan was “created” and owed his worship to his maker, but put his energy into replacing his maker rather than honouring him. Just so the rebellion of mankind is without logic or excuse and will rightly bring eternal judgment. It is arrogance and pride alone that leads to the Eternal Judgment of God for angelic and human beings.

**16 By the multitude of thy merchandise they have filled the midst of thee with violence, and thou hast sinned: therefore I will cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God: and I will destroy thee, O covering cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. 17 Thine heart was lifted up because of thy beauty, thou hast corrupted thy wisdom by reason of thy brightness: I will cast thee to the ground, I will lay thee before kings, that they may behold thee.**

The king of Tyre was a “wheeler dealer”, just like Satan remains one to our own day; he deals in selfishness and evil, in deception and lies, and makes merchandise of people for his own ends. Satan created the first violence from the religion of Cain, who would not accept the need to bring a blood sacrifice, for he believed the fruit of his labours was sufficient to bring to God. He rejected the sin of his life as significant and rejected the need for a sacrifice for his sins. This is the satanic blood-less religion that leads to all violence, just as it leads to the first murder. Genesis 3:17-21, 4:3-8.

Though Satan had the highest position in heaven he was removed from his place because of his great sin of pride. Pride destroys all who follow it’s deadly lie, and is the main, if not sole, reason for unsaved people being in the Lake of Fire with Satan and those angels who followed him. Revelation 20:11-15. Final judgment will occur, but in the meantime all who follow pride will experience being cast down by their maker at some point, for that is his last appeal to them to repent. Only in humility can we be saved, and for the lost catastrophe and loss are often the only way up to God!

For Nebuchadnezzar it was mental and physical illness, Daniel 4:23-32, and for others it is terminal sickness, defeat in war, or dying itself. All human beings at some point face their mortality, and have the last opportunity to repent, but Satan remains staunch in his rebellion to the end, and so does the king of Tyre. No logic will shift them from their fondly held lie to the truth, and so they die in their self deceit. Isaiah 14:9-20.

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**18 Thou hast defiled thy sanctuaries by the multitude of thine iniquities, by the iniquity of thy traffick; therefore will I bring forth a fire from the midst of thee, it shall devour thee, and I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all them that behold thee. 19 All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more.**

The Lake of Fire in Revelation becomes alive with fire from the very source of Satan himself. This verse, as we have seen earlier above, explains the ultimate justice of God, and the ultimate in justice from God, in that Satan's own motive power leads to his eternal judgment and everlasting death. He is burned up from within himself, rather than being "zapped" from the outside by God, he is destroyed from within himself. Rebellion against one's own creator pollutes the life and the soul and all that is around the person who has rebelled, but finally all rebellions implode upon themselves because you cannot release great evil without it turning on the people who have set it loose.

The earth, the heavens and all the old creation are imploded in the end. 2 Peter 3:10ff, Revelation 21:1ff. All that is solid to the touch is simply atoms in arrangement. All of the old creation will implode at the end, and the old created space-time universe, and all that is part of it will be gone in a moment, and only those who through the gift of eternal life have gained their place in the next world will enter it in joy by the grace and mercy of the creator. In some way the Lake of Fire itself is perpetuated, Revelation 21:8, but it is in a manner we cannot speculate upon, and in a way that does not disturb the joy and peace of the saved in eternity.

God's gift of life is eternal, and not removed once given by God. We all and the angels either enjoy eternal life with God, or eternal death with Satan and his evil crew! We need to preach this truth more powerfully than we have to date. For a creature to try to replace their creator is to have lost one's mind, and it leads to the loss of eternal life, and its replacement with an eternal death. There is no logic to such rebellion; the pride and arrogance of demons and evil men and women alone produces this evil stupidity. All who do this are rightly judged eternally by Almighty God.

### **Isaiah 42:10-12**

**9 Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them.**

Isaiah sees that the things spoken of by Moses and himself earlier in his ministry have come to pass; they are fulfilled in the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 720 BC, and by the days of this prophecy in the Southern Kingdom of Judah around 700 BC. The end of the present nation is not far away, and its restoration will come under Cyrus. Isaiah realizes he stands close to these great events of Israel's national history. He sees that the "times of the Gentiles" is about to begin and that he has been given the key to understand these things. He is overwhelmed about what God has shown him. He sees that God has forewarned them all of the things that are to come. 1 Peter 1:10-12, 2 Peter 1:19-21.

**10 Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof.**

Isaiah echoes the prophets a great deal. Here we have echoes of Psalms 33:3, 40:3, 96:1-3, 98:1-4, 117:1ff. Paul picks up the song after the Lord's first advent and reminds all believers that this is our song! Romans 15:8-16. Once again the nations like New Zealand and Australia, at the "ends of the earth", are included in this song, as are all the islands of the far flung Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic oceans. Psalms 97:1, Zephaniah 2:11. All the sailors on the seven seas are included in the song, for all will praise the Lord in that day as they see his works and deliverance.

**11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory unto the LORD, and declare his praise in the islands.**

Those in the Arab and Israeli wilderness areas and those in the cities of the world will all praise the Lord with the same song also. The survivors of the Great Tribulation period will be scattered in hiding all over the known world, but they will all be united in psalms of praise in that glorious day when the Lord returns to set up his kingdom. All the nations around about, from the rock of Petra, the hill country of the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia (Kedar), through to the mountains of the Eastern world, they will lift up their voices in praise to the Lord. In the far flung islands of the world there will be the praises of the living God sung aloud for all to hear and glorify the Lord that mankind is at last united, as survivors and servants of the living God. The enemies of the truth will receive a "speedy riddance", Psalms 18:7, Jeremiah 25:30, Zephaniah 1:18, 3:8, but the redeemed of the Lord will come with singing into Zion. Zephaniah 3:14-20, Joel 2:21-25, 3:16-18, Amos 1:2, 9:11-15.

**(b) The Gulf States (Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates)**

**Habakkuk 3:1-7**

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## **3:1 A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet upon Shigionoth.**

The title, "Shiggaion," occurs only once besides this and it is in Psalm 7. It probably means a psalm with music expressive of strong emotion; with "erratic" or "dithyrambic" metre and a rhythm that indicates the singer is in great distress, or experiencing great passion as they sing. Habakkuk's title, on Shigionoth (plural) then would mean upon, or (as we should say,) "set to" music that brings the singer and the hearer to deep contemplation upon the serious message of the Psalm. We are reminded in this passage that the role of the prophet is rarely to bring good news. A prophet is called to bring warning and severe condemnation upon those who have initially rejected the written words of God, and so the verbal words are delivered as a last warning. Prophetic ministry is a hard, sad, and tough ministry. The people to whom these words are directed in Habakkuk's own day, and in the day to come, must hear these words, obey them quickly, and be prepared for great distress in the process of obedience.

## **3:2 O LORD, I have heard thy speech, and was afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy.**

The prophet himself identifies the deep and fear filled burden of his words. Prophecy is meant to make men and women be very afraid, and be determined to obey the Lord. The phrase, "in the midst of years", may be better translated, "as the years approach", indicating that the final application of these words is well into the future from Habakkuk's time. The nearer the time, the clearer and fuller is the prediction; and the "signs of the times" that will be revealed here and elsewhere show that the complete fulfilment is at hand. The judgments will be heavy, but the prophet knows that they are not greater than the people deserve, yet in the midst of the "wrath" – (infliction of righteous punishment) – he prays for the Lord to remember mercy, and spare the souls that return unto the Lord with humiliation and prayer.

The heart of a genuine prophet is always concerned for the souls of the lost to whom she/he speaks. Habakkuk is concerned that even though the Lord's judgment is righteous and just upon those who have ignored the written words of spiritual direction, that even as the wrath of the Lord falls upon them, they might repent fully and be saved, and so receive mercy in the midst of judgment. It is the reminder to us that the Lord is always merciful and gracious to those who repent and obey, even if it is in the last moments of opportunity for them before they die. There is still salvation offered until man's last breath, as the dying thief (terrorist) discovered on the Cross next to Jesus. Initially he had "reviled Jesus", with his fellow terrorist, but finally he repents and accepts that Jesus was indeed the Messiah, and with his affirmation of that, he is assured of salvation. Matthew 27:44, Luke 23:39-43. Many are saved through these last days of earth's history before the Lord's Second Advent. We are now in that period leading to the Tribulation, and the pace of events has picked up post Covid-19, with Ezekiel 38-39 to be fulfilled at great cost to the Persian Gulf Arab nations.

## **3:3 God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.**

Just as the Lord delivered the Israelites from Egypt in glory and power, and all who heard of it praised the name of the Lord, so the Lord will deliver his people in the latter days of the Great Tribulation Period as they are obedient to Him. The two cities mentioned are Arab cities, outside the boundaries of the land of Israel at the time. Firstly the city of Teman - This was a city, the capital of a province of Idumea, to the south of the land of Israel. Numbers 20:21, Jeremiah 49:7. Secondly the city of Paran – This was a city that gave its name to a province in Arabia Petraea. Genesis 21:21, Deuteronomy 33:2. As we have already seen in our study, the Israelis of the last days are urged to flee to these very places to hide in the mountains from the Anti-Christ, and from there, the prophet assures them, they will be rescued by the Lord, in exactly the same way, and with the same glory and praise as the Lord delivered their ancestors from Egypt. When the Lord's deliverance of his people is fully seen after his Second Advent, the entire earth will praise His Holy Name for what he has done.

## **3:4 And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power.**

Horns are everywhere in Holy Scripture the emblem of strength. It may be, that here that the "rays of light" are likened to horns, as the face of Moses is said, with the same image, to have "sent forth rays" after he had long been in the presence of God. So it may be a mingled image of the Glory of God (light) and the power and might of the Lord (horns). God is light, but He is also might! It is the holiness of God that is seen here and the prophet recognizes the power of God with the purity of God. The Anti-Christ of the last days does not recognize the might of God and Satan's calculation that he can actually beat the Lord is a reflection of this stupidity.

The prophet sees that the hands of God are powerful, and he will deliver the saved, and destroy the enemy in his holy might. This great power is "hidden" from unsaved man and demons, but when God moves to judgment, all he needs to do is open his hands towards them and they are destroyed. It is this simple act that reveals power, that shows just how powerful God is. The prophet asks us to focus upon the Lord and see that he has the whole world in his hands, and he has all the power of the universe in his hands, for his hands made the worlds! Psalms 33:6-9, Hebrews 1:2, 11:3.

## **3:5 Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet.**

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God's people have a stark choice in crucial times; they either walk with God and receive blessing, or they walk with the enemy and receive the wages of sin! Leviticus 26 and Deuteronomy 27-30 cover this reality. This plague that Habakkuk mentioned here was several times inflicted on the disobedient Israelites in the wilderness; see Numbers 11:33, 14:37, 16:46; and was always the proof that the righteous, just, and holy God was then manifesting his power among them in judgment, because they had disobeyed his direct words to them. The burning coals are also a warning of judgment if the hearers of the prophet do not obey the revealed words of God. The disobedient Israelites were consumed by a fire that went out from Jehovah (see Leviticus 10:2, Numbers 11:1, 16:35), and the burnt-offering was consumed by a fire which came out from before Jehovah, (Leviticus 11:24). God acts – God judges evil.

In the New Testament the writer to the Hebrew Christians echoes Habakkuk and Moses words with passion and urgency. He reminds them that idolatry and false worship will bring judgment upon them and he urges them to separate themselves from all forms of false worship and serve the Lord in spirit and in truth alone. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" Hebrews 10:31. The writer then quotes from Deuteronomy. "Our God is a consuming fire!" Deuteronomy 4:23-24, Hebrews 12:28-29. This reminder comes after a warning against idolatry.

Judgment falls upon all mankind in the Great Tribulation period because of idolatry; the unsaved worship the statue/idol of the Beast/Anti-Christ set up in the temple at Jerusalem. Salvation comes to the Israelis and the Arabs who reject the idolatry of the Anti-Christ and who hide in the hills of Jordan and Arabia. They must fight the forces of the Anti-Christ there initially, but as they resist and work together against the evil one they have the assurance that they are all to be delivered there by the returning King - Jesus.

**3:6 He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting.**

"The loftiness of man shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be made low and the Lord Alone shall be exalted in that day". Isaiah 2:17. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low". Isaiah 40:3. Isaiah saw that the Lord's return to this earth was in mighty power and with convulsions of nature that would level mountain ranges. The Apostle John has the fuller details revealed to him, and records in Revelation the prophecies regarding the greatest series of earthquakes that the earth has seen since the flood of Noah. Revelation 6:12, 8:5, 11:13-19, 16:18. All the cities of unsaved mankind will be levelled, and all the economic power of the Anti-Christ will be broken in pieces. The mountains will be flattened/shifted/transformed by the one who made them, but the saved of the Lord will rejoice in the deliverance that these earthquakes bring them, for they are the work of the Lord!

**3:7 I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.**

Cush and Midian are terms that apply to the land we know as Saudi Arabia today. The impact of the work of God in judgment brings trembling and affliction of soul to all of Arabia and its people. They see, as the Jewish people have seen, Zechariah 12:10ff, that Jesus is returning, and it is not as they had been previously taught, but as the older biblical prophets had said. The trembling and affliction here is godly fear and righteous affliction, just as it was for Israel. Many amongst the Arab peoples of Arabia repent of any evil they have ever felt towards the Jewish people and join with them to wait for the coming of Jesus. It is the certainty of this welcome amongst the Arab people that is behind the instructions of the prophet Daniel, and the Lord's own direct instruction to Jewish believers to flee into their lands when the Anti-Christ sets up his idol. (Refer below.)

**Matthew 24:42-46,**

**42 Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. 43 But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. 44. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.**

These instructions are for those in the latter days before the Lord's return. "Watch" means to keep on being alert. You need information to be able to watch intelligently and the Lord is going to give this information. The verb "watch" is in the present active imperative in the Greek language of the New Testament, which means that it is a command to be constantly watching. The fact that the believers addressed here do not know when the Lord will come means that the exact time of the Second Advent is not known and cannot be known at that time, but the believers in the Tribulation will be able to know the signs and events which will lead up to His coming. They know enough to know it is coming near, and as they see the signs they are to be daily more alert to dangers and more determined to serve the Lord. Those who fail to be alert will suffer loss and possibly death, but the obedient will be delivered as they follow the Lord's words.

In verses 43 and 44 the Lord uses an illustration to demonstrate what he has meant by the earlier instruction to alertness. The "Goodman of the house" is the householder or master of the house. In the time of Jesus the Goodman of the house would have been the father. The word "if" is a second class condition and means, "if and it is not true". This householder therefore does not know when the thief is coming and so he suffers consequent loss as his house is attacked and ransacked. The "thief" of the ancient world came in force and murdered the people he stole from; it is



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severe, sudden and violent loss that is referred to in the word “thief” here. If however the householder knew about the time when the “thief” would suddenly arrive, he would be prepared and respond appropriately, protecting his property and goods. The Lord therefore encourages His listeners, and subsequently His readers, to be alert, and know what is going to happen around them with the evil men of Anti-Christ, so that they can be confident, well prepared, taking active steps to keep all believers safe around them.

**45 Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? 46 Blessed is that servant, whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. 47 Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.**

Unlike the previous passage the Lord now deals with someone who is alert. The person who is prepared for the evil of those who follow the Anti-Christ is both faithful and wise. The faithfulness shows stability. Being wise he knows what he is doing and why. This is a believer in the Tribulation who has learnt Bible truths and applies them into the situation he faces. He is a type of person on whom one can count in a catastrophe, and the believers amongst the Arabs are in this category; they read the scriptures and correctly interpret them and they hide the Israelis who flee to hide amongst them. They stand against the Anti-Christ and resist him and his people until the end. As we have seen in an earlier section of our study, the Arab lands escape out of Anti-Christ’s direct control and they strongly reject his idolatry. Daniel 11:40-45.

The Lord is said to “give meat in due season”. To the unbeliever the gospel is given, to the believer doctrines are given so that the young believer can grow in the knowledge and grace of Jesus, and so replicate what the mature spirit filled believer has done for him. These believers are mature, and they show that by their bravery in hiding the fleeing Israelis and in resisting the control of the Anti-Christ over them. These people not only are given responsibilities of leadership in areas before the Lord returns, but will receive rewards after he returns, and increased rewards in eternity. The “faithful and wise servant” is the type of believer whom the Lord will welcome with the statement, “Well done good, and faithful servant”. Refer below.

**Matthew 25:31-46,**

**31 When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: 32 And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: 33 And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.**

This final section of chapter 25 deals with the fate of the non Jews at the end of the Great Tribulation period. The picture here is of Jesus who is called the “Son of Man” coming back in a great glory to the earth with his Holy Angels. As far as Satan is concerned this completes his opportunity to deceive people, and he is held in prison and for the thousand year reign of Jesus as King on the earth. Revelation 20:1-3, 7-10.

The word “ethnos”, translated “nations” in this passage, does not refer to nations as a whole but refers to individual groups of people amongst the Gentiles. Just as the Jews have been split between believers and unbelievers in the previous section, so the Gentiles are similarly treated in this section of Matthew 25. There are a number of places in the Scriptures where the word “ethnos” is used for Gentiles rather than nation states, although it is translated as such as well. Matthew 6:31,32, 12:21, 20:19 Acts 11:18 15:3, 26:20. Here the Gentiles are separated one from another.

And the Gentiles are separated with believers classified as the sheep going to the right hand, the hand of blessing, and the goats, the unbelievers, going to the left hand the hand of cursing. In the ancient world a King would raise his right hand for yes and his left hand for no rather than speaking all the time. In this way he would be able to give the judgment without wearing out his voice. It is the criteria for this judgment that needs to be carefully noted. Amongst the people on the Lord’s right hand at this point are all the Arab believers who have been righteous and supported the Jewish believers through the dark days of the Great Tribulation, and who have stood firmly against the Anti-Christ’s religion and economic power.

**34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.**

The Lord first of all addresses the believers on his right hand. He calls them “blessed” and invites them to inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The Scriptures make it quite clear that it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but that we are saved by the mercy of God through faith. These people are not saved by doing these things, but these things are done because they are saved. It is extremely dangerous to do these things mentioned in the Tribulation as the authorities are constantly attempting to kill believers as “Enemies of the World State”,

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but the Arab nations have rejected the “World State”, and fiercely rejected the idolatry of the Anti-Christ, and so many within their nations are able to practise openly their faith in the one true God.

The people referred to as “my brethren” appears to relate to the 144,000 Jewish evangelists of Revelation 7:1-8, but it may also apply to all the Jewish and other believers who have been assisted by righteous people. It may be that these evangelists were the ones who led the believers to the Lord. Their response to the great evils around them under the pressure of the Tribulation is fantastic, even though many who have been saved have been martyred for their faith. The martyrs are shown in **Revelation 7:16-17** where they have been under great pressure. *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”* Many however come through this great time of Satan’s worst evil because they stand firm in the doctrines of the Word of God and refuse any compromise with the enemy and it would appear the Arab nations resist Satanic control thoroughly through this time. Daniel 11:40ff.

**41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

The goats are the surviving unbelievers of the Great Tribulation period. God calls them “cursed”, for they have rejected truth right to the end. The verb is in the perfect tense in the Greek language of the New Testament, meaning that they were cursed at that point, so that they will be cursed forever. Their decision making through the Tribulation was self centred and evil, and so they are condemned on the basis of their free will choices. They refused to assist the Lord’s people, and they chose to serve the Anti-Christ, and so they share the Anti-Christ’s fate. They are destined for the Lake of Fire which was created for Satan and his angels. Revelation 20:4-15. These people being determined unbelievers were not able to do things of eternal worth and this was demonstrated by the negative attitude towards believers and specifically towards the 144,000 Jewish witnesses during this time.

**Isaiah 60:1-10**, especially verse 8 (This passage also is duplicated from an earlier section, but once again in this context the repetition is useful – it is good to sit with this passage twice or more.)

**1 Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.**

This is the call of the guards amongst the believing armies as they see the clear evidence that Jesus is coming back to the earth within a day or even hours. As we have identified before, there is much to be done to ready the city of Jerusalem for the Lord’s arrival and for the first sacrifices to be offered. From the chapters of Isaiah and other passages studied above, it appears that the Lord’s coming may first appear in the dawn hours of one day and possibly his coming will follow that dawn around the whole world just over twenty four hours and he finally enters Jerusalem on the following morning. Whatever the exact time frame, (it may be longer than 24 hours) there is time for the believers to prepare for the Lord’s arrival at the city of Jerusalem. With the tectonic activity that is described in the Great Tribulation period the atmospheric conditions around the earth’s stratosphere mean that the Lord’s return would be visible all around the earth by refraction of light and other phenomena in addition to any media coverage. People know he is drawing closer.

This preparation would mean that the defenders in the city may have a day and a night of frantic preparation to clear away the bodies of the enemy, clear roads, road sides, and rubble away, so that the path to the now desolate Temple site can be trodden by the Lord from the Mount of Olives exactly as he did 2000 years before and enter this time through the site of the present Golden Gate into the Temple to offer the morning sacrifice at 9am. The last great earthquake has totally changed the topography of the land of Israel, and every other land. Revelation 16:17-20.

This being noted, the hills of Jerusalem are still there in some form, and the site of the Temple is there, and the location of the Golden Gate is still clear through the ruins of the final earthquakes, so that the Altar on the site where the Millennial Temple will be built is made accessible for the Lord to make sacrifices there to celebrate his victory. When the Exiles returned in 535 BC they built the altar first and made sacrifices there. It was twenty years until the temple was completed, but the altar functioned. The tribulation temple is clearly destroyed by the last great earthquake that breaks open the Mount of Olives, but an altar could be built in the right place opposite the ruins of the Golden Gate in the time frame of the Lord’s return, even if it is only 24 hours (or the Lord sets up his own altar).

The people are called to arise from sleep and shine out the glory of the Lord. Matthew 5:16, Ephesians 5:8, 14, Philippians 2:15-16, Revelation 19:16ff. There is the sound of battle over the whole world as those who oppose the Lord gather to fight his heavenly progress and they are defeated quickly and systematically by the Lord world wide, until his final touch down back at Jerusalem.

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**2 For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.**

There are two forms of darkness over the earth in these last terrifying days; the physical darkness that blocks the sun and also the spiritual darkness that is the wilful darkness that blinds men to the truth about the Lord. Amos 8:9, Malachi 4:1, Matthew 24:22, Revelation 8:12, 16:8-11, then Matthew 23:24, Romans 1:21-23, Ephesians 4:17-19. The evil people who have served the Anti-Christ are deliberately spiritually blind, but towards the end of the Great Tribulation period the sun is darkened and their terror increases with this. The pagans are frightened and paralyzed by their fears, but believers world wide are more and more confident and active.

The believers are told to shine their gospel light, as this day is the last one for the unbelievers still alive at this time, and it may be that some repent even at this late stage. The offer of salvation still appears to be there, although the persistence of these evil people is strong in their satanic deception. The lost are left without excuse before the throne of God, for right until their death they have the Gospel message preached to them in spiritual power. Those who join the Anti-Christ and the false prophet in the Lake of Fire are there because they seriously choose to be! As we have seen throughout all the Biblical passages, those who join Satan must seriously desire to serve him and seriously hate and reject the Lord. People must work very hard to reject grace and enter Hell.

**3 And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.**

There are people saved by the gospel light shining out. It is not clear to some commentators here whether this verse applies to the Lord, who draws all the saved Gentile nations to him after his return, or to the saved Jews who draw the Gentiles from around about to worship the Lord as he comes. There is witness here either way and people are clearly saved right until the last minutes, and subsequent verses indicate that it likely refers to the witness of the defenders of the city of Jerusalem itself. Genesis 49:10, Psalms 22:27, 67:1-4, 72:17-20, 98:1-4, 117:1-2, Romans 11:11-15.

**4 Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side.**

The people are told to look up and see the saved people arriving, possibly by plane, from other places to assist them in the clean up, and possibly also to be there for the Lord's arrival. This would indicate that there is enough time from the Lord's first appearance to his final touch down for people in various places in Europe at least to catch flights to Israel in order to be there for the Lord's arrival, for his final destination is known from the scripture. Luke 24:50-53, Acts 1:6-12. Given the tectonic activity this is amazing, but as has already been discussed, short take off jets may be able to utilize cleared runways quickly, and all believers know this requirement, and are ready to spring into action as soon as the Lord destroys the enemy in their vicinity. Any planes that can carry Jews home are readied and flown by believing crew.

Jewish people arrive from all over the world to be there for the glorious day, and the forces of the Anti-Christ, who have been persecuting them until this time, are not able to stop them get there. This tells us that Jewish and Gentile believers survive everywhere and at all levels of society, for the flights to be able to take off from other countries and arrive in Israel in time for the Lord's arrival. These first arrivals, as noted above, may be the 144,000 witnesses spoken of in Revelation 7:1-12. Isaiah 49:18-26, 66:10ff.

**5 Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.**

Once the Lord is on the way, many of the saved peoples of the earth start to head towards the city of Jerusalem, bringing gifts for the Jewish fighters there to restore their souls, and to honour them. They know the forces of Anti-Christ are to be destroyed by the Lord personally but they don't wait for it to fully occur, they just act in faith, and even though millions of the enemy are still hate filled awaiting the Lord's judgment, these believing pilots and flight engineers obey the Word and start the great air lift. The returning Jews also bring gifts to worship the Lord with gift offerings for the Temple and city of Jerusalem so all can be decorated in splendour after the ravages of the Great Tribulation period. Isaiah describes it as like a sea of people flowing towards the city from all corners of the world with gifts in their hands.

Once again there is the evidence that the Lord has sealed many through this terrible period and even though possibly more than 90% of the world's population perish in unbelief in this time, there is still what seems a multitude flowing towards the city to bless the Lord in his city and worship at the site of what will become his Millennial temple. Their hearts will swell with pride and joy; they will be awe struck at the numbers who are coming and the great wealth that is being brought to honour the city, it's people and the Lord, so that the temple may be rebuilt with magnificence. Psalms 96:7-10, 98:4-9.

**6 The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the LORD.**

The slower arrivals are mentioned here, and these arrive much later than the first day. The camel is still the best "vehicle" to travel the desert ways across Arabia and many arrive, with their Arabian believer friends and protectors bringing great gifts for the new Temple. This is another indication that the good news message of the gospel makes significant inroads

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into Islamic areas before and through this period of Great Tribulation. Many are saved in these places. Once again the work we are doing now may play its part in this, for Arabic speaking believers can discover the teaching of the Old Testament prophets and Jesus (Isa to the Arab world) through the CDs/USBs we make, and our present web sites. CDs and USBs will survive, but it can be expected that the Anti-Christ will close down all biblically based web sites quickly. Fortunately all that goes on the internet is permanent and technically adept believers will probably be able to retrieve biblical material through the Tribulation period. We see today the impact of evangelical Arab groups through cable TV and radio into the Middle East with many being saved.

**7 All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered together unto thee, the rams of Nebaioth shall minister unto thee: they shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.**

The last eight chapters of Ezekiel describe the restoration of the Temple and the function of the Millennial Temple. Ezekiel 41-48. The two areas mentioned for the animals from which the sacrifices are chosen are KEDAR and NEBAIOTH. Genesis 25:13 describes these as descendants of Ishmael and as wandering tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. They are the tribes that have gathered today in the United Arab Emirates areas. They will come with acceptance to the altar of the Lord, finding blessing through Jesus that their ancestor lost to Isaac. All the old curses are removed in and through their discovery of fellowship with Jesus, and in these terrible days there is glory for all the sons of Abraham who seek to live righteously before the one true God. Arab and Jew find worshipful unity through him.

**8 Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows? 9 Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.**

The later arrivals to the land come in the clouds, by air, and by sea across the Mediterranean, or up the Red Sea. They come in a steady stream to fill the land of Israel so that over a short period of time all Jews are back in the land. Through that time of the millennial reign of Jesus as King they truly fulfil their destiny as the torchbearers of the Lord. The isles of the far seas where the saved Jews have been safe through the Great Tribulation now give them up for their return and they come back with all their worldly goods intact and more besides. No-one has lost any money, and all bring their wealth with them, ready to be resettled in the land given to their fathers millennia before.

**10 And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee: for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favour have I had mercy on thee.**

These latter non Jewish arrivals will be willing, volunteer labour for the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem. These walls will not be for protection, Zechariah 2:5,10, for the Lord is there, and no additional protection is required. The walls will be rebuilt to give the visual boundary to the old city, and remind all of its violent but glorious history. The rulers of other nations will serve Israel and will "minister" to the city of Jerusalem, providing all it needs for the life of its people. The city will exist as a centre of world worship and all its inhabitants will be there to serve the Lord and his Temple, and meet the needs of the pilgrims. Zechariah 6:12-15, 14:16ff.

As was done in the days of Ezra, so will occur again, but the king of Persia will obey the decree of the Lord rather than write one for the rebuilding of the Temple. Ezra 6:3-12, 7:12-28, Nehemiah 2:7-9. There is rejoicing then as all the saved peoples of the world rejoice in King Jesus and his Temple, which for the next thousand years stands as a memorial of his work of salvation. Psalms 30:5-12. The Arab peoples stand with the Lord in his temple and worship Him with their fellow sons of Abraham, united in worship in that glorious day.

(c) **Jordan (Biblical names = Ammon, Moab, Edom)**

**Jeremiah 49:1ff,**

**1 Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD; Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? 2 Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.**

The Ammonites were enemies almost from their first contacts with Israel, although there was significant inter-action, both good and bad, through the centuries. Inter-marriage was clearly not uncommon, although in the priestly history of Israel and Judah intermarriage is seen in a sinister light, with the two cases mentioned leading to great evil. Rehoboam in 2 Chronicles 12:13, and the conspirators of apostasy and murder in 2 Chronicles 24:15-26. As the descendants also of Lot, Genesis 19:38, and the Arab peoples of the area they were settled in what is now central Jordan, and their capital Rabbath Ammon, is now the Capital city Amman of the kingdom of Jordan. Their population is now absorbed into the surrounding Arab peoples of the area, so like Moab and Edom the Ammonites became part of the landscape through the centuries after Jeremiah to the point where they have no separate identity.

During the period of the Judges the Ammonites joined with Moabites and Amalekites to seize Jericho from Israel. Judges 3:12-15. They were dealt with by Ehud, who slew their king and then seized the ford over Jordan and eliminated the

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Moabite army (and likely any allies with them). He then restored the area to Israelite control. Judges 15:16-30. Archaeological excavations reveal that during the eleventh century BC the Ammonites built very strong fortresses on their borders with Israelite territory. There was clearly a state of continual warfare or threat at this time, and this came to a head with the battles of Jephthah who defeated them thoroughly. Judges 10:8-11:33.

Under king Nahash of Ammon, a new war was declared against Israel and the people of the target city, Jabesh-Gilead appealed to King Saul of Israel for help. He led an army and destroyed the Ammonite's army in the field totally. 1 Samuel 11:1-11. Occasional raids by the peoples on the east side of Jordan (Ammon, Moab, Midian and Edom) continued and Saul later in his reign conducted another major campaign against them. 1 Samuel 14:47-48. Ammonites did fight for David in an attempt to weaken Saul, under the principle of divide and rule, and David played politics with them also after the death of King Nahash, but was insulted by the new king. The result was all out war, which Syria also entered into in support of Ammon. The result was a great slaughter of the Syrians so that they made peace with David and refused to assist Ammon again. Ammon was now isolated. 2 Samuel 10:1ff.

The following year after this victory David sent Joab with the army again to take Ammon and they besieged their capital city. 2 Samuel 11:1-12:28. Joab urged David to come for their surrender, as he had robbed them of their water supply and time was running out for them. The nation of Ammon became a vassal state to both David and Solomon, the latter of whom took an Ammonite wife, from their royal family (who may have been used to rule as client kings). 2 Samuel 17:1ff. During the great rebellion of Absalom in David's reign he sought refuge and rebuilt his strength in the territory previously controlled by Ammon, and this is very strong evidence that they supported David thoroughly by this time and clearly did not hold his war against them against him.

During the period following Solomon's death things changed again, back to days not unlike the period of the Judges. The Ammonites and Moabites controlled the trade routes from the trans-Jordan north, south and east, and so they fought to control this lucrative taxation source. The Assyrians grew in power and influence through the 800- 650 BC time period, and the displaced Arameans from the north moved into Ammonite and Moabite territory, with their support and encouragement, strengthening them in the Arab culture they all shared. Sennacherib III, who defeated and took into captivity the northern kingdom of Israel in 720 BC took tribute from Ammon, and so did his successors until around 620 BC. The power vacuum created by the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC allowed the Ammonites to take advantage of those places that had been weakened by the deportations of 720 – 700 BC and were now no longer garrisoned by Assyrian troops, or subject to their reprisals if taken. This appears to be what has occurred and leads to the chapter in Jeremiah we read now. Around 630 BC this was beginning to happen, and was attacked by Jeremiah's predecessor Zephaniah in Zephaniah 2:8-11.

The history of the Ammonites after the fall of Nineveh appears to be as follows. The first phase was as harassing forces, often working with the Babylonians to raid Israel. As we have already seen, 2 Kings 24:2, Nebuchadnezzar used them and other Arabs to harass Jehoiakim's kingdom for a year or so, while he built up strength after his exhausting and costly battle against Egypt around 600 BC. Within a few years however the kingdoms of Ammon, Moab, Tyre, Sidon and Judah had formed an alliance, with the support, or at least the connivance of Egypt, to rebel against Babylonian power. This fatally flawed alliance is the second phase of Ammon's history in the days of Jeremiah.

The two phases of this period for Ammon came to "sticky ends" for Judah both times; the first in 597 BC with a major deportation under Jehoiachin, and the last, in 586 BC with the loss of every city and the deportation of over 95% of their population. Ammon survived both times, but was later dealt a crushing blow by Nebuchadnezzar. This was not before the king of Ammon had played evil power politics, using the Jewish captain Ishmael to murder Gedaliah and his Babylonian allies. Jeremiah 40:11 – 41:15.

As a result of this evil and the previous rebellions Nebuchadnezzar besieged Rabbath-Ammon as he had Jerusalem and took it, burned it to the ground, knocked over it's walls, and killed or deported over 90% of their population, and they were never an independent nation again. The territory of Ammon, with it's few survivors got absorbed into the Arab bands that then moved into the nearly deserted country. The area became a Persian province in the 530s BC.

**3 Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together. 4 Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me?**

From one side of this nation to the other the destruction wrought by the Babylonian Army was total. The king, the priest and the princes are either killed or taken into captivity. The women are pictured as running to and fro between the stone wall enclosures within the fields (sheep fold and vine yard walls) and town defence systems, trying to hide, but it is all in vain. They weep and lament loudly for the destruction, and also possibly as they are rounded up by the Babylonians. The reason for their demise is the same as for Moab; it is their over whelming pride and arrogance towards all threats. Psalms 49:6-9, 52:1-7, 62:5-10. They had trusted in their false religion and their apparent, but deceptive military strength; both were proved flawed and foolish.

They had bought off the Assyrians with tribute money and worked with the Babylonians and then betrayed them, but they thought that they would survive anything from the sanctuary of their mountains and beautiful fertile valleys, but all would

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be swept away. The prophet refers to them as “a backsliding daughter”, indicating that as a nation they had known the true God, but left God for their demon-god Chemosh and so slid back into the paganism of their neighbours. They trusted in their wealth, and from their control of caravan routes, and while their wealth and power was significant, it was all hopeless. They had the pride that had risen to a sense of invincibility, but none are invincible when they stand against God. It is this message that the descendants of this people learn and apply thoroughly in the Great Tribulation period.

**5 Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wanders. 6 And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.**

They have their pride and over-confidence replaced by deep and abiding fear. The direction of the threat will not just be the north, for all around them the Arabs of the desert will hear of their defeat and sweep in to settle their fertile lands and loot what remains. The survivors of Ammon either intermarried with the Arabs, or moved westwards settling where they could and scratching a living from the land as the disposed Israelites had to. From being a strong nation they were reduced to slaves of Babylon, or landless wanderers. They were restored to their land eventually, but always as vassals of others, the peasantry of other rulers. They remain so to our own day, but in the latter days they will find salvation and blessing in their response to the gospel and their protection of the Jewish believers of the Great Tribulation period.

**7 Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished? 8 Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.**

The Edomites, as partly the descendants of Esau, opposed the children of Israel from the beginning until the ending of their history when they are absorbed into Israel. During the Exodus they actively opposed the march of Israel, and at the end of their history, as the Idumaeans they produced the king, Herod the Great, who would, with his descendants, try to kill Jesus and his followers. They were however led to Judaism under the Maccabaeans/Hasmoneans, before the days of Herod, and so many amongst them worshipped God, and many of their descendants will find salvation again in their worship of God in the Tribulation period. Their land will be the centre of the tectonic disturbances of the latter period of the Great Tribulation period as the Great Rift Valley runs up through their land.

The people to be known as the Edomites seized the land of the Horites after their demise around the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC. Archaeology alone gives us reliable base data on this area and its people. The Horites had a significant civilization from the 23<sup>rd</sup> century BC. They may have been wiped out by Chedorlaomer in his invasion, described in Genesis 14:1ff. The settlers of this land were a mix of Horite, Canaanite, Arabic (of Esau), and Hittite. They forbade the Israelites permission to cross their land by the main highway. Numbers 20:14-22, Deuteronomy 2:1-8, 23:7-8. The Israelites were forbidden to hate them and were allowed to count as Israelites a child born into the third generation of an original mixed parent family. God saw the Edomites/Idumaeans in terms of their later salvation, not in terms of their present hostility at the time of the Exodus.

Solomon subdued the Edomites and entered them into his kingdom, establishing a naval port at Ezion Geber, and his famous mines in their vicinity. The rich caravan traffic was thereby controlled by Solomon and added significantly to his wealth. Edom was lost under later kings and control of the land flowed back and forth. Edom was controlled by Assyria and made to pay heavy tribute, which impoverished them. They fell under Babylonian power influence in 604 BC and paid tribute to them until the rebellion in Zedekiah's day. They rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem and were active in taunting the captives. Lamentations 4:21-22, Obadiah 10-16.

They did not live long to rejoice, for under the Nabatean invasions of Moab they also suffered from the expanded Nabatean kingdom and were finally absorbed into that kingdom, or the Idumaeans kingdom that centred around Hebron. The Idumaeans were conquered by the Maccabees after the battle of Akrabattene in 164 BC, and John Hyccanus compelled all Idumaeans to become Jews in faith and practise. Antipater emerged from there as Governor for the Romans of the region of Judea in 63 BC and his son was Herod the Great, who the Romans made king in 37 BC. The Idumaeans were the staunchest defenders of Judaism in Jerusalem in 70 AD, many dying there, with the last ones falling amongst the 960 defenders of Masada in 73 AD. The survivors were absorbed into the wandering Bedouin who still travel their land today.

The prophecy of Jeremiah goes back to the prophetic words spoken over Esau right at the beginning of the joint history of Israel and the Arabs. Genesis 25:27-34. The blessing of Esau by Isaac his father sets the tone for his life and the destiny of his descendants. Genesis 27:37-41. Esau settled around Mt Seir in what would become Edom around 1740 BC. Genesis 36:1-8. They had enough wisdom from the patriarchs and prophets who had spoken to Israel and Judah through the years. They had similar language to the Jews and knew all the truths of the scriptures, but in their human viewpoint they thought they were wise, without God's viewpoint accepted to correct them. They were blessed by association with their father Abraham and Isaac, but by not following the truth of these men, or the faith of their descendants in Israel, they lost their position of blessing amongst the nations and lost their lands to others. This was reversed in the past by rediscovering faith, and will be reversed in the future by the same means.

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**9 If grape gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough. 10 But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbours, and he is not.**

The destruction of their lands will not be like the occasional Arab raids across the deserts where things would be taken but little destroyed, for the Arab raiders were smart enough to leave the grape vines and olive trees for next time! They knew that if they destroyed everything the Edomites would not produce anything and if they didn't produce anything and be prosperous, then there would be nothing to steal next year! All this would change with the Babylonian conquest, and as the other nations discovered, there would be nothing left at all for them after their enemy came through this time. Their land would be stripped bare and be blighted but it would not ever fully recover as Israel would. These people were simply "gone" and their remnant absorbed into other peoples. Psalms 37:35-36, Isaiah 17:12-14, Malachi 1:1-4. Their hope remained, but only in and through salvation and obedience to the Word of God.

**11 Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. 12 For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it. 13 For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.**

Even though they gloated over Judah's fall, they are still under the Lord's protective hand and their children and widows will be protected into the future. Psalms 10:14-18, 68:5, 82:3-4, 146:9, Proverbs 23:10-11. The people who look to the Lord God of all will always be delivered, and they are to trust in the Lord in their distress, and they will be cared for then again. The rest are to face the destruction that is coming to all who reject the Lord's truth. Proverbs 17:5, 1 Peter 4:17-19. Their land will be a perpetual desolation, and so it is unto this very day. Ezekiel backs this prophetic word with his own prophecy. Ezekiel 35:2-25.

**14 I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle. 15 For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.**

Jeremiah has a message from the Lord, not a "rumour". The message is that the word is already sent out to all the surrounding nations to gather and take advantage of the land of Edom in her distress. They are already gathering their strength to plunder what is left of her after Babylon has carried away the content of their cities as booty. From a great people they will become small amongst the nations; they will be absorbed by them. Their very name will be unknown over the years to come and the land will be known by another name, just as it was before they arrived there. This is the "fact of history" that they forgot! They forgot that they were but men on a journey through time and that the Lord their God would hold them up as they served him and allow them to fall into oblivion of they forgot him and abused his people.

**16 Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD**

They were "terrible" to others, in the sense that they lived in an inhospitable land without hope of capture by any except the strongest and largest of armies. Their fortresses were high up on rugged hills, with natural defences that defeated all but the strongest and most able of their enemies. They are reminded that pride has led to the fall of all the nations around about and it will lead to their own fall, for the God can cast them down from the very heights of the eagle's nests of the Negev. Proverbs 16:18, 18:21.

God's good name depends upon his answers to the prayers of the lost and the Lord maintains his good name and delivers all who call upon him. If pride is faced and people call upon the Lord, they will be heard and delivered. We can be tested sorely in this life, but we will be delivered if we trust in him who gave his all for our salvation. If he did this much for us as unbelievers, can he do less for us now as his children? 1 Peter 5:6-9. All the Edomite-Bedouin believers of the last days find salvation and deliverance in the Lord by obedience to his Holy Word and in their protection of the Jewish believers who flee to live amongst them. Read through the following verses and preach their content or their truth often, for the Lord seeks from all of us obedience to his Word, for there alone we will find blessing. Romans 5:8-21, Hebrews 8:6, 9:14.

### JEREMIAH 49:17-22

**17 Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof. 18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.**

Remember, the same words used over Judah are here used over Edom, for their sins are the same; the sons and daughters of Isaac have sinned just like the descendants of Esau. Deuteronomy 29:22-29. They will all be so thoroughly destroyed that travellers will hiss through their teeth as they see the destruction and be amazed at their fall from such

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prosperity to desert. It will be as total as Sodom and Gomorrah; cities the sites of which that could be seen from their lands. After the destruction of the Babylonians of this land only the Bedouin have lived there since, with metres of wind blown sand covering and occasionally uncovering their once great cities. Psalms 11:1-7.

**19 Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?**

Nebuchadnezzar came up like a lion (the symbol of Babylonian Kingship) from the Jordan River. This was a potent figure of speech in this day, when Asiatic lions still hunted from the reeds around the River Jordan and suddenly leapt upon an unwary sheep, goat, or person. There will be no escape for the false religious and political "shepherds" of Edom, as the lion is to scatter this disobedient flock and never allow them to be gathered fully again. They will never be a separate nation, but will become the "flock" of other nations through history.

The genes of the Edomites are found today throughout the region of Trans-Jordan, Israel, and Egypt. God has given them over to judgment and they will be finally judged by their appointed shepherd, the Lord Jesus himself, on his return. The foolish kings of Edom have thought that they were shepherds of sufficient power to defeat all the plans of their enemies, but they deceived themselves in their pride. Pride will always deceive and destroy, for it makes men believe they are more than mere mortals! The final judge is the Lord Jesus and he will judge all the Arab peoples on the basis of Matthew 24-25, as we saw above. Those who have been obedient to His Word will be saved. This is the present expectation of the Moslem people who read and know their Koran anyway! Even within the Koran itself there are many passages that will be used to bring the Arab peoples to faith in Jesus in the last days.

**20 Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.**

To be corrected they need to hear the Lord's words. It is an absolutely settled thing; the nation of Edom is doomed in 586 BC, and the least of the Babylonian units will achieve victory over these mighty desert warriors. The Lord is against them and they will not stand at this time, for the one who made them has decreed that their rebellion against him is over, and so it is. Their land will be desolate, and that is an end of it! Zechariah 4:6, Malachi 1:3-4, 1 Corinthians 1:27-31. Their later hope will be in the Lord alone, not their own power. The Tribulation believers in these lands will not make the same errors that their ancestors made.

**21 The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea. 22 Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs**

There is a profound impact upon all the surrounding lands because of the fall of Edom. The sounds of destruction are heard to the Red Sea. Nebuchadnezzar's army moves with the swiftness of an eagle, and Bozrah, their mighty city fortress will fall, with its mighty men reduced to the involuntary cries of a woman in child birth. They have lost their ability to fight, as well as lost the will to resist. It is a solemn reminder; we may raise up great buildings, build up great businesses, and purchase and drive expensive cars, but all these things are temporary, and are gone with the wind of adversity or disaster. We may train with weights in the local gym, prepare ourselves for war, so that we have great physical strength and excellent ability in the use of weapons, but all this can be blown away in an instant.

From their fortress cities the men of Edom felt good, and they were good fighters who practiced every day. Man on man they are mighty, but they are a few thousand, and when they see the size of the Army Nebuchadnezzar has brought against them, even the mightiest man realizes that there is no hope for them. They depended on their strength, but far greater strength has been brought to bear against them. It is important to be as fit and healthy as we can be for more effective service of the Lord, but we are fools if we trust in a thing (bodily strength) that the smallest cell (cancer or virus) can destroy suddenly.

It is good to build a good house and business so that ministry can be more effectively funded, but to trust something that a fire or earthquake can destroy in minutes is foolish. Our security and stability for life and witness rests with the Lord our God alone. It is this truth that the final descendants of the Edomites see in the Tribulation period and obey the Lord in those dark days. The remnant of Esau will be delivered by sheltering the descendants of Jacob.

### JEREMIAH 49:23-27

**23 Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet. 24 Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.**

Damascus has always been a great city, and remains one today as the capital of Syria, as it has been capital to many people groups down the centuries. It has been great, but it has also been captured and destroyed many times. A number



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of these captures and/or destructions are prophesied and recorded by the prophets. Circa 780 BC, Amos 1:3-5, Circa 720 BC, Isaiah 17:1-14, Circa 515 BC, Zechariah 9:1-8.

Abraham travelled through Damascus on his way to the land and picked up his most trusted servant, Eleazer of Damascus, there. Genesis 12:1-9, 15:1-6. From the days of Thutmose III (circa 1460 BC) Damascus was under Egyptian rulership, through until the days of Akhenaton (1372-1354 BC) when it was lost. It was regained by Seti I (1312-1298 BC) and finally lost under Ramses II (1301 – 1225 BC). The peoples around Damascus were the Arameans, an Arab/Chaldean mix who spoke an early Aramaic language that became the language of the Middle East by the days of our Lord and was the main language of Palestine through from around 530 BC – 70 AD, with Hebrew a religious language mainly. The book of Daniel is partly written in Aramaic as a sign of the dominance of the Age of the Gentiles after the first fall of Jerusalem in 605 BC.

King Saul fought the Syrian kings based in Damascus, as did David and Solomon, and for a time they held all the territory of these kings, including the city of Damascus. The control of the lucrative trade routes to Mesopotamia gave whoever controlled Damascus great wealth through trade. 2 Samuel 8:5-6. The Aramaeans soon shook off Hebrew dominance and in subsequent centuries dominated Israel under two great kings of Damascus, Ben Hadad I (883-843 BC), Hazael (circa 843 – 801 BC), and then Ben-Hadad II lost the kingdom to Assyria and the Hebrews. The Assyrians conquered completely the Aramaean kingdom centred at Damascus in 732 BC. The king of Judah, Ahaz sold out the Syrians to Assyria to save himself, and Hoshea, the last king of the northern kingdom of Israel fell to the cruel Assyrians shortly afterwards in 720 BC. 1 Kings 15:16ff, 20:1ff, 23:1 – 21, 2 Kings 8:7-15, 14:28, 16:1-20, 17:1ff.

The city was nearly completely flattened and it's people carried off by the Assyrians, just as Amos and Isaiah had predicted, but by the days of Jeremiah the city had been rebuilt and repopulated, for it was simply in too important a position to be abandoned for long. Under Assyrian control it prospered again, and when they fell to Babylonian power after the Battle of Carchemish in the early 600s their prosperity continued. The Babylonian capture of the city and state (Hamath and Arpad being two other previous city-states that were part of the greater kingdom of Syria) was significant, with many deaths as Jeremiah predicts, but it was not to be as disastrous as the Assyrian one had been.

Hamath is now called Hamah and is on the Orontes north of Damascus, and Arpad is now the village/town of Arfad and is 14 kilometres north of Aleppo on the coast, hence the reference to the sea. Once again, it would appear that Nebuchadnezzar launched several offensives simultaneously and simply overwhelmed the defenders in all important places by sheer weight of numbers. The method of capture for Damascus is given by the prophet; the Babylonians got fire established inside the wall and collapsed it (a common technique at this time) so gaining access to the open streets of the city and slaying all the young men who opposed them. The rest of the army stood silent in surrender. The palaces were to be burned by fire, although most would be rebuilt quickly by the Babylonians.

The population after the Assyrian deportation was mixed and continued to be so through the Persian, Seleucid, and into the Roman period. Their rulers tended to be drawn from the Nabatean Arabs after the Persian period, and this was the case during Paul's time there after his conversion. Acts 9:10-28. In this period Antioch was the more important Syrian city for commerce and this continued through the Roman and Byzantine period, until the battle of Yarmuk in 636 AD when the Moslem armies took the city. Damascus was the capital of the Umayyad Empire from 639-744 AD, and again a capital city under the Mamelukes in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It's most serious sack, even worse than the Assyrian deportation, was in 1401 under Tamerlane and his Mongol horde. There were few survivors of that great evil, but the city rose again from its ashes.

**25 How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy! 26 Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts. 27 And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad**

Jeremiah weeps for this city, which he must have visited several times, for his language indicates knowledge of it's layout and a love for it ("my delight"). The city was not ever left long destroyed, and became a centre of Babylonian administration and later of Persian power, then Seleucid, and finally the Romans used it as their capital for their frontier province of Syria. All power, wealth and political influence are gifts of God. When a person, a place, or a people forgets that they have things courtesy of the Lord their God they are on unstable ground. Damascus forgot it was dependent upon the grace of God and their judgment came as a result of their power plays against the Jewish people. The only hope for Damascus in the future is when they protect Jewish fugitives from the Anti-Christ, resist his power over them, and accept the truths of the Word of God and wait for the return of Jesus in faith. Those who survive the Great Tribulation period do so because they have the grace of God, and the holiness of God, as their central focus points for all decision making. They truly practise "Islam", or "total submission" to the Word and Plan of God.

**Ezekiel 21:20-32,**

**20 Appoint a way, that the sword may come to Rabbath of the Ammonites, and to Judah in Jerusalem the defenced. 21 For the king of Babylon stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.**

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Nebuchadnezzar has done his divination and made his plans but they are all in the plan of God and he has been in effect "led" to freely do what he intends in his heart, but also what is in accordance with the plan of God. The various means of divination are used by the king of Babylon. He has known Daniel, but still uses his pagan means, at this point anyway, to determine the way ahead, by casting arrows into the air and seeing which way they land, and by having his priests examine the livers of sacrificed animals to determine the "omens". All this is pagan nonsense but it means that the Lord can ensure that he is led in the way that suits the plan. Here we see the man determined himself to do what the omens say, yet being guided by the God through these foolish things, for the Lord is far bigger than the systems of the pagan priests that he uses.

Men may think they are following their gods, and be determined to do so, yet the Lord God of all can ensure their choices reflect both their free will and the outcome of his plan. It is a foolish thing to go against the living God, for no man has the power or knowledge to out think God. This is the same today with people who reject the God of the Bible, but follow spiritualist systems and talk with spirits, (read – demons) through their religious practises. They can be fooled by the demons, but as the demons can operate only under the permissive will of God, Job 1:6-12, they are unable to do anything outside the plan and purposes of God, even though they are in rebellion against him. They tremble at the reality of the rulership of God over all things and creatures. James 2:19.

Nebuchadnezzar's choice will be towards Jerusalem, for the Lord has determined their judgment and Nebuchadnezzar is his instrument. The plan calls for judgment, but within it those who repent will be saved from their enemy's hands, for the Lord's hand is upon every detail of the process. This great king will himself be judged for his idolatry, and will spend seven years under the burden of mental illness before he is purged of all its stupidity. The great suffering of the world under the yoke of the Anti-Christ prepares the Arab peoples to reject his rulership, but the full revelation of the deception of his religious policies are the turning point for Arab and Jew alike. It is the total rejection of the idolatry of the Anti-Christ that delivers the Arab peoples in the Great Tribulation period. The occult world of today is not "harmless fun" as many consider it today, but satanic deception, and walking away from it will alone deliver the pagans of the last days! The works of Satan must be rejected, and the will of Satan's Anti-Christ resisted. That resistance is to start today! James 4:7.

**22 At his right hand was the divination for Jerusalem, to appoint captains, to open the mouth in the slaughter, to lift up the voice with shouting, to appoint battering rams against the gates, to cast a mound, and to build a fort. 23 And it shall be unto them as a false divination in their sight, to them that have sworn oaths: but he will call to remembrance the iniquity, that they may be taken.**

Having conducted his divination, he has indeed discovered the divine will, and he makes his plans quickly as to which of his generals are assigned to which tasks in the process of seizing the various cities that are to be targeted. Some leaders of the army are involved in psychological warfare; they are in charge of "shouting".

The ancient forces understood the importance of diversion, deception, distortion, distraction, and defence for the attacker. They would have lesser units of the army make extremely loud noises, as if battle was about to be launched from their direction, to ensure that the enemy were unable to marshal all their forces and sally out of the gates. In the early stages of a siege the attacker could be vulnerable to a sudden attack in force from the enemy within the gates. While one or more groups made distracting noises, another attacked the gates with their battering rams, in the hope they could force an opening and the army pour in quickly and end the battle in a day, but the other two strategies (build a siege mound, or fortress) were more likely the outcome.

The first immediate objective of a sudden attack was that they would ascertain the fire power the enemy had inside the walls, and the second is they tied the best of the enemy army up defending, and so made it less likely they would sally forth in force. The third element of the attacker's army would then immediately begin a siege wall around the city to stop the people within escaping, and they would also build forts for their own army to sleep soundly within, also a precaution against a night sally by the defenders. The plans of Nebuchadnezzar are well laid and indicate a careful and thorough commander.

What is the Judean's response to all this within the walls? They will see the enemy as operating under a false religious system and will trust their own renewed oaths to the Lord, and the past oaths of the Lord to the Jewish people. These people were, as we have seen, regular attendees at Sabbath services in the Temple. It was not for lack of religion that the people would be slain; it was for lack of holiness and over abundance of hypocrisy!

The people within Jerusalem will renew their oaths to the Lord, but they will fail to renew their lives! They do not repent of their evil, and so continue their immorality, they continue their idolatry, and they continue their compromised lives, with a super spiritual act in the Temple to try to mask their own evil. They quote the scriptural promises regarding Jerusalem, made to their godly ancestors, but they do not see that their spiritual darkness has separated them from receiving such promises themselves. The people who opt for religion without spiritual reality, continue to follow Satan's strategy, and so will suffer his final fate, but those who follow God, turn in repentance to the one they see they have wronged, and through heart and life change they are delivered, though through fire! 1 Corinthians 3:15, 1 Peter 1:7, Jude 23.

The truly repentant become the remnant. From the last siege of Jerusalem in 586 BC Jeremiah gives the final survivors figure as only 745 people heading into captivity from a city that may have had 100,000 inhabitants at the start of the siege! Jeremiah 52:28-30. His figures here are for Jerusalem only. Compare 2 Kings 24:15-16, where for the whole land

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the nobility, army leaders, and artisans that went into captivity in the second captivity group, in 597, were numbered at 8000. The total group, from all the forty plus fortified cities of this time can only be guessed at, as can the numbers of "poor people" left to tend vines and olive trees. The carnage is terrible, but the prophets have made it clear that it was also avoidable. All the people had to do was confront the truth about their sinful lives and they would be saved. This remains the truth today, and will be the stark choice of truth for those in the Tribulation period!

**24 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because ye have made your iniquity to be remembered, in that your transgressions are discovered, so that in all your doings your sins do appear; because, I say, that ye are come to remembrance, ye shall be taken with the hand. 25 And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end,**

There are a great many of the most important theological themes of scripture in this passage, for it illustrates the problem of mankind in all ages; the problem of sin and evil. The people have thought that God does not mind their sins, and that he overlooks their false and evil religious practises. There is to be no compromise with any thing from Satan's side of history for his side and all who take it are doomed to the Lake of Fire. Revelation 14:9-13, 20:12-15. Only rejection of satanic religion saves mankind through this time, and many amongst the Arab peoples do this and are delivered to blessing in the Millennial Kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

The evil ones amongst the Jewish people of this day of Jeremiah had ensured by their arrogant holding to their evil behaviours that their iniquities would be remembered, rather than wiped away. They rejected repentance and so did not receive God's forgiveness, for they didn't see their problems, or God's with them! They were determined to keep on following their plans and so they will all perish in them, and special attention is directed to the prince of the land, King Zedekiah, who was called upon to stand for truth before the Lord and keep his oath to Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him king over Judah, but his iniquity is great and his arrogance leads him to death.

It is arrogance that leads to King Zedekiah's death and all the people who follow after him, and it will be the same satanically blinded arrogance that leads evil Arab and Jewish unbelievers to their deaths in the Tribulation period, for they will follow the False Prophet and the Anti-Christ, rather than the truth of God. Mankind is constantly sifted by God through the centuries into those who follow His Word and those who resist it and follow after Satan's deceptions. Praise God for many Arabs and Jews respond to the truth and are delivered, even though their evil fellows are deceived and perish.

**26 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. 27 I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no more, until he come whose right it is; and I will give it him.**

The evil people who have been "lifted up" to rulership will be cast down due to their unbelief, and the poorest people who repent will be "lifted up" and will live and go on to produce the children who will repopulate the land. This will occur both in the Exile of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC and in the Tribulation period. God will overturn all the social, family based, and wealth based systems of rulership in the land. These people believe they are entitled to rule, but they will become a family of shepherds and carpenters again. David was taken from the sheep fold to be king, but his descendants have coasted down hill on their godly ancestry, and so the Lord will over turn their fortunes and they will return to the sheep fold. 2 Samuel 7:8-29, 1 Chronicles 17:7-12, Psalms 78:70.

God lifted David up and he is the one who lowers his evil descendants back to humble status. Their expectations are all overturned, and their social status reversed, and this will continue as their status quo until the one comes whose right it is to take the Davidic throne again. The Father will give the throne back to the line of David through the Messiah, who will rule from Jerusalem in the Millennial Kingdom. Those reading these words may physically live to see it, or if not, you will, if believers in him, return with him to see it. Ezekiel moves from Zedekiah's doomed throne to David's greater son's eternal throne. Matthew 22:41-45, Acts 2:25-36.

It is the Lord who lifts us up to place us, and empower us, to do whatever the will of the Father is for us. We place ourselves in his hands and we are safe, empowered, protected, and stabilized in him. 1 Peter 5:6-7. He has a plan and we are to rest in the timing of the Lord relating to that plan, not any hare-brained schemes of our own. It is the Lord alone who shakes the heavens and the earth, not any other power, and it is he who will ruler forever from David's throne. Haggai 2:21-22, Hebrews 12:25-29.

**28 And thou, son of man, prophesy and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD concerning the Ammonites, and concerning their reproach; even say thou, The sword, the sword is drawn: for the slaughter it is furnished, to consume because of the glittering: 29 Whiles they see vanity unto thee, whiles they divine a lie unto thee, to bring thee upon the necks of them that are slain, of the wicked, whose day is come, when their iniquity shall have an end.**

The Judeans are now fully reminded of their fate and their destiny; and even though the immediate fate is terrible, their eternal destiny under David's true descendent, is secure and mighty. They have a future, but the Ammonites, their traditional enemy, do not have a future as a separate people. They will be restored as a people after the Babylonians

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attacks, but will be ended as a people, and will live on only as they are absorbed by the Arabs that will overwhelm their lands. Jeremiah 49:1-6, Ezekiel 25:1-7, Amos 1:13-15, Zephaniah 2:8-10.

These people mock Judah at this time and all nod their heads and say, "God is judging them", but the day will come when they will know surely that God has judged their nation also! They have been wicked and have mocked Judah for its wickedness, but in the end, all will see that God judges all of them by the same standard. Psalms 4:4, Proverbs 17:3, 1 Corinthians 11:28, 2 Corinthians 13:5. As God judges them so the Lord will lift them up in later days as they repent, recognize the Word of God and are obedient to the Lord.

**30 Shall I cause it to return into his sheath? I will judge thee in the place where thou wast created, in the land of thy nativity. 31 And I will pour out mine indignation upon thee, I will blow against thee in the fire of my wrath, and deliver thee into the hand of brutish men, and skilful to destroy. 32 Thou shalt be for fuel to the fire; thy blood shall be in the midst of the land; thou shalt be no more remembered: for I the LORD have spoken it.**

They will all be judged where they live, for that is where they were placed by the creator to serve him, but they have all served their own lusts and so will die in them. They will fall before a brutal enemy who will delight in their slaughter, and they will all know the end of their nations in great bitterness. Five years after the fall of Jerusalem the Babylonian Army entered the land of Ammon, Moab and Edom and destroyed them all thoroughly. The Ammonites are remembered today only in the name of the capital of the modern Arab state of Jordan, Amman. Their surviving descendants will find blessing only in the Messiah of the Jewish people they mocked, but when they repent and receive Him they will be blessed and restored again.

To step outside the plan of God is to walk into danger at every turn. We are made by God to serve him and we find our greatest joy and eternal reward by finding the things to do for the Lord in accordance with his will. In his plan alone can we relax and serve him with certainty of the outcome. Our freedom is over once we select a path, for each path in life has it's own outcomes and consequences, which we cannot change. Only God can turn cursing to blessing after wrongful choices are made. We are to urge the Lord's people to make right choices and we are to urge all who have wandered away from his path to repent and return to the way of life. There is no other safe place.

False Religion has no power to turn history around, or change the destiny of people, for it leads to hypocrisy and then judgment. Only genuine relationship with the one true God, our Creator and Saviour, can turn around our lives and produce the blessings we were re-made and re-born in Christ for. This will be the path to blessing for all the Arab peoples. Many will find this path in the dark days of the Tribulation.

### **Ezekiel 25:2-14**

**1. The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against the Ammonites, and prophesy against them; 3 And say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the Lord GOD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity;**

The children of Ammon are descendants of the daughter of Lot, from the incest with her father, and they had gone from the monotheism of their ancestor to the paganism of the peoples amongst whom they dwelt. Genesis 19:30-38. They had opposed the children of Israel through their history and they were particularly filled with hatred and delight at their misfortune in the days of the Babylonian Captivity. Jeremiah has already announced a similar judgment upon them and the other nations who rejoiced in God's foolish people's misfortune. Jeremiah 9:23-26, 49:1ff.

From the beginning they had opposed Israel's presence in the land, and some of their Arab descendants continue to do so today. This has been for some of these people an implacable, and Satanic inspired hatred, that has run for over three and a half thousand years. Thank God it is ending for many now, and it will end with the remnant of these people becoming saved, and these people will enter the Millennium under the lordship of Jesus. However the last descendants of those who have given themselves over to hatred are eliminated permanently from the earth. Isaiah 11:9-16, Amos 1:13-15, Zephaniah 2:8-11. Their attacks upon Israelite territory, and their idolatrous lifestyle that led Israel astray, may be seen through the Old Testament history books. Judges 3:13, 11:32ff, 1 Samuel 11:2-11, 2 Samuel 10:1-6, 1 Kings 11:7, 2 Chronicles 20:1-5, 26:8. It is their rejection of this evil that always opens the door to their salvation.

During this particular invasion (589-586 BC) of the land by Nebuchadnezzar the Ammonites joined the Babylonian army as volunteers to exact their vengeance upon the people of Judah. 2 Kings 24:2. The Psalms of Asaph, from this time, also record the hatred of the people groups Ezekiel will mention in these chapters, and identifies that their hatred is not so much racial hatred as religious. This explains the satanic origin of the attacks upon the land by these groups, for they are driven by their hatred of the Lord and his revealed faith. Fired up by their pagan religions, and offended by the prophetic words against them, they take vengeance upon the Temple of God especially. Psalms 83:1ff.

**4 Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk. 5 And I will make**

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**Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.**

They joined with the Babylonians to sack Jerusalem, but they themselves will eventually be the targets of Babylonian power, because they will make the same mistake the foolish rulers of Judah did; they will play politics with Egypt to try to balance the power of the Babylonians. None of these peoples are asking what God is doing in the history of their time, and so they play politics and lose. Religion blinds people to the truth about what God is doing and so people think their way through problems, rather than praying their way through them. We are called to ask what the Lord is doing with each day we live, for only then will we be sure of ourselves and our role in the Lord's plan. Only through this path is there any lasting blessing on this earth and in eternity.

God tells them, through the prophet, that their lands are given to the Babylonians. The Babylonian rulers will establish themselves in the palaces of their kings and nobles, and they will serve these eastern rulers. Their fine cities will become ruins and the camel market will operate where people once lived in their capital Rabbah. The crowded suburbs of their towns and villages will be the crouching places for flocks that will hide behind the broken walls of their once prosperous houses. They will know then that they have abused the Lord their God and the God of all nations; they will see that they did evil and have been judged for it in that day. One hundred years before this time Isaiah had also warned the peoples of this area that judgment was coming. Isaiah 17:1ff, 32:9-14. It is a dangerous thing to oppose the warnings of God's prophets.

**6 For thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; 7 Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.**

It is always a dangerous thing to rejoice at others calamity. God makes it very clear that to rejoice at others misfortune, even if they are bad people, is to rejoice at evil, and is to be judged as the evil are surely judged. We are called to care for and pray for our brothers and sisters in Adam, for all have fallen short of the glory of God and all need a Saviour, and so no genuine believer can ever rejoice when an unsaved person falls into hell. We are called to keep on preaching to them until the end of their lives, and keep witnessing to the truth of God's Gospel message until the end of our own. God is interested in the sins and righteousness of all the peoples of the earth. He calls us to tell the truth to all and give the Gospel to all until death stops them hearing or us speaking. We are never to rejoice over the judgment of others, even though those judged may have done great evil to us personally. Judgment is God's strange work and he prefers to save, so our focus is always to be upon such things also. Isaiah 28:21.

### EZEKIEL 25:8 – 11 JUDGMENT UPON THE MOABITES

**8. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Moab and Seir do say, Behold, the house of Judah is like unto all the heathen; 9 Therefore, behold, I will open the side of Moab from the cities, from his cities which are on his frontiers, the glory of the country, Bethjeshimoth, Baalmeon, and Kiriathaim,**

The next nation of the descendants of Lot is Moab. This nation provided a very important woman into the line of David and therefore the line of Jesus, by the name of Ruth. Ruth 1:1ff, 4:13-21, Matthew 1:5. These people are judged, but from within this nation down the ages there have been those like Ruth, who were believers in the true God, and who became the saved remnant of their people, and so received the Lord's blessing in the midst of judgment. This will continue until the end, and many will be saved exactly as Ruth was in the last days.

The Moabites had been abusive towards the people of Israel and so they would be judged for their insults. They have dealt with Israel as if they were pagans like themselves. Rather than accept the God of Israel, as they were urged to do, they have insulted the God of Israel and so will receive the judgment of the Lord upon them. Each of their cities mentioned will be destroyed and their people enslaved by the Babylonians. All these things occurred historically. All the words of the prophets have occurred, or will occur.

**10 Unto the men of the east with the Ammonites, and will give them in possession, that the Ammonites may not be remembered among the nations. 11 And I will execute judgments upon Moab; and they shall know that I am the LORD**

The Ammonites and the Moabites will have their frontiers opened up like a ripe melon by the knife of the Babylonians. They will confront their own end through this and will all fall together, as they stood in abuse of Israel together. They will know who the true God is after they have lost their lands, for their gods will not help them and they will see that they have all been deceived. Isaiah had prophesied these things 100 years before this time. Isaiah 15-16, 25:10-12. Jeremiah has warned the Moabites also. Jeremiah 25:17-21, 48:1ff. God's warning is in order that any who love truth amongst them might be saved.

Ruth was a mighty believer, with a love for the Lord, and so her birth within a pagan group was not a barrier to blessing, and she becomes a great grand mother of a king, and in heaven she is honoured as a godly woman in the line of

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Messiah. We are never to write any person off, for while they live there is hope for them and their people. These people as pagans trusted gods that were no real powers at all, and they served evil, thinking that it would give them power.

Only the creator of the universe gives power and might, and he alone gives safety to the people who obey him alone. We must trust for security in the Lord alone, never our military might. In the last days the people of the Arabian nations will trust the Lord, and stand against the armed might of the Anti-Christ, and they will be kept safe by God in their rebellion against the Anti-Christ, because the God of Abraham will keep them.

### **EZEKIEL 25:12 - 14      JUDGMENT UPON THE EDMITES**

**12. Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because that Edom hath dealt against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and hath greatly offended, and revenged himself upon them;**

The Edomites were opportunists from the beginning; they were true desert dwellers who lived to fight and raid others. The descendants of Esau were "wild asses" as he was. Genesis 25:21-34, 26:34-35, 27:39-46. The Israelites were however forbidden to hate them and were ordered to consider them "brothers". Deuteronomy 23:7-8. They always took opportunity for any vengeance, storing up grudges and vendettas for many years before finding the chance to launch revenge attacks. They were true pagans, living for evil, for lust, for power and for booty. They were like pirates to Judah and sought the chance always to wreak havoc upon any who gave them opportunity.

David and Solomon's Armies had subdued them and made them pay tribute, but that had simply meant that they sought their chance when the nation of Israel split to regain power for them selves. 2 Chronicles 28:17ff. They joined the armies of Nebuchadnezzar and enjoyed the opportunity they then had to exact cruelty upon all Jews, and even attacked and slew the Jewish fugitives who fled from the Babylonians. Ezekiel 35:1-15. It was great evil and as we have seen above, they would pay a terrible price for it later.

**13 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; I will also stretch out mine hand upon Edom, and will cut off man and beast from it; and I will make it desolate from Teman; and they of Dedan shall fall by the sword.**

They have enjoyed killing the Jews, and they looked forward to later moving their flocks into the deserted lands once occupied by Jews. They were keen on plunder and enjoyed the murder of the Jewish people. Their terrible Anti-Semitism will bring judgment upon them. They had been this way since the days when their king hired Balaam to curse them. Numbers 22-24, Isaiah 11:14, Jeremiah 49:7-12, Joel 3:19. This land was a prosperous land, and this is hard to see today, for it is desert, with even its towns buried in shifting sands. Their prosperity will pass and they will be eliminated from their place amongst the nations, with other of the Arabs moving in from the deserts and intermarrying with the survivors and forming the new group, the Idumaeans. They slew many fleeing Jews and they also will be slain by the very men they have assisted kill Jews this time. Psalms 137:7, Lamentations 4:21-22, Obadiah 10-16.

The Babylonians exacted as heavy a tribute upon them as had the Assyrians and their prosperity dwindled. They entered the land after the Babylonians had destroyed Judea and they made Hebron their capital, but were invaded by and conquered by, first the Nabataean Arabs, then they were beaten in battle by Judas Maccabeus in 164 BC, then occupied by the next Jewish Maccabean leader John Hyrcanus in 120 BC, who compelled their people to adopt Judaism.

**14 And I will lay my vengeance upon Edom by the hand of my people Israel: and they shall do in Edom according to mine anger and according to my fury; and they shall know my vengeance, saith the Lord GOD.**

It is God's judgment upon Edom and it will be powerfully felt by all the peoples around about. Those who are coming to destroy the Edomites will execute God's justice upon them in stages, and it will be totally in accordance with his will. These people have stepped outside God's will for them one last and final time, and so they will leave the stage of history as a people, and as we have seen above in other passages, even their half Arab descendants would finally leave the stage of history during the last Jewish defence of Jerusalem in 66-70 AD.

They would fight hard for the Jewish State against the Romans and their nation would be wiped finally from the earth by the Romans. They were always on the wrong side of the Lord's will, whether it was opposing the Jewish people in 586 BC, or fighting for the Jewish people in 66-70 AD; in both places they set themselves against the will of God and way of God, and so the majority leave the stage of history. The remnant of them survive today amongst the Bedouin and will yet play their part in the latter days.

There is no future in any policy that rests in hatred of any other people group, for that is a satanic viewpoint and negatives can never produce anything positive. To hate Israel is even more negative in its impact than standard racism, for God's special curse is upon those who attack Israel. We must warn all peoples, especially our brothers in the Arab world that Anti-Jewish feelings are not in accordance with God's clear revelation, and even though Israel is under judgment still, and we live yet in the Age of the Gentiles, that it is a dangerously foolish thing to attack or abuse Israel, and all such actions will be judged by God, and the people who do such things will not prosper.

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If people will accept the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour and Lord, then they will be blessed and delivered from all harm. If they accept the Gospel message they become actually our brethren. We are to treat all people groups as potential brethren and work, through the Gospel, respectfully and thoughtfully, and sensitively, to see them become so. None are to be considered past redemption until they are dead! We see the change in attitude that we have been reading about in many passages above beginning in our own days in 2020, with the Abraham Accords being signed in September, and since that time other Arab nations joining the Accords.

## **Jeremiah 27:1-11**

**1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, 2 Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck.**

Jeremiah was asked by the Lord to act out what would happen to all the nations around about Judah as a result of their plots and schemes to defeat the rise of Babylonian power. The many small states, frustrated after over 200 years of Assyrian dominance now did not taste freedom, but rather simply another power that would rule over them. They sought independence and freedom from the great powers who extorted money from them at all times, but they didn't seek God's path to freedom. Tribute money would be demanded every year from these "client states". It was in effect "protection money" and was demanded from all conquered people, and was a considerable burden, and it was meant to be. The superior power kept control of the finances to ensure no-one else was powerful enough to raise the money for weapons and the training of an army to challenge them. The only path to freedom is genuine faith!

Jeremiah is told to make model yokes and chains for each of the nations mentioned by the Lord and he is to approach the ambassadors of each nation or city state as they visit Zedekiah in Jerusalem and present them with a yoke and length of chain each. It is a stark and visible warning that they must either "take the yoke" of servitude to the "great power" that rules over them, or they will be chained to the yoke in slavery after their defeat by them. This passage also tells us that the foolish king of Judah was engaged in political intrigue with all these states and was carrying on secret meetings with their ambassadors planning an insurrection against the Babylonians. It was as far as most of the people thought a "patriotic movement", and to oppose it was to support excessive taxation and dominance; it was to be a traitor to Jewish nationalism.

Pause and reflect upon this. Realise fully just what the Lord is asking Jeremiah to do here. He is being asked to stand against his own people and their desire for freedom from the Babylonian yoke of taxation. The American Revolution began with the cry, "no taxation without representation", and so all of us understand the great drive to be free from the dominance of a foreign power. God's words to Jeremiah indicated that Babylon was his chosen instrument to punish his people and that they were to accept the yoke and wait upon the Lord, not take up arms in any patriotic war. This was a time for patient humility and spiritual recovery; it was not the time for political action. This underlines the vital truth that we all must hear from God; it is not the "politically correct" message that God want us to hear, but his message!

Nearly four hundred years before this time the prophet Ahijah had acted out the division of the kingdom after Solomon to Jeroboam. 1 Kings 11:26-40. One hundred years before Isaiah had been asked by the Lord to act out the slavery that was coming to the people because of their sins. Isaiah 20:2. In both cases the reasons for the judgment announced was idolatry; the worship of foreign gods. It remained the sin of the people. God was saying to them in effect, if you worship foreign gods, then get used to serving foreigners! If you seek freedom find it in politically serving foreigners and spiritually restoring your spiritual status with me the true God of all, and then you will be set free.

Ezekiel continued this form of address to the people, acting out various lessons for the people in Babylonian exile. Ezekiel 4, 5, 12, 24. they had to put aside political "realities" and accept spiritual truth before they would be delivered. In today's world the Arab people are told to hate Israel, but their blessing comes as they serve the believing Israelis of the Great Tribulation period. The Arab people must put aside the political "reality", and their recent educational propaganda, and embrace the spiritual to be saved from the power of the Anti-Christ.

**3 And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;**

The kings who were all plotting against Babylon were the ones named in these verses. Their messengers have been coming and going, and while they are meeting in secret, the King of Babylon will be aware of things through his spies and will be preparing his counter measures; both diplomatic and military. They were all fools to think they could prepare to rebel without this great king hearing of things through spies. Also, other than Tyre, these nations and cities had been Israel and Judah's sworn enemies for over seven hundred years, and their paganism had caused judgments to be visited upon them all by God, both directly and through the agency of other nations. What hope was there in a rebellion that depended upon pagans, especially when they were being judged because of their own paganism.

There was also a series of covenants with the king of Babylon whereby all these nations had sworn loyalty to the king of Babylon, and sworn to serve him. This oath had been sworn by Zedekiah in the name of the one true God, and so he was under a solemn obligation before God to obey his oath and fulfil it by loyalty to the Babylonians. Patriotism was not a

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reason to break his oath! Ezekiel makes this point very clearly, as does Jeremiah in a number of later chapters. Ezekiel 17:11-18. All these nations will be judged for their oath breaking behaviours and patriotism will not be a reason that God will accept. Today we tend to believe that there are things that can be used to break our word, but the Lord makes it clear we are not to swear oaths we are not prepared to keep. Matthew 5:31-37, James 5:10-12.

**4 And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters; 5 I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.**

Jeremiah is to command these ambassadors to deliver a message from the God of Judah, but who is also the God and Lord of all. These men would have been very concerned to receive such a message, for their embassy was meant to be secret, and this prophet approaches them in the palace streets and gives them a formal message and a “gift” of a yoke and chains!

The message is that of what theologically is called “general revelation”. It is the message of power and control by the Lord of all. It is God’s way of saying to them that they have sovereignty over their nations and the areas around them only by the grace and mercy of God, and that they must be obedient to the Lord God or they will lose it all. It is God’s plan that is being followed not their own. Exodus 20:11, Job 26:5-14, Psalms 115:15-18, 135:10-12, 136:4-9, 146:3-6, 148:2-6, Isaiah 40:21-26. The creator God is also the God who rules over the earth and controls the governance of nations. Daniel 4:17ff. This is why the prophecies of Daniel could be so specific, for they are history written in advance by the one who controls all history.

**6 And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. 7 And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son’s son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.**

All the earth is the Lord’s to give to whomsoever he desires, and he does decide to give over lands and peoples at times to discipline and when that occurs nothing will change things except repentance. Nebuchadnezzar is referred to as “my servant”, thereby making it clear to all who hear this prophecy that to oppose that king is to oppose the Lord God of the heavens and the earth who has made him king and ruler of nations for this time.

The prophecy makes it clear that Nebuchadnezzar will not rule forever and that he too will be punished, but that the people must wait for the Lord to deliver them from Babylon, and must not raise up rebellion before they are delivered. They are to depend upon the Lord alone, set themselves right spiritually, and they are to wait for the Lord to deliver. They will serve Nebuchadnezzar, his son and his grandson, and then they will be delivered from him into a new rulership. They will have seventy years of servitude to Babylon, from 605 – 535 BC, and then the kingdom will fall into the hands of the kings of the Medes and the Persians, just as Isaiah had prophesied. Isaiah 14:3-11.

Nebuchadnezzar and his son and grandson will rule and serve themselves from the plunder of the nations around about, but then “his time will come”, and Nebuchadnezzar’s nation will serve up a banquet of plunder for all around them. He has rulership of the land and even the animals, and they taxed them all! Psalms 50:10-15. The Psalmist reminds us all that the Lord owns everything, we simply have use of things here, and he will deliver us in troubled times, for he has all the resources in his control. Notice the phrase, “until the very time of his land come”.

This reminds us that there is a plan that is being worked out and it is the Lord’s plan not man’s plan. The great king himself was told of this through Daniel, and possibly had a copy of Jeremiah’s words also, given his sending a special unit of soldiers to rescue the prophet after the final siege was broken. Daniel 2:36-38. The rise and fall of great Babylon is a warning to all who build great wealth without thought of the temporary nature of all wealth. The Lord gives us resources and enough wealth to be used for his glory through the completion of his work, and if we practise this we will be prospered and useful upon the earth.

Our daily challenge is not to be attached to our wealth, for we if we win this battle against materialism we will see it as the great king of Babylon finally did. Daniel 4:23-37. It was Nebuchadnezzar’s grand-son Belshazzar who finally heard the words that his time was up, and even then tried to buy God’s judgment off by promoting his servant Daniel. Daniel 5:22-30. Daniel does not suffer in his post and is recognized by the conquering king as a true servant of the one true God, and rules under him. Daniel 5:31-6:3.

**8 And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. 9 Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:**

King Nebuchadnezzar is given sovereignty by God himself to rule over all the surrounding nations, for he is a central part of the plan of God for this day. Those who do not voluntarily serve the great king will be made slaves by him. The yokes and chains are to be given to the ambassadors of all the plotting nations to be solid evidence against them, that God has



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heard their plots and given formal warning to them, and if their plots are known to God, they can be sure the King of Babylon, the “servant of the Lord”, will know of their plotting also. Ezekiel 17:19-21.

Jeremiah persistently makes this point clear in all his messages throughout all his ministry. There is no escaping the plan of God, or the destiny that the Lord has for them. Those who seek to either fight the great king of Babylon or flee from him into Egypt will suffer death, for they are out of the plan of God for their lives. They must be obedient to the plan and walk where God wants them to or they will be lost to history. Jeremiah 25:17-29, 38:17-23, 42:7-22, 52:1-14.

Jeremiah was persistently telling the truth and there were many false teachers and prophets who were just as consistently telling the lies that the people preferred to hear. As the false prophets, diviners and magicians opposed Moses, Exodus 7:11ff, just so the enemy has his false prophets through the ages to oppose all who stand for truth. Biblical discernment is called for and ruthless strength to oppose evil in all its forms. Deuteronomy 18:9-22, Isaiah 8:19-22, 47:11-15, Micah 3:5-8, Zechariah 10:2.

It is obedience to the truth of God’s Word alone that saves mankind, not being popular with the politicians and pretending you are special. Thinking you are special and will avoid judgment simply makes you a bigger fool and the shock of your fall more catastrophic to you. Blessing and judgment is with the Lord alone; narcissism is the enemy’s character trait.

**10 For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. 11 But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.**

There is blunt speaking here, and that is God’s way all through history. We either face the truth or reap the consequences of believing a lie. The enemy’s purpose in sending lying prophets is that the nations who believe the lies might be removed from their land and destroyed as peoples. Satan has a hatred of mankind at the core of his being, for it is man who condemns him by their response to the Gospel. The Angelic Conflict centres on the role of man in the condemnation of Satan and the fallen angels who went with him in rebellion against the sovereignty of God. Satan is the creator of discord and rebellion and uses it to destroy fallen men and women. He is a murderer from the beginning, for every person he can kill in unbelief is another human being joining him in the Lake of Fire. He seeks to bring as many down in rebellion against God, and the resultant life misery, as he can. He is malice personified.

This study explains why rebellion and all manner of evil has been a part of his policy since the beginning. Satan’s main desire is to secure unbelieving men and women in total rejection of God’s Plan and so make them willing pawns for his malice. All those caught in such an evil place perish both temporally and eternally, but they perish and die in their own wilful choice against the Creator and Saviour God. There is no glory in their life or their death. The false prophets are deceived within their own hearts because they have idols there. They worship other forces, powers and things, rather than the Lord their God alone. The evil of Satan centres in pride, lusts and arrogance. It is pre-occupation with wealth, power, fame, sex, and position in society that deceives foolish men and women. They start to think such temporary things are important and so are open to satanic dominance and deception. Ezekiel was told this in Babylon several years after this time we are studying here. Ezekiel 14:1-11.

The Lord says to Ezekiel that he deceives the false prophets. How can this be? If we reflect upon the study of the Angelic Conflict we see it quickly; the false prophets and the foolish elders of Israel are in the same place. Both groups have rejected doctrinal truth and are harbouring false viewpoints within. They worship “things” and so the Lord simply “hardens their hearts” – that is, he puts pressure upon them in their place of ignorance and foolishness – and so they are self deceived into greater foolishness. The Lord tests the hearts of man; he seeks obedience in the heart and life of us all. He seeks for us to deal with the idols in our hearts; to clear away any worship of things, and make the heart purely devoted to him alone.

The promise from God, through the prophet, is transparent and honest. If the peoples around Judah will serve the great king of Babylon they will have prosperity in their lands. They will have enough prosperity to pay their taxes/tribute to him and have plenty over for their enjoyment of life, and they will have his peace and safety from attack, because that is the will of the Lord for them at this time. They will have security and prosperity because this is the path and will of God for them at this time. If they will accept the Lord’s will for them, put aside their nationalism, put aside their patriotism, put aside their pride and arrogance, then they will have the blessing that God has for them under Nebuchadnezzar.

The Lord does not want us distracted by politics of any shape or form; he wants us solely fixed in our gaze upon his will for us upon the earth, in order that we might do it. We can carry nothing from this earth except the good works done in the power of the Holy Spirit, so let us focus upon Holy Spirit filled lives only and forget who “rules us”! The apostles did not need to care which man was the serving Caesar of their day; and all were bad men at their time. All amongst the apostolic band focused upon the Lord’s will for them to fulfil, and that is to be our focus also. It matters not who are the rulers of our nations and the world itself, we are called to serve the Lord God alone.

We are not here upon the earth to be wealthy, powerful, or famous. These things, if they occur, are simply bonuses and responsibilities. We are here to be his ambassadors, and so in whatever state or financial status we find ourselves, there we are to serve him. We are not to be distracted by anything that we cannot take with us out of this life. We have the choice as to whether we wear the yoke of Jesus or that of deception and death. He wants us to wear a yoke and serve

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him, and he makes no secret of that. We are not here to relax and retire; we are here to work ploughing his field! His yoke is well made and fits perfectly for us; it is our path through life. If we reject the creator's legitimate demands upon our service and life, then we will end up wearing the ill fitting yoke of slavery to the enemy of all mankind. His yoke is true slavery and ends in our death. Matthew 11:28-30.

We are either on the right side of history, (God's side), or the wrong side, (Satan's side), but either way the path of history has been already set by God! It is the Lord who rules over this earth and the wise man and woman recognize this and select their path according to what honours God and places them in the place of maximum service. Politics is only understandable as you look back and see how God wove his purposes out through the will of fallen men. The Lord is working his purposes out and so let us not be distracted by power and the exercise of it, for the only one with real power is the Lord of all and He is going to rule one day.

The Lord's plan for this present age is that nation states rule over their own areas, but at times the land and properties of one nation are seized by another. When this occurs we are not necessarily to take up arms and fight for that land and people's return to their own sovereignty; we are to stop, pray, and seek the Lord's will in the matter, for he may be working his purpose out through the domination of one nation by another. Remember believers of the last days, it is our obedience to the Lord's Will to which we are called, not to national identity and integrity. Nebuchadnezzar was an imperialist tyrant, but he was God's man for his time. Let us beware of jingoistic slogans, but rather let us hold to biblical revelation and be obedient to the Lord alone!

In the latter days this means turning from all government authority that supports the Anti-Christ, and standing with God's people, even if that places you in direct rebellion against your official government. There is to be no compromise with evil at any time, but in the last days active resistance is called for. God's Word is to be obeyed unto death! There is only ever one question that we must answer. It is, "What is God doing in this?" We are then called to obey God, even if it places us outside our own family, or state policy, and well beyond your upbringing/education. Luke 14:25-27, Hebrews 13:13-14.

### **Jeremiah 40:11ff – An Object Lesson in the Persistence of Evil in the lives of some.**

**11 Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; 12 Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.**

Many families had fled when the Babylonians entered the land, and they had not fled to the fortified cities but across the Jordan and away from danger. They had settled amongst the old relatives of Israel, but also their traditional enemies at times. The refugees would have been accepted by these nations, as was the norm during times of war in the ancient world, but they would be keen to return once things were safe, for they had been beggars and manual workers for their hosts for over two years now and longed to return to the now empty land and find food and places to live for themselves again; possibly even return to their own homes and gardens.

The Lord had provided enough wild food for the returnees to gather ample for their needs for the next cold months. All they had to do was accept defeat, acknowledge the Lord's will, serve the Babylonians, obey their governor Gedaliah, and follow God's man Jeremiah. Sadly there were evil men amongst them who had not learned their lessons from the defeat of the nation, and still harboured resentment towards those who had spoken against the war from the beginning and now ruled over the land.

Those who followed Zedekiah and believed in his rebellion still rejected the Word of God, for their king had until the very end! They wanted food, but once they had that their thoughts were as likely to turn to power and how to take it from Gedaliah. They were focused upon how to take vengeance upon this man and his staff, who they considered "quislings" and traitors to their king. These men were pride filled fools, yet they saw themselves as the "patriots". The truth was, the "traitors" to their king were God's true servants and were to be obeyed! The only hope for life was to do the right thing before God, but like their king before them, they prove that evil always lacks brains and logic, but might be strong on "patriotism"! Some of the group recognize the evil in the one man who is a danger and try to warn the Babylonian Jewish Governor Gedaliah.

**13 Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, 14 And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.**

Johanan is an experienced commander, and clearly from his prominence in the narrative a noble and good man. He has kept his troops together in the field facing the defeat of all others. He is not one of the corrupt bodyguards who fled from their king, and he still has good intelligence of what is happening in the land around. The enemies of Judah were many and it would suit the neighbouring nations for there to be no governor in the land, for then they can sweep in unopposed and use the land as they wish without the Babylonians being able to oppose them easily.

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While Gedaliah lives there is a power presence for Babylon, and so his removal is in the interest of all the rebellious nations and plots can be expected. Gedaliah does not think about this, nor does he take good counsel from his Babylonian staff members, nor from Johanan and Jeremiah. The correct course of action would have been to take the details and investigate them thoroughly and then take ruthless action against Ishmael and his men if the truth was found against them.

Gedaliah is too quick to forgive and forget, and too quick to trust in a situation where trust ought to have been withheld until the fruit of Ishmael's life was tested. We are not to trust possibly evil men, but exercise biblical discernment and justice. The devil is active and his servants are as evil as their master. We must not trust people until there is evidence to do so. Jesus did not trust people and we are not to trust too quickly ourselves. John 2:24-25.

There are times when trust may lead to disaster and many suffer for the foolishness of one well meaning person. Gedaliah is well meaning and does not intend to cause harm, but to forgive, or trust, when evidence is offered that this is not the right course of action is criminal stupidity and will lead to other's deaths as well as your own. We do not park our brains at the door of our meeting place, we are ordered to be discerning and test the fruit of the lives of those who ask us to trust them Matthew 7:13-23. This principle will be vital in the last days! Falsehood must be spotted quickly, for those following after evil will be destroyed by it quickly.

**15 Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? 16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.**

Johanan is used to "hits" on enemies and is a tough customer. His suggestion is wrong, for Ishmael needs to be publicly investigated, and all intelligence information needs to be assessed, and the execution ought to be public. This man must be killed, but the modus-operandi of King Zedekiah must be over and a correct process must be followed, but Gedaliah must be as ruthless as justice demands to protect the innocent. Sadly Gedaliah gives himself away by saying he believes Ishmael, for that means that this good man feels he must be careful as he feels he is out of favour at court! It is a fatal error of Gedaliah's part. Remember, Jesus didn't trust people. John 2:24-25. We must only trust people who are proven safe and truthful, and that means we "fruit inspect" before trusting. Matthew 7:13-23. If there is not evidence of fruit of the Holy Spirit in a person's life we cannot trust them. Also, we must not shrink back from investigations to discover the truth, whatever our own perceived strength or weakness.

Take all evidence based allegations against an officer of the church seriously and investigate immediately and thoroughly. Deuteronomy 17:6-7, 19:15. All public officers are to be dealt with publicly, and wrongful allegations against an officer are to be treated in exactly the same way as the wrong doing would have been. If malicious allegations are made without any evidence they are to be publically discounted, and the evil men and women making them are to be publically rebuked. They have been exposed by their evil words as workers of iniquity and are to be revealed as such.

Paul and John's letters give good guidance regarding these things. Too many pastors are trusting without evidence that a person is trustworthy. This is not spiritual, it is just plain old fashioned dumb. Remember Jesus' words concerning the false "christ". Matthew 24:23-28. In the Great Tribulation period many will be traitors to truth and will sell their own friends and relatives to the evil men for money, and to take the heat off themselves. The godly and righteous leaders of that day must be ready to execute all who serve the Anti-Christ and work for him in any way before they kill the innocent.

**John 8:37-44 – Who are indeed Abraham's sons?**

**37 I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.**

These people are not sons of God, they are physical sons of Abraham as they are Jews, but they are not spiritual ones. Spiritually you are not his sons, Jesus says, and you will never see him for you will not be going to heaven where he is with God. Abraham is with God the Father, but these men are bound for a different eternal destiny. The parable of the Rich man and Lazarus makes this point also. Luke 16:19 - 31. The Lord is talking to hypocrites because they are in the Temple very often, yet they do not have a relationship with God.

**38 I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father.**

Jesus is strongly pointing out that He is saying things to them that are directly from the Father, but they are doing the things that they have seen from their father (that is not Abraham, but Satan). Different fathers, different destinies. The Lord is being sarcastic here. There are the saints and there are the "aints". As John will point out in his first letter, the acts of the person show their parentage. If you are God's child, you bear the family likeness and show love and concern for others, and you worship the True God and acknowledge that Jesus is indeed coming to judge the world.

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**39 They answered and said unto him, Abraham is our father. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.**

They were very proud of their father Abraham. They thought that as they were born in the "right family" they would be all right eternally. What is important is whose father you have spiritually. James and Paul both make this point. The Bible makes it clear in the words of Jesus and the words of James; "Do not tell me how good you are, show me by your deeds whether you are truly the child of God or of Satan". James 2:19. Many people now trust in the fact that they have good parents and live in polite society but nothing will save the individual other than their personal relationship with the Lord as their Saviour and Lord of life.

Hebrews 11:8, 13, 17, all show the works of Abraham. Look back also to Genesis 18:1-8. Abraham and all the Old Testament saints died in faith not having received their full inheritance. This passage shows that the thing that made these heroes of faith great was that they believed God's Word, even if they did not see it fulfilled in their lifetime. They looked at things from God's viewpoint rather than the viewpoint of unbelief. The ultimate test for faith came when the Lord Jesus came and stood in front of the people of Israel. The people standing physically in front of the Lord did not want to embrace Him or his words, they wanted to kill Him. "We are part of Abraham's seed", said the Pharisees, but the Lord's answer hits the real issue dead centre. "If you were Abraham's true seed you would accept my Word, because I am the Word he worshipped".

**40 But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.**

The Lord is blunt here. He confronts them with the great gulf between what they are claiming and what they are performing. 'You people claim this', he says, 'but look at what you say, look at your deeds'. The Lord is not trying to win an argument here; for he seeks their souls. He is pushing them into a corner to show that they are lost, and need a Saviour. God seeks the lost right through until the end of the Tribulation period. As we have noted a number of times above, in the last days men must work hard to remain lost!

**41 Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.**

They react badly to Him. The Lord says that they are not doing the actions of Father Abraham but their father Satan. They retaliate, saying that they are not born of fornication, and claim that they have but one father that is God. They are saying that Mary was a prostitute, and that the Lord is an illegitimate son. This accusation was prophesied in Psalm 69, and was the common taunt of the day to Jesus and Mary. The story of the virgin birth was known very well at this time, they made it a shame by lying about it. Few believed Mary. They thought of Jesus as illegitimate, born of a loose woman with a Roman soldier as His father. This is still taught today by some of the religious Jews, even giving the name of the Roman soldier as Panthera. This great evil of blasphemy is a reflection of their greater evil of unbelief.

**42 Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.**

Here he is turning it right back on them and making it very clear what the issue is. The Lord is teaching the virgin birth here, not from the wicked story they had put around, but that He came from God. My birth is unique said the Lord, my Father sent me, says the Lord. The Lord is saying that they are sinning against the love of God by their attitude. It is this attitude that explains why people are in the lake of fire. How can we escape if we neglect, and then abuse, so great salvation? Hebrews 2:3.

Here we are in this passage, but a few months from the Cross. This is a quiet passage but a very powerful one. If you are an unbeliever you are in rebellion against God and are therefore related in your rebellion to Satan. People show their relationships by what they love and side with. If you love someone you respond to them. 1 John 5:1-5 - refers to this passage in John's Gospel. This is a commentary on this passage and also on John 15. By our acts of love towards people we show our true attitude towards them. In the Great Tribulation period the showing of love and concern will be possibly fatal if caught by the evil people, and so all acts of love towards believers are rewarded by the Lord on his return to earth. This is the basis of great rewards for the Arab peoples on Jesus return.

**43 Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. 44 Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.**

These people do not see the truth because they are unbelievers. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16 - the unbeliever has no concept of spiritual things. You do not understand what I am saying says the Lord because you do not have the internal apparatus (the Holy Spirit) to do so. You are children of the Devil not God. There is no such thing as the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man. Liberalism which specialises in not studying the Scriptures has this as their concept. God is the Creator of all, but not the Father of all. 1 John 3:10.

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In relationship with Jesus, God gives us a position that we will enjoy forever. There are only two categories of people; those who are with Jesus by faith in his person, power and plan, and those who decide that what he says is false. You are either a permanent resident with God, or you are a servant on Satan's team trusting your own ideas ahead of God's revealed Word. Satan's appeal is always to the rebellious nature of man. As unbelievers men do not enjoy bowing the knee to anyone, especially God. Satan's religion is very popular, because Satanic religion does not make these demands on the followers of it; Satan knows what appeals to man, and if there is any self denial it is for pride based results. He appeals to the Old Sin Nature, whereas God demands subjection of the Old Sin Nature.

## **Romans 4:1-16. Who is covered by the blessing of Abraham?**

**1 What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?**

**2 For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God.**

**3 For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.**

Paul is very careful in his argument here, because he wants to make it clear that the true "sons of Abraham" are not the circumcised Jews, because they are circumcised genetic sons of Abraham, but all people who share Abraham's faith in God and obedience to God's directions. He will carefully eliminate any superiority by birth and legalism, and establish the basis for the blessing of all genuine believers in the one true God being Abraham's true sons. Genetics is not going to be as important as faith and the open expression of it. He begins by quoting Habakkuk 2:4. This text is at the heart of defining who is and who is not blessed in their association with Abraham. It is living as Abraham lived that delivers us, not being genetically related to him.

**4 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.**

**5 But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.**

It is not the works of men that can justify them, for no-one can do enough to be acceptable to God. We are all sinners and we are saved by God's grace and mercy alone. It is our faith in the character and work of God that separates us from the pagan and the hater of God. It is not believing God exists that saves anyone, for the devils believe God exists, indeed they know it fully and completely and they tremble at the thought. James 2:19. Abraham knew God and worshipped and served Him. Abraham never felt God owed him anything for any work Abraham did; he simply believed and responded to God's requests of him. It was his active and heart felt faith that counted. It is this sort of faith that will deliver the Jewish and Arab peoples in the terrible days that are coming. It is the faith God requires of us today also.

**6 Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,**

**7 Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.**

**8 Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.**

David also had noted this principle of the priority of saving faith in Psalms 32:1-2. Blessing is a result of God's assessment of us, and God's actions towards us, not any actions we take towards God. It is heart felt trust and worship that the Lord blesses, not legalistic works done in man's weak strength. What we need is forgiveness of sin and that is what God gives. We are covered by the Lord's work for us, and we are the recipients of his blessing because of this work. Have we embraced His provision by faith today and are we walking, working, and witnessing in its power.

**9 Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.**

**10 How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision.**

The main argument of the legalistic Jews was that they were saved and blessed simply by their genetics and the actions of their parents in circumcising them. They argued that this made them members of effectively an exclusive club; the "sons of Abraham", and therefore they were blessed forever in their fore-father. Abraham had the Lord's blessing announced to him well before he was circumcised, so that action certainly didn't figure in the equation of blessing.

**11 And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also:**

**12 And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.**

Abraham received the sign of circumcision, not as a work of the flesh, but in humility and faith, for the Lord had directed it. It was his belief in the Lord's words and his actions upon those words that gave evidence of his belief. James 2:14-26. All who have simple faith in God and express that in obedient actions are truly following Abraham's example. It is faith alone that saves, but the faith that saves will not remain alone for long as James notes. Genuine faith will always work

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out into the details of daily life serving God in practical and observable ways. If we walk through this life like Abraham did in humble faith and obedience to God's desires for us we are truly his sons and daughters.

**13 For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

**14 For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect:**

**15 Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.**

**16 Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all,**

Legalism of any form has no place in being a "son/daughter of Abraham", for the Law was added for Israel only over 700 years after Abraham first expressed his faith and left Ur of the Chaldeans. It is faith that is required to make people sons and daughters of Abraham, and for the Arab people of the Great Tribulation period that faith in God has a very specific expression, as we have seen in the passages above, Matthew 24-25. They must believe that God is bringing the present world to its end, and act to save the lives of all who come to them for sanctuary fleeing the forces of evil.

In the midst of the pressures of the Great Tribulation period they express their faith that Jesus is soon to return by hiding the fleeing Jewish believers. In this way they truly express their faith, just as Abraham did before them. It is this expression of faith that saves them. Matthew 25:34-40, James 2:14-26. It is this that makes them inherit the blessing of their father Abraham, and be truly his sons and daughters.

**Isaiah 16:6      There remains hope while people live**

**5 And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness. 6 We have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud: even of his haughtiness, and his pride, and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so.**

God's Great Mercy preserves a people, and a king's family; nothing else ever does! Mercy is theirs if they will repent. The judgment is settled, it will fall, but not upon all, for those who turn to the Lord may yet be saved and the king's house upon the throne of Judah will yet be delivered, and the king's descendent Joseph will see the son of his wife Mary, the descendent of David via Nathan, rise up and he will be the future and coming King of all kings. The king will sit upon the throne in righteousness and through the mercy of God. This is the Lord of glory and he will be there upon the throne in Jerusalem. Psalms 61:2-8, 72:4-5, 18-19, 85:9-12, 89:1-2, 14-16.

The glory and grace of the future and coming King is contrasted to the pride and arrogance of the leaders of Moab, for it is because of their heart's sin that their nation falls. Jeremiah 48:26-34. The Moabite Stone records the same things as are in these two prophetic passages and provides extra-Biblical evidence for the truth of all the biblical references to these peoples and their paganism that led to their destruction. All this Moabite king's lying pride, and his lies of arrogance, are worthless when the verdict of history comes in.

Finally it is not what a man says of himself that matters but what history records that gives a verdict, and last of all, it is only what God says that counts for eternity! A wise woman or man humbles them self before God and lets the Lord lift them up; he/she does not politic for temporary power, but prays for permanent position in God's Plan. 1 Peter 5:5-7. It is this viewpoint that saves the Arab peoples of the Great Tribulation, and it is the pride based viewpoint of the ancient king of Moab that dooms so many through this last time frame of man's history before the Lord's return. What do we value?

**Jeremiah 48:26, 42,**

**26 Make ye him drunken: for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision. 27 For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.**

The curses here are also descriptions of the life of pagan Moab and the reasons for their catastrophic fall. Alcoholism was, with sexual immorality, their "favourite" vice, and they will pay dearly for it when the enemy comes. Babylon was the home of Beer and with Egypt the start place for the brewing industry, but the drunkards of Moab will feel the results of their addiction as the enemy comes. The Bible does not condemn drinking alcoholic drinks with food as part of meals, but it consistently and always condemns drunkenness, and identifies that in certain situations alcohol should not be consumed at all. These men in Moab were, like many today, completely without control over their drinking, and so brought their nation into disaster. There are times when even legitimate drinking of wine with a meal is to be stopped, so that nothing hinders obedience and military readiness. These people have been pagan fools and sadly they will die that way as drunken pagan fools.

When men or women get drunk they roll around in their vomit without realizing what they are doing. Drunkenness is disgusting and always will be. They have mocked Israel in the past, but now the nations will mock their drunkenness in the face of disaster. Israel was a subject for laughter and mockery by all in Moab, as they fell before the swords of their

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enemies and as their goods were pillaged by the Babylonians. They literally “skipped for joy” in a little mocking dance, as they heard of the distress of the Israelites. Such delight in other’s pain is a great evil and this nation will pay dearly for it. True faith in God is shown always in humility and compassion; those without compassion lack the spirit of the living God. Alcohol is always poor medication when facing danger, and in the last days those that tranquilize themselves rather than face the truth will pay with their lives.

**40 For thus saith the LORD; Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab. 41 Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men’s hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs. 42 And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.**

As we have seen above the eagle was a symbol of Babylonian power, as it later would be of Roman power. The swift predator of the sky was an apt symbol for Nebuchadnezzar, for he moved quickly and ruthlessly. The fortresses were seized so quickly that the guards were not even ready to defend themselves; it was an ancient “blitzkrieg”. The Moabites ceased being an independent people because they did not factor in the will and purposes of God into their plans. They magnified themselves above God and his will for them. They lifted themselves up above the status of creature and acted as if they were the creators of their own destiny. Isaiah had expressed this thought a hundred years before this time and both he and Ezekiel would take this image and use it to explain the fall of Satan himself. Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:11-19.

Though expressed towards Tyre, and in this time frame also by Jeremiah to Moab, the principle remains the same. Narcissism (self absorption and self centeredness – arrogant lifting of yourself to the centre of the universe) is at the heart of satanic policy and always will be. **Proverbs 16:18, Isaiah 37:23.** To forget you are a creature and act like the creator is the sign of stupidity, but also the hall mark sign of evil. It will find its final fulfilment in Satan’s man of sin who will rule over the old Roman Empire region during the Great Tribulation period. Daniel ties all this together in his vision in Daniel 11:36ff, but this evil man’s end is sure, for the coming of the King of Kings finally ends the dominion of the evil one over the hearts and minds of the men and women of the earth. Daniel 12:1ff, Zechariah 9:12-17, 14:1ff. The challenge for the Arab leaders of this last time is to walk with God, not with these evil, self centred and finally stupid men.

**Amos 8:1-14 Judgment is coming to all who will not walk as Abraham walked**

**Amos 8:1-3 Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and behold a basket of summer fruit. And he said, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A basket of summer fruit. Then said the LORD unto me, The end is come upon my people of Israel; I will not again pass by them any more. And the songs of the temple shall be howlings in that day, saith the Lord GOD: [there shall be] many dead bodies in every place; they shall cast [them] forth with silence.**

This short section contains a word picture, not unlike those given in Amos chapter 7:1-9. In the first two word pictures in Chapter 7, Amos pleads with God, who relents and draws back from the judgement He was threatening. In the third, and now this fourth word picture, there is not request for, nor a granting of reprieve, thus indicating that the time for judgement was approaching. This vision contains the warning that the end has come (v2) so the imminence of the danger is clear. It is possible that the intervening remarks of the false prophet Amaziah rejecting the words of Amos might have sealed the fate of Israel.

There is a dialogue here between Amos and God, with God asking Amos what he sees. The answer is a basket of summer fruit, the type that is ready to be harvested at the end of the summer; the last of the harvests of the year. Being in a basket it has already been picked, so the time to eat it has come. There is a slight play on words here in the Hebrew, for ‘summer’ fruit is *qayits*, whilst ‘the end’ is *qets*, and although the words are not from the same root, they have a similar sound. The meaning links them, for the fruit would be eaten at the end of the harvest.

It is clear from this passage that God is no longer able to pass by the judgement that He has threatened. The moral and spiritual state of the people has reached the point when God has to act, despite (perhaps because of) the covenant relationship between God and Israel. The harsh result of this is that the normally joyful songs of the temple would be turned to wailings, presumably of grief, as the judgement to come would result in numerous dead bodies strewn around the place. The songs of worship that God deserved and required would be turned to lamentation instead. It was almost as though the harvest of the summer fruit would find its end in a harvest of lives cut down when the judgement deserved by the wayward people came to pass. There is reference to resulting silence here, probably because of the scale of the destruction and also the lack of professional mourners who would normally accompany a funeral.

In Amos, as in other prophets, there is seen a change from a message of warning to a message of doom when it is too late to avert disaster. God was willing to forgive, but the people were not prepared to repent and change their ways. The same situation frequently applies today too, and God’s hand of mercy and grace has been extended in the person of Jesus, but if there is no repentance and a genuine turning to Christ, then God’s wrath remains on the unrepentant sinner. The ultimate judgement, of course, comes at death, when it is too late to seek forgiveness. There is still hope, but it is a little hope, as time is running out for those who ignore the clear warning and words of God. The last days of the nations

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before the Lord's return will be very similar to the days we see described here and the challenge to saving faith is the same as Amos gives.

**Verses 4-14** Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail, Saying, When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the sabbath, that we may set forth wheat, making the ephah small, and the shekel great, and falsifying the balances by deceit? That we may buy the poor for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes; [yea], and sell the refuse of the wheat? The LORD hath sworn by the excellency of Jacob, Surely I will never forget any of their works. Shall not the land tremble for this, and every one mourn that dwelleth therein? and it shall rise up wholly as a flood; and it shall be cast out and drowned, as [by] the flood of Egypt. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day: And I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; and I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness upon every head; and I will make it as the mourning of an only [son], and the end thereof as a bitter day. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find [it]. In that day shall the fair virgins and young men faint for thirst. They that swear by the sin of Samaria, and say, Thy god, O Dan, liveth; and, The manner of Beersheba liveth; even they shall fall, and never rise up again.

This section of the book continues the theme of the first few verses of the chapter, as it develops the theme of the judgement that is about to fall upon Israel. It is explored in four sections, the first being vv4-8. This section culminates with reference to an earthquake, which takes us back to the very beginning of the book, where Amos states that he was writing 2 years before the earthquake. This time, however, the earthquake is seen as a part of God's judgement, rather than a random event of nature. The signs of catastrophe in Amos day are similar signs of God's judgments that occur during the Great Tribulation period and so the challenge to faith and obedience through this time is relevant to those in that later day of ultimate and final judgment.

The section commences, with a reminder of why God's judgement has to fall. Amos addresses those who are treating the poor unfairly, and commands them to hear what he has to say. One suspects that they were not too eager to hear it, but Amos wants his message to be heard. The fact that they were 'swallowing up the needy' indicates that they were gazing covetously at what they could gain from the poor and needy, despite the wealth of the leaders and rich traders.

The people are so wrapped up in their desire for profit and trade that they cannot wait for the religious festivals and rituals to be over, and they can then resume their business activities again. They long for the new moon festivals and the Sabbaths to be over, so that they can sell their wheat and grain, for trade was forbidden on both of these occasions. It is clear, however, that it was not just the prospect of trade that they wanted, but the continued opportunity to oppress the poor, presumably by giving short measures for the money paid to them. In v 5 we see that "they made the ephah small" (gave short measure) and "made the shekel great" (increased the price), so they were dishonestly profiteering on both counts. They also had false balances so that the weight of their goods was wrongly measured. This behaviour had been expressly forbidden by God in Deuteronomy 25:13-15.

The problem was compounded in v6 by the desire to oppress the poor person into slavery, for he would be unable to pay for the food, or even for a pair of shoes, so he was sold for even the smallest debt. We also find that the poor were sold the worst of the wheat so the quality they were given was not good, and thus less nourishing. The refuse of the wheat is literally the 'falling' of the wheat, the chaff and small pieces that fell through the sieve used to sort it. Effectively this would have been animal feed that was sold to the poor. We have the picture of the merchants going through the rituals of religion, whilst thinking about how to make more money, and that dishonestly, once the trading recommenced. They regarded a day spent in religious activities as a day wasted, maybe a stark reminder to the desire for Sunday trading that has spread across so much of the world today. Indeed, in the West today, Sunday is now often the busiest shopping day of the week.

Jesus had a good deal to say about the need for fair trading and not giving short measures, and also that we are not to oppress the poor. He also made it clear that we cannot serve two masters – God and money, yet this is exactly what the people were doing. Although they were not living in the New Testament era with the benefit of Jesus' teaching, there was sufficient detail in the Mosaic Law to know that dishonest trade was not acceptable to God. So often when the poor were oppressed, they were sold into slavery, with the total destitution that often accompanied it.

God looks for us to do business in a way that has care and compassion for those that we are serving. The contrast is selfishness and greed, so it is no wonder that God had to shake their faulty foundations of life with an earthquake. The land would be tossed about like the Nile, a river that regularly flooded and submerged that which was in its path. This flood can remain annually for weeks, but is a means of producing new crops, although the picture here is one of destruction. There is little benefit accompanying an earthquake, except it reminds foolish people they are weak indeed.

God emphasises the certainty of what He is threatening by swearing on Himself in v7; there is no higher authority and God is speaking with grave seriousness here. He will not forget any of their works. This is in stark contrast to God's promises not to remember the sins of those who are saved, and accordingly not call them to remembrance. Psalm 103:10-18. God in His omniscience does not forget anything, for He would not remain omniscient if He did so. However,



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whilst He cannot forget the sins of those whom He has forgiven, He does promise never to remember them, for He alone has control over His memory and will not therefore call them to remembrance. Here, however, God says He will not forget their works, and being unforgiven, God will always be mindful of these sins, and so He will send judgement.

In verses 9-10 we have the next aspect to God's judgement, and this is in the form of an eclipse, for God would take the sun away in the middle of the day. It has been calculated that at least 2 total eclipses of the sun must have occurred during Amos' lifetime, one on 9 February 784 BC, and the other on 15 June 763 BC. Amos and his contemporaries would not have had the scientific knowledge to be able to calculate the occurrence of coming eclipses, so the occurrence of an eclipse would have been a more awesome experience then even than it is in our day. It has also been calculated that there were partial eclipses of the sun on 24 June 791 B.C., at the feast of Pentecost; the next was about eleven years after, on November 8, 780 B.C., at the feast of the Tabernacles; and the third was in the following year, 779 B.C., on May 5, at the feast of the Passover. It is interesting that the 3 eclipses here were all during feast times. There is, perhaps a reminder here of the darkness that came over the earth when Jesus was crucified, when the sins of the world were placed upon Him, this too being at Passover.

The eclipse would turn the feasts that they were going to celebrate into mourning, so that they put on sackcloth, a sign of grief. Baldness too, is a sign of mourning as both men and women shaved their heads when in grief. This would have added meaning because many of Israel's feasts celebrated light, including the light given in creation, the light of God's truth, and the light of life. The removal of light in the midst of these celebrations would speak powerfully to the people, hopefully reminding them that they had sunk into cult worship rather than the true worship of the sovereign God who had chosen them. This would highlight the hypocrisy of the people who were paying but lip service to God. It would also graphically symbolise God's light being cut off from Israel because of their disobedience. There is also a sense in which the sun sets at noon (or whatever time) for a person who dies, so when God's judgement falls the people involved will find the sun setting on their lives.

The next problem for the nation is seen in verses 11-12, and is one of famine. However, this is not a famine with a lack of food, but a famine of the Word of God. God has often used a famine of food as one of His means of bringing judgement, but here it is God's word that is lacking, and from an eternal perspective this is more serious. The time would even come when the people would wander far and wide to seek God's words, but would not find them. The word used includes the meaning of 'reeling' as a drunken person, or of trees swaying in the wind. There is no stability when God's Word is absent. Some see the reference to the wandering from sea to sea as being from the Mediterranean to the Dead Sea, while others see this as a general reference to wandering far and near.

Bear in mind that one of the founding principles of God's word in the Law was that man does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). The Israelites would be well aware that creation itself was made by the word of God, and that as a nation they had come into existence by God's Word, and that God had spoken numerous times through the prophets over the centuries.

Jesus reiterated the importance of God's word in Matthew 4, when he was tempted in the wilderness. He responded to each temptation with a quotation from God's word in Deuteronomy, showing its importance and power. In so many parts of the world today, it is not possible to preach God's Word freely, and even where there is freedom to do so, many nations prevent God's Word being taught to young people in schools, so that there is indeed a famine of God's words throughout much of the world. As a consequence, the degree of Biblical illiteracy is huge, especially in the rising generations. Too often, people do not realise the importance of having God's Word until it is no longer available freely.

The final picture given by Amos in this section is one of drought (vv13-14), when the young men and women will faint from thirst. There appears to be a link here with false worship, for Amos relates the drought to those who swear by the sin of Samaria, or the god of Dan. Some versions translate v14 as those who swear by Ashimah of Samaria, suggesting that this might be a foreign god of Samaria, whilst others refer to it as *guilt* or *sin*. Either way, it is clearly sin in God's sight, for He is a jealous God, given that worship belongs to Him alone. The guilt could well refer to the idolatrous golden calf set up in Samaria, the nation's capital.

As to Dan, there was a shrine there with a bull image (1 Kings 12:29), so that is probably the cause of God's wrath there. Beersheba is also mentioned as a site of idolatry, this being located in the south of Judah, but the shrine there was still regularly visited by pilgrims from the northern nation of Israel. It was not entirely pagan worship at Beersheba, but an idolatrous worship of Jehovah. The picture given is of corrupt worship that is a long way from the true worship of the Almighty God prescribed in God's word. Idolatry was always wrong, and is always to be shunned. It will be idolatry that is the trigger point for the change at the middle point of the Tribulation period and the Anti-Christ's use of the idol in the temple will be the point at which the Arab and Jewish believers unite in total opposition to him.

Even the young would die in the coming drought that Amos predicts. These are people in the prime of life, who have more strength and resistance to problems than the more vulnerable in society, so if they are affected then none will escape this judgement. This only goes to emphasise the certainty and finality of the judgement that would come upon the nation. There is a good degree of idolatry and false worship in our day too, and whilst in the west at least, the idolatry may not be quite as overt as it was in Amos' day, it is nevertheless there for to many people materialism is their god. The issue is whether we will worship the true Creator God, or the creation, whether in the form of nature or something man made. Godly people must always oppose and reject idolatry.

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## Jeremiah 25:17ff.

**17 Then took I the cup at the LORD's hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me: 18 To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day;**

In the vision the prophet takes the cup from the Lord's hand and he forces all the nations, who are represented in some form around him, to drink the cup. The judgment began at Jerusalem and went out from there. The result of the cup being drunk was that they all became desolate, and all who saw were astonished at the destruction amongst them. It became clear to all that they were cursed. Psalms 60:3, Isaiah 51:17-23, Ezekiel 9:5-8. The reference to the present day at the end of verse 18 indicates that this prophecy was written down after the destruction of Jerusalem and all could then see it's application.

This would be at an early date, for Ezekiel and Daniel both had a full copy of the book of Jeremiah in the 570s. It may be Baruch added this last phrase as he brought the book together after Jeremiah's death, or that Jeremiah himself put these words into the account during his time with Gedaliah, before the last rebels carried him off to die in Egypt. 2 Kings 25:22-26. The judgment of God upon all nations through history is a "cup" that is given by God to people to drink. God is active in judging mankind, and during the last judgments in the Great Tribulation period the judgment will be total. It will begin at Jerusalem and it will end there with the Lord's arrival back there to rule. There is certainty in God's judgments – He will act in history and the Anti-Christ forgets that to his doom. Godly Arab and Jewish believers remember this fact and draw comfort and strength to resist evil through these days from passages of the prophets that encourage the truth of judgment as the antidote to the lies of Satan's man.

## Jeremiah 48:47.

**45 They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones. 46 Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives. 47 Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.**

Fire comes upon the land, both literal and figurative. This is another destructive image, but also a reality of warfare as the enemy set fire to crops and cities. The fugitives stand powerless under the shadow of the walls of Heshbon, awaiting transportation to Babylon. There is no hope for deliverance from any of the neighbouring towns, only the desert will offer some refuge for survivors that fled early enough. They were happy to be called the people of their god Chemosh, but now it rings hollow and empty, for their god has proved to be a nothing and they are powerless and helpless before their enemies.

They are to go into captivity, but they will be restored to their land; they will be assimilated into other nations, but they will survive in the gene pool of the Arabs of the Trans-Jordan. The lessons of history will all be applied in the last days of the Tribulation period, when the descendants of these people, who once were idolaters, firmly reject the idolatry of the Anti-Christ. In those terrible days they will embrace the words of God and stand firmly with their Jewish fellow believers in the one true God and resist the enemy of God and man and are eventually delivered by the returning Lord.

## Daniel 11:40-45      The Areas the Jewish Refugees from Anti-Christ are told to flee to are beyond Anti-Christ's control

**v 40-43 And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. 41 He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. 42 He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. 43 But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.**

It is noted that the "time of the end" is again mentioned in the start of the last section of chapter 11 and shows that military struggle will be a major feature of the Tribulation period, and that by the last three and a half years ("The Great Tribulation Period") the Anti-Christ does not have things his way and is fighting on all fronts to try to maintain his power.

Again the Kings of the North and South are mentioned. In the second and third centuries BC these related to Syria in the north and Egypt in the south, but these do not need to be our guides as to who these powers may be in these last days. The fact that the northern forces come with "many ships" indicates that it is not Syria, as they don't need ships if they are threatening Israel. As the Syrians and Egyptians share a common border with Israel they also do not need to overflow

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“countries” to achieve any attack. The north and south nations may be far further away in those directions than the original north and south kingdoms of the days of Daniel and the Hasmoneans.

The battle being described here is the battle for the strategic control of the Mediterranean coast and Israel itself. The “He” described is clearly the Anti-Christ, world ruler figure. He launches his assault upon Israel (the glorious land), enters Egypt and North Africa, but does not take control of Jordan or Arabia. This is the area of Edom, Moab and Ammon where believing Jews flee when the statue of the Antichrist is erected in the middle of the Tribulation period. As we have noted earlier in our study, it appears that Anti-Christ’s idolatry is the switch that turns any support he had won in the Arab world firmly “off”. He is seen and rejected as a satanic counterfeit at that time and the borders are closed and guarded. He is unable to take these Arab lands and troubles to the south (possibly rebellions in African States) and north (possibly from rebels in the old Russian States) keep him distracted until the Lord destroys him. Remember, there is no unity amongst Satan’s people, for they all have their own self centred agendas and so fight each other!

As we have already seen in Matthew 24:15-16, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) 16 Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains”. In addition the remnant is seen fleeing to the mountains of southern Jordan/Arabia from the dragon, or Satan, in Revelation 12.

**v 44-45 “But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. :45 And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”**

Here we have the culmination of the military conflict in what is called “the Armageddon Campaign” which terminates with the return of Jesus back at His Second Advent. The Antichrist is busy in and around the Middle East and hears of the armies of the Kings of the sun rising as well as another attack from the north. He responds with great fury. To “make away” means wholesale slaughter. He is immensely strong, but he is no match for the One True God. The general headquarters of the Antichrist is set up between the Mediterranean and Dead Seas in the vicinity of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is attacked and partly taken but the timing of the Lord’s return stops the entire city falling.

In Revelation 16:12 – 19:21 we see that the entire satanic system, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet are judged, destroyed, and individuals caught and thrown into judgment. The Lord himself completes the slaughter of the heathen armies that have survived the Vial/bowl judgments. The “time of the Gentiles” to dominate the sons of Abraham is over when he arrives. He is the King of the Jews, but also King of all kings, and sets up His kingdom on earth. The Arab supporters of the Jewish people are able to share in the glory and blessing of the Lord’s victory, and as we have seen above receive honored places in the Millennial Kingdom as the providers of the sacrificial animals for the Millennial Temple.

### Amos 7:7-9

**Amos 7:1-9: Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me; and, behold, he formed grasshoppers in the beginning of the shooting up of the latter growth; and, lo, [it was] the latter growth after the king’s mowings. And it came to pass, [that] when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land, then I said, O Lord GOD, forgive, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small. The LORD repented for this: It shall not be, saith the LORD. Thus hath the Lord GOD shewed unto me: and, behold, the Lord GOD called to contend by fire, and it devoured the great deep, and did eat up a part. Then said I, O Lord GOD, cease, I beseech thee: by whom shall Jacob arise? for he [is] small. The LORD repented for this: This also shall not be, saith the Lord GOD. Thus he shewed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall [made] by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand. And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more: And the high places of Isaac shall be desolate, and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste; and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.**

The last three chapters of Amos comprise the last major section of the book. In this chapter, Amos conveys visions that he has seen, and in his generation, when many people would be unable to read, it would be powerful to create word pictures as he spoke. In this way he would enable his audience to understand the thrust of what he was saying. Even today, creating word pictures is an effective way of communicating thought so that the message stays in the mind. Jesus used parables in a similar way and that means of teaching the people was most effective.

The first two visions given are of disasters, the first being of grasshoppers, or locusts in verses 1-3. The first and second visions declare that it is the Lord Jehovah speaking, whereas the third one uses a different word Adonai, for the Lord. The first message is that God is preparing a plague of locusts, and in all probability this would occur in the late spring, being said to be the latter growth. The king’s mowings may well refer to the first crop, which could be taken by the king as a form of tax, or perhaps might also have been the prime crop.

The word used is mainly for a locust in its larva state, which would be in the autumn, while the young come forth in the spring, which would tie in with the cropping pattern. This might imply that there was a time allowed for repentance. In late

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spring the 2<sup>nd</sup> crop of hay would be sprouting, and would promise provision for the farmer. The latter growth was reserved for the farmer and his family and animals, and would feed them through the winter. However, if the plague of locusts came then, the crop would be destroyed and the potential for adequate provision removed, as well as the prospect for a good crop the next year. This vision is reminiscent of Joel's vision in Joel 1:4.

Once Amos has seen the locusts eat the crops, he prays for God's forgiveness, clearly recognising that this is a judgement from God and not merely an accident of nature. He also recognises Israel's small stature in God's sight and their inability to stand when God moves in judgement. In response to the prayer for mercy, God relents and declares that it shall not be so. God does not "repent" to the extent that He has done something wrong, nor does He change His mind as such, but the outward effect is of a different outcome from the one threatened, in response to believing prayer. In our day too, we need God's discernment to apprehend when God is at work in this world, as do those who are prepared to intercede before God. James 5:16 reminds us that the effective prayer of a righteous man achieves a great deal.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> vision is found in verses 4-6 and is of a judgement of fire. Amos sees a great fire of judgement consuming the land, and even the great deep. This may mean that even the sea was consumed, which shows us that the fire is severe indeed. However, others see this prospect as not feasible, and suggest that the sea may reflect the mass of sinful humanity, which the sea does sometimes symbolise. It may be that this vision is set to occur in the summer when the temperature is at its hottest and fire is more likely to spread in a catastrophic way, although it could be that there is a reference to drought in this vision.

Fire is often seen as a symbol of God's wrath and judgement, and it seems that this proposed judgement is more severe than that of the locusts in the preceding verses, for fire consumes all that is in its path. Hebrews 10:30-31, 38, 12:29. Often God's judgements are progressive to reflect the continued hardness of heart of the people. It is worth remembering that rebellion against God is a challenge to His omnipotence and is an insult to His character.

Again Amos intercedes for powerless Israel and God responds in mercy to his cry and does not bring about the threatened judgement. The importance of effective mediation and intercession cannot be stressed too highly. We have many Biblical examples of times when God has responded to intercessory prayer and had not proceeded with a threatened judgement. These judgments are lifted from the nation Israel, but in the last days of the Tribulation period there is no chance for intercession to change things. Men and women must simply act upon the certainty that the judgments are coming, and take every step to keep themselves safe from them by obedience to the life giving words of the Scriptures.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> vision is found in verses 7-9 and concerns a plumb line held by the Lord against a wall. What is being said here is that God is measuring His people Israel, and He finds them so far away from the upright position that He will have to judge them. This vision is applied specifically to Israel and is more specific in this regard than the other two that precede it. A plumb line is used by a builder when they are building a new wall to check that it is upright. It is also used by a builder or surveyor when an old wall is leaning and might be dangerous, in which case they know whether action needs to be taken to prop it up, or even to demolish it.

God here enters into dialogue with Amos to ask what he sees, and it is clearly implied that when God measures the condition of the nation it is far from upright and needs serious attention. There is the threat of devastation for the high places and sanctuaries – the places of worship that had become corrupt. God would send an enemy into the land to perform His judgement, but the action was His and was well deserved. It may well be that a period of time has elapsed to allow the people to repent, but there has been no spiritual fruit.

This time there is no apparent relenting on God's part, indicating that the judgment would indeed come to pass. He will not pass them by, or ignore their sins, for the time to act has come. The judgement against the house of Jeroboam was fulfilled by Shallum, who conspired against Zachariah the son of Jeroboam, and slew him, and reigned in his place, which put an end to the family of Jeroboam (see 2 Kings 15:10).

God does respond to prevailing prayer when it is within the Plan of God, but there are times when He has to act in judgement in order to maintain His holiness and just character. We learn here that God is holy and must judge a wayward people. He is, however, also merciful, and will respond to the prayers of His people and deliver them in the midst of the judgment if they repent and obey the Word of Scripture. Both God and Amos are seeking to avert judgement for neither wants it, but there are times when the point of no return is reached. God's judgement is never fickle, not is it a spontaneous reaction of anger, but it is measured and just when He knows that His compassion has been rejected.

We now have the benefit of God's completed word and in many respects this is our plumb line for our lives. God does measure us still to see how we align ourselves to the true attitudes that we should adopt, but we should also study His word so that we can see how we should live, and also where we are going wrong. If we do not know God's word we will not know God's requirements, but of course once we do know it we are then called to obey it! During the last days the people of God, both Jewish and Arab need to obey the Word of God and take personal actions on the basis of the certainty that the events that the prophets have foretold, will occur. Faith in action through this time means believing the scriptures and taking actions on the belief in the absolute truth of the prophetic words therein. This is Abrahamic faith!

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## **Psalms 60:5-12 A Prayer for Deliverance for Difficult Times**

### **5 That thy beloved may be delivered; save with thy right hand, and hear me.**

This prayer is a model for those praying in the Great Tribulation Period. David makes the deliverance personal; it's not just about his people, it's about him. He feels his people's pain as his own and seeks deliverance for the people on the basis of his being beloved of the Lord and able to ask for it personally. His people are to be blessed by their association with David. David is recognising that one believer may act as the SALT for his people, and that he may deliver them and bless them through their association with him. David wants his people delivered by the awesome power of God's right hand. The "right hand" was the way of saying the absolute power of God. David is asking for total power to be expressed to produce the victory. He doesn't want God to hold back from judging and he himself will not hold anything back from God in obedience himself. This is our faith challenge in all Ages, but with assurance all believers can join David in the last days before the Lord Jesus returns.

### **6 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.**

### **7 Gilead is mine, and Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;**

This passage has a parallel passage in Psalm 108:7-13. It appears that David sang of this situation twice around this time. This is helpful to us, and those coming after us in the Tribulation period, for we have two prayers here, both facing the same situation upon which to draw strength. He has what we now call a "word of the Lord" about the fate of his army and the victory it will gain for the kingdom. God has given him the assurance of rejoicing in victory. He will see the areas of Ephraim and Manasseh that have been pillaged restored and recovered fully to the kingdom. From the southernmost areas of Ephraim, Judah and Manasseh the enemy will be driven out. These areas that have been over run and their people locked up in their fortified cities will be free again, for the Lord has decreed these areas are his and the enemy will be put out.

The areas of life that the Lord has power over are declared "God's own places", and they will be protected by the Lord. When the areas of the Lord's work are over run by the enemy, we are to pray and then seek God's way to recover those areas. The Lord has said, "they are mine", and we will have the power and the plan to achieve their return. Let us advance with focused power and purpose. It is of note that these very areas are those to which the refugees of the Great Tribulation Period are instructed to flee. These areas will be the haven of the Lord's people in that coming day. Ezekiel notes that they will return to the children of Israel for settlement during the Millennial Kingdom also. Ezekiel 43-47.

### **8 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe: Philistia, triumph thou because of me.**

### **9 Who will bring me into the strong city? who will lead me into Edom?**

The lands from where the raiders in David's day have come are now mentioned and they are under God's judgement. Moab will become the wash pot of God, and their people will be "washed out" like dirty linen. The land of Moab will be cleansed of their evil people. Remember, some of these people were David's own family, and the believers amongst them would be delivered. This is legitimate "ethnic cleansing" because it is based solely upon the spiritual status of the people, with only the people who have actively and persistently defied the Lord being excluded from their lands. These countries have been cleansed through the centuries with none from their original inhabitants left to live in the ruins of their once great cities. They defied God again and again and they rejected God's work and ways, and so they were destroyed, with their remnant spread amongst the surrounding Arab peoples. The ruins of the ancient world are a warning to us all of how thorough the Lord is when He decides to judge a people, but the remnant of believers persists.

### **10 Wilt not thou, O God, which hadst cast us off? and thou, O God, which didst not go out with our armies?**

### **11 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.**

### **12 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies**

David is expressing confidence here, not doubts about the Lord's ability to judge the enemy and deal with them. He knows that the Lord will answer his prayers and cast off the enemy's power. God is with Joab and the army as it heads out to defeat the Edomites. He prays for the Lord's total victory, and recognises that the help of men is feeble and ineffective. Through the power of God the army of Israel will "do valiantly"; they will excel in their work and defeat the enemy thoroughly. They achieve this feat just as the Lord on his return will defeat the forces of the Anti-Christ throughout this same area and deliver the godly remnant from amongst the Arabs and the Jews.

Adversity does not mean we are on the wrong path, it may mean we are on the exact path for us and the enemy does not like our success. The believers of the Great Tribulation Period are under great pressure from the forces of the Anti-Christ, and they are called to stand like David in assurance of the Lord's deliverance. Adversity means godly people are to pray for the Lord's assurance and strength, and then, when sure of their path forward, throw all their energy into the path ahead of them. The truth is that all believers are loved by God. We are loved by God without deserving it. We are recipients of His grace, love, mercy and forgiveness. Let us proclaim the love of God for man, and announce this good news to all who will hear it.

When we ask for deliverance by the power of God let us ask for the full power of God to be exercised and let us not hesitate to express the full power of God in our own life and give over all our power to serve the Lord. Let's be whole

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hearted, not half hearted in our obedience to the Lord, and our service and support for God's people. The army of Israel in David's day headed south to fight, and they did so with all their might. We are called to act with the same confidence that David and Joab's men showed here. They all fought like lions and were tough and committed to their tasks. Let all believers of all ages be thorough and courageous also. Those believing Arabs and Jews of the Great Tribulation need to draw courage from David's example and hide from the forces of evil and fight them when they can or must. The one thing they are never to do is give up the fight, or surrender to evil men.

When we visit the ruins of ancient civilizations in the ancient world we ought to bow our heads and remember the grace and the judgement of God. All these great places fell and were destroyed and our own great cities will themselves be destroyed by God for the same reasons the ancient ones were. It is man's disobedience that brings judgement upon mankind. Let us warn the Lord's people and preach the Gospel to the unsaved that they might be saved from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10. For those caught in the middle of the wrath of the Lord against evil men, they need to stand like David in righteousness and serve the people of God in courage and steadfastness. God can and will deliver believers who are obedient, even though the enemies of truth fall around them.

**Isaiah 63:1-6 The Lord arrives in Jerusalem after first having Judged and Eliminated the enemy from the places where the Jewish people have been hidden by their fellow believers amongst the Arabs.**

**1 Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah? this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.**

The Lord comes from the direction of the ancient city of Bozrah. It appears that there was a major staging post there for the Anti-Christ's armies who are determined to wipe out the Jews who have fled into this land to escape the Abomination of Desolation. The Lord deals with them and destroys the land of the Edomites, or Idumeans. Psalms 24:7-10, 137:7, Isaiah 34:1-17 (especially verses 5-6), Lamentations 4:18-22, Ezekiel 25:6-14, Amos 1:11-15, Obadiah 1-21.

The peoples descended from Esau are sifted and judged at this time. Some, who side with the Anti-Christ, stage their last rebellion against the descendants of Isaac, and they are destroyed totally. The good news however, as we have seen in earlier chapters, is that many of these Arab sons of Abraham have accepted the Lord Jesus (Isa) as their Saviour and coming King, and they have hidden the Jewish believers amongst them against the forces of Anti-Christ. As the Lord arrives these believers come out from their hiding places to prepare for his return to Jerusalem and the return of the Jewish exiles. They reopen the highway from the Gulf of Aqaba through to Israel for people to come up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord there. Given the great earthquakes that have shifted the entire levels/topography of the land this is an amazing feat. This passage and others give them advance warning through the Tribulation period as to what they will need by way of equipment for this day, and they are ready and willing to work to open up the highways again.

Before these believers can take over their nations and bring righteous rule to them after the years of Anti-Christ's tyranny and attacks upon them, the Lord must eliminate all the unbelievers from amongst them. Numbers 23:19, Psalms 45:1-6, Revelation 11:17-18, 19:11-14. He comes to judge but through judgment of evil to deliver the righteous, and he is "mighty to save", and does deliver his people wherever they are. We are always secure in his hand. John 10:28-30, Hebrews 7:25, 1 Peter 1:3-5, Jude 24-25.

**2 Wherefore art thou red in thine apparel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the winefat?**

The question from many, who have not understood the Word of God and the necessity for judgment, is why the Lord's garments are red like the earth of Edom. They wonder at why he has been in the wine press of God's wrath, and his garments are covered with the blood of those slain in their disobedience. For many today this picture of Jesus is incomprehensible. They cannot see the Lord as the judge, nor can they see the one who gave the Sermon on the Mount as the one on the white horse of battle. They have difficulty because they ignore the blood soaked figure on the cross and the blood soaked earth of the last two thousand years that has drunk in the blood of those martyrs who gave their lives for the Truth. So many die for their faith at this Tribulation time, and they are all there with Jesus to see the judgment upon those who have persisted in their hatred of the Lord, his people, and the truth. Revelation 7:9-17.

**3 I have trodden the winepress alone; and of the people there was none with me: for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury; and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment.**

The winepress of wrath is the symbol of the carnage of ancient warfare with blood soaked clothing and the ground covered in the bodies of the fallen. The Lord alone is the winner of the victory, for he alone defeats the enemies of his people. Now we know that he comes with his saints, called the "armies of heaven", Revelation 19:14, yet this passage also indicates that he alone does the judging. Men are not called upon to judge men at this time and the unbelievers are killed by the Lord alone. Revelation 14:18-20, 19:11-21. The armies of heaven are spectators, and are present to observe the absolute righteousness of his final judgment over those who opposed the Lord. They are also there to celebrate his victory, but he doesn't need them to win it, he does that alone, just as he did it alone on the cross!

**4 For the day of vengeance is in mine heart, and the year of my redeemed is come.**

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There are two aspects to the judgment of unbelieving men and women; firstly they deserve judgment for their rejection of their Lord, but secondly the believers need deliverance from these unbelievers who have tried to kill them all. Isaiah 34:8, 35:3-4, 61:2-3, Luke 21:25-31. It has always been thought that the "armies of heaven" include the church age saints who form at least one significant army corps of that group, with the Israelite saints forming the second division, and the pre-Abrahamic believers forming the third division of the army. This is indicated by the use of the military word "taxis", meaning division or army corps in the passage on resurrection, which covers all the groups, in 1 Corinthians 15:20-28.

The first resurrection, and associated reception of resurrection bodies by all the dead saints appears to occur in separate "divisions", although it may be all together at one point in time. At the time called "The Rapture" it would appear all saints who have died receive their resurrection bodies, and then join the Lord for his Second Advent. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, Revelation 20:4-6. The second resurrection is only a resurrection to judgment, for the sorting of the two groups of mankind into saved and lost has already been done by the Lord well before the resurrections occur. Matthew 25:31-46, Luke 16:19-31, Revelation 20:12-15.

The Matthew passage refers only to those alive at his return, and some, who have not accepted the Lord Jesus at their Saviour, but who were "righteous" in their protection and loving practical care for the evangelists through that terrible period are still welcomed and rewarded, and now that they see him, they do accept him as their Lord and Saviour. This is a category that reminds us, that the grace and mercy of God dominates all his dealings with men; and that those who have not heard the full Gospel, for whatever reason, are judged on the basis of their righteous dealings with those who stand for the Lord. There is no mercy however shown to those who showed none to believers. The Luke passage above reminds us that all who have died had already been sorted into their two resurrection categories.

The distinction in Revelation 20:4-6, between those who died for their witness to Jesus, and those who suffered for the Word, may cover all periods of history, where the latter group incorporate all the pre-church believers, and the former group incorporates the church and Tribulational saints. We will only know this at the time, and it has been traditional to group the Tribulational saints with Israel, but they die for witness to Jesus, and this is one category that John refers to, with the allegiance to the Word of God as another.

It has also been traditional to keep the Church Age saints in heaven and not speak of an earthly destiny for the church, yet much of what we have seen would indicate that the church is certainly involved in the fulfilment of the Sermon on the Mount and in living under their King upon this earth where so many down the centuries have given their lives as witnesses to him. We all have both an earthly and an eternal heavenly destiny, and **where** we glorify the Lord is not ours to select; we remain "under orders" in this last period of the history of the earth, just as now we are under his orders. Let us leave our location for worship in the Lord's hands, as we place ourselves under His geographical will for our lives now.

**5 And I looked, and there was none to help; and I wondered that there was none to uphold: therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto me; and my fury, it upheld me.**

There was no-one who was able to assist from mankind's side, but the Lord did not need such help as man could provide. The defenders in Jerusalem will feel things are pretty hopeless, but the Lord will deliver them all. Isaiah 34, Joel 2, Zechariah 14. This is stated to remind us all that we could not achieve anything that the Lord has done, and the good news is that we didn't need to, for he has done all in grace and love and mercy. Psalms 44:3, 98:1-3, Isaiah 59:16, John 16:32, 1 Corinthians 1:22-29, Hebrews 2:14-15.

**6 And I will tread down the people in mine anger, and make them drunk in my fury, and I will bring down their strength to the earth.**

The Lord's actions here are deliberate and are at this point without mercy, for the time of mercy is over! This is the hard thing for some believers to get their heads around; the Lord must at this time judge evil men and women or else the world cannot be cleansed. These are the ones who have been through the Great Tribulation period and still blasphemed the Lord's name and rejected the message of salvation when they heard it, blasphemed his holy name, and even went further to try to kill the messengers. Revelation 16. These people are without hope because they did not want hope; they hated the only one who could save them, and they persisted in their rejection of Him until the very end. Psalms 75:1-10, Isaiah 59:15-17, Zechariah 12:2. He comes to remove these evil men and women from the earth by death. Matthew 24:36-51.

**Amos 9:5-15 God surely Judges all who reject His Rulership over them.**

**"And the Lord GOD of hosts [is] he that toucheth the land, and it shall melt, and all that dwell therein shall mourn: and it shall rise up wholly like a flood; and shall be drowned, as [by] the flood of Egypt. [It is] he that buildeth his stories in the heaven, and hath founded his troop in the earth; he that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The LORD [is] his name. [Are] ye not as children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith the LORD. Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt? and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir? Behold, the eyes of the Lord GOD [are] upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not utterly destroy the house**

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**of Jacob, saith the LORD. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as [corn] is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth. All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us.”**

In this section, Amos starts by magnifying God and His power in nature, thus reinforcing God's sovereign right and ability to move in judgement and power should He choose to do so. He is able to touch the earth and it melts (verse 5) and to cause it to rise and fall like the Nile, which regularly rises and falls with the flood season. In verse 6 we read that God is able to work through the rain, which God both withholds and pours out according to His good purpose. Perhaps there is a reference to the flood here, as a reminder of God's ability to intervene in judgement when necessary. Nevertheless, rain is also used to refresh the earth, and is a cleansing agent, so there is a wholesome flavour to God intervening in this way. Some people believe that these two verses might form part of an ancient hymn, and if that is so the use of these verses here is even more significant, for that which would be used to praise God is now turned around to be part of God's judgement.

The problem worsens in verse 7 when God compares Israel to the Ethiopians, effectively saying that they are like any other nation to Him, and as such they do not have the protection they thought they had as His chosen people. To the people of Israel, Ethiopia would have been a distant nation that was not regarded as particularly important in their eyes. It would have been quite crushing for them for God to liken them to such a nation, but it underscores the extent to which He was displeased with them. Bear in mind how God had chosen, nurtured, and led Israel over many centuries at this point, and God's apparent indifference to them here would have hurt them deeply. However, it only reflected the indifference that the people of Israel had shown towards their God, who had been so gracious and kind to them.

It is indeed a sad state of affairs when the God who chose Israel and made promises of blessing to them, is now obliged to make promises of judgement to them instead. However, this is in line with His word given earlier, for in Deuteronomy 6:15 God promised that if they went and worshipped other gods He would be angry with them and would destroy them from the face of the earth. There needs to be a balance here, for God has promised that the Jewish nation will abide forever (see Jeremiah 31:36) and that there is still the special covenant relationship, but for those that disobeyed there would be judgement and destruction. Privilege carries with it responsibility and the people here had abused the privilege so that they would bear the consequences. God has never finished with Israel, and they will play a significant part in God's purposes in the closing days of this current era on earth, and attitudes towards them determine the fate of all.

This theme of destruction that is not total is brought out in verse 8, for although the promise of judgment and God's wrath have become ever stronger, God does indicate here that He will not totally destroy the house of Jacob. God does always preserve a remnant of those who are faithful to Him, and He has always preserved some of the Jewish nation, for God's faithfulness and holy character demand this. The continued existence of the Jewish nation over the centuries, even after worldwide dispersion, is a testimony to God's faithfulness.

The section closes with an elaboration of God sifting the good from the bad, so that judgement will fall where it must, but that the godly remnant will be preserved. God says that He will sift and shake the house of Israel as with a sieve, so that the "rubbish" or dirt will be shaken out to destruction, whilst those who have not rebelled against God will remain. There will be a separation of the good from the bad, and this is a theme that recurs so often throughout the Scriptures. Jesus Himself spoke of this separation, as we have seen above, in Matthew 25, when He spoke of the sheep and the goats, although the separation spoken of by Amos is much more immediate.

Many people struggle with the concept of an "angry" God, especially as sometimes perceived in the Old Testament. This is not a view that truly emerges from the Bible, for God is, and always has been, merciful, but he remains angry at evil and sin. Even from the first sin, God provided a way of escape by introducing animal sacrifice, and the principle of the innocent dying for the guilty. God does move in judgement when it is warranted, and we thank God for that, or else all mankind would have been wiped out years ago!

The Lord moves to judge evil only when there has been adequate opportunity to repent, for God gives grace and mercy abundantly before judgement. Even when His judgment falls, it is frequently a means for bringing His people back to Himself so that there is restored relationship. There is always a wholesome purpose in what God does, but He remains angry at persistence in evil, and there is no hope for such people. Don't blame God for being righteous, for righteousness demands that evil is eliminated, and if people will not eliminate evil from their lives, evil will eliminate them.

**Amos 9:11-15 "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by my name, saith the LORD that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit [them]; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God."**



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In this final section of the book the tone lightens, as Amos gives a promise of future hope after judgement. God promised restoration to the land again, with prosperity for the now repentant nation. Now Amos indicates that there will not just be survival, but future abundant blessing. This follows the theme found so often in the Bible that God's discipline is intended to be for His people's good and is thus positive rather than inherently destructive. The hope offered, however, is not to replace the prospect of the coming disaster. The time of judgement will come (hence the reference to "that day" in verse 11), but the hope is for restoration to follow it, so that all is not lost for the nation. Indeed, there are times when God's righteous judgement has to come, but through His mercy it becomes the doorway to a brighter future once those who have been disciplined have learned from it.

In this passage Amos gives hope to the people of his own day, and hope for those of the "latter days". Hope is at the very centre of the life of faith, for we depend upon the holy character of God, not anything in ourselves. Consequently, although the message is primarily for Israel in Amos's own day, we can all be encouraged by it, for all believers are called to be people of faith, and through that faith, focussed in Jesus person and work, we have a sure hope for our eternal future. God's light so often shines at the darkest times, and this is what Amos is reminding us of here.

Amos predicts that God would raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, repairing the breaches and raising up the ruins. Some suggest that the reference here is to Succoth (translated *booth* or *tabernacle* in English), this place being the centre of David's victories against his enemies to the east and south. Edom (see verse 12) was one of these enemies and perhaps was seen as a symbolic reference to them all. Succoth came to represent the greatness and military might of David's kingdom, and at the time of Amos it lay in ruins. It would be rebuilt as in the days of old, namely at the peak of the glory of David and Solomon's kingdom.

Others see a contrast with the pinnacle of David's power, for the reference is not to his palace (Hebrew: *bayith*), but to a tabernacle, or booth (Hebrew *sukkah*). This would imply a period when David was experiencing a trough in his life, and not when he had the maximum power and influence. This reinforces the devastation that will come upon the nation, but there will come one, the Messiah, the "Son of David", who will see the kingdom rebuilt and flourish. Thus the kingdom of God will realise its full potential. The restoration under Zerubbabel was only partial and temporary and did not include all Israel, and was not the full realisation of this prophecy. There is also a direct link with the Messiah, Jesus, in the use of the word *tabernacle*, for John 1:14 reminds us that Jesus dwelt (or *tabernacled*) amongst us as a human. These words of Amos are direct encouragements to the people of the Great Tribulation period, reminding them that the promise here is to be fully and completely fulfilled.

Amos looks beyond just physical restoration, for in verses 13-15 he sees a time of great and lasting prosperity. The land will be so fruitful that the ploughman would overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes the one who sows the seed. Such will be the abundance that the harvest and vintage can hardly be gathered before the time for preparing for the next crop shall come. Instead of the greater part of the year being spent in war, the whole shall be spent in sowing and reaping the fruits of earth. This is a fulfilment of Leviticus 26:5 and there is also linkage to Isaiah 65:21-23. The mountains dropping sweet wine is an appropriate picture, for the vines were terraced on the hills so that the fruit would "drop". These words can only find fulfilment in the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus upon the earth. That identification makes it absolutely clear that this whole passage applies to the believers of the Tribulation period to give them hope as they resist the forces of the Anti-Christ.

After the Lord's return to judge and then rule, the people would be settled again, and able to live in their rebuilt cities, with adequate security to enjoy the fruit of their vines and gardens. There is clearly an abundance of produce that can only be achieved through the blessing of God. When God fully re-plants them in the land again they would not be ever torn from it again before the world of space-time itself ends. This is such a contrast from much of the history of Israel, where the people will be driven from their land and foreigners would come in and eat the fruit of it. The ultimate fulfilment of this passage will come in the messianic kingdom, when Jesus' reign will be clearly seen and will be undisputed. In that day, no one will be able to doubt the sovereignty of God and at last there will be complete peace on earth. The future for the believers of the Great Tribulation period is truly glorious and they have the most wonderful future to look forward to through the darkness that surrounds them. The call is to be obedient to the prophets and hold fast to the Word of God through this time, and they will be delivered!

### NOTES

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## **SECTION 10    The End of Man's Rule of the Earth Comes – Jesus the King Arrives in Power**

### **Revelation 19:11ff**

**19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.**

God is now moving to judge unrepentant and hate filled mankind. "Krino", translated, to judge, in this verse compares with "dikaioma" a judicial sentence in verse 8. God is judging in absolute righteousness and justice. The verb translated "opened" is in the perfect tense which means that it is opened with permanent results. There is no turning back in the execution of the PLAN OF GOD; all that is meant to occur will now occur. Those who persist in their rebellion against the Lord will be judged and condemned eternally. The days of grace and mercy are now over.

White horses were used for victory parades. They were very rare with the normal horses being black, brown or grey. In the ancient world, when a general came in victory, he rode a white charger, usually a stallion. Antichrist had his counterfeit of this in Revelation 6:2, but the symbol of victory here is the real thing. The Lord has come as a victor and he will reign forever after executing justice upon the earth.

If a king or general came in peace, he rode a mule or donkey. Thus Jesus first came riding the foal of the donkey at His so-called "Triumphal Entry" when he was upon earth for his First Advent. He was however rejected and crucified as the Prince of Peace. The offer of salvation to mankind, won on the Cross is still offered right upon until the Second Advent unfolds. He is at that point the judge of mankind; but he remains the Saviour of all who have accepted him. He returns as the victorious Lion of Judah - this time in judgment – and He is always called "faithful and true", for his judgments are exactly that at all times.

The phrase "makes war" is the present active indicative of the verb "polemeo". Millions of men under arms under the Anti-Christ's orders are killed at the Second Advent, and it is all done by Jesus personally. The Lord leads the only army where the general does all the fighting. The opportunity for those who have followed after the Anti-Christ to reject evil is over, and they must accept the wages of their sins, and the wage is death, both temporal and eternal.

Jesus is called here "Faithful and True". Jesus bore the sins of the world and warned that apart from Him, no man could come to the Father. John 14:6. He is faithful to His word, both for blessing and cursing, and His own integrity demands the following judgment. God is faithful to us right now even though we may be fickle. 2 Timothy 2:12-15. Our response to these truths about the Character of God ought to be faithful service and serious study of his words to us. It is this level of obedience that characterizes the believers of the last days, and it is their tenacity and serious devotion to the Lord that leads to their deliverance.

**19:12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.**

The Lord here is wearing a diadem of royalty rather than a stephanos (victor's) crown. The diadem was worn by royal birth-right whereas the stephanos was one given as a reward. He is king and so he comes the second time to earth as who he is. He is already the victor and doesn't need to wear that crown any more, he is now acknowledged by all who will remain upon the earth after his advent, as the King of all kings, and the Lord of all lords.

He is also called here, "The Unknown Name". The flaming eyes, as in Revelation 1:14, speak of righteous indignation and wrath. He is crowned with many diadems as King of Kings. The name written is often used as a description of a personality. This is a side of the Lord's personality that the unbeliever does not understand but is a crucial aspect of his righteousness and justice. This is the Jesus the world does not know. Of this Jesus, Paul says that if the rulers of this world had known Him, they would never have crucified Him 1 Corinthians. 2:8. Therefore, this is referred to as His unknown name.

**19:13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.**

The vesture referred to here is a robe worn by a chiliarch or Roman leader of a thousand men. He has upon him the mantle of a military commander. Dipped is the word "bapto", from which we get the word baptised. He is identified with the process of judging and executing the evil ones. He is the "Word" and he keeps his words, and he spoke of judgment at his first advent, and so the words are fulfilled exactly as it was prophesied.

Here he is also called "The Word of God". This is John's favourite title for Jesus. John 1:1-4, and 1 John 1:1. The Living Word is revealed in the written Word, and the written Word tells us in Isaiah 63:1-3, that at the Second Advent the garments of Jesus will be stained with the blood of His enemies. "Logos" is the Greek name for word but it means more than that. The Lord is the very mind behind all the creation and so his actions are based upon absolute and perfect logic and justice. All the divine wisdom that went into the creation goes into the judgment of evil men.

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**19:14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.**

The imperfect tense of the verb translated "followed" (Akoloutheo) shows that the army kept on following the Lord Jesus Christ. This army is made up of all the saints of earth who follow Him wherever He goes (John. 14:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:17). The robes have been identified in verses eight with reward for divine production and with the perfect cleansing of these saints by the work of Jesus upon the Cross. He was blood stained at his First Advent, with his own blood shed to save all who would come to him.

He is blood stained at his Second Advent with the blood of the evil people who resisted his message and persecuted and murdered his servants. Therefore, those once scorned by this world will return with Him in glory and power. This army apparently does no actual fighting; it is the commanding general that does all the fighting. It is he who is blood covered, but his saints remain clean. It is grace all the way with Jesus; he does the work and the believers get the benefits.

**19:15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 19:16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**

The weapon of Jesus is the sword of His mouth. He leads, rules, and He judges by the Word of God. The Word is compared to a sword in Hebrews. 4:12. There is a difference, however, in the two passages. When the Word of God is seen as the sword of the believer, it is called a "machaira." This was the short two-edged sword made famous by the Roman legions. It was easy to handle, could thrust, and cut both ways with little difficulty. This represents the adaptability and usefulness of the Word of God to our every need.

Here, however, the word for sword is "rhomphaia." This was the great Thracian broadsword. It took a man of great size and strength to wield this great six foot sword. It was primarily a weapon intended to do the job with one mighty sweep. What a picture of the ease with which Jesus will defeat His enemies! One mighty blow from the Word of His mouth will execute total judgment on the armies of Antichrist and unbelieving mankind. They will be scythed down by the words of his mouth. The very mouth that spoke the creation into existence will speak the enemies of the truth out of existence.

This will be what is called the "baptism of fire" in Revelation 20:14 and spoken of in Matthew 3:10-12. With this sword He will both "smite" (judge) and "rule" (literally, shepherd) the nations, as unbelievers are cast off the earth in judgment and believers alone are left to enter the Kingdom Age. Here he is called "King of Kings, Lord of Lords". This name speaks of the absolute authority and sovereign power of Jesus. All power is His in heaven and earth. He is the source of all authority. Based on this authority, He judges the earth as its rightful King and Ruler. He alone has the right to judge the earth.

It was common practice for a victorious Roman general to wear a banner on his thigh and John sees this symbol of victory in the vision. The word written is in spoken of in the perfect tense showing that it was written in the past with a result that it stays written forever. When the Prince of Peace comes back he makes war to clean up the earth, as after the evils of the Tribulation, that is the only way to eliminate the last remnant of determined and persistently wicked mankind. The winepress is used to show maximum destruction of the enemy.

You need to fight for freedom, and the freedom of worship and life itself in the Millennium is granted by the Lord's total and absolute victory. Only elimination of those determined to be evil removes the threat to mankind from Satan and his followers. "Lord of Lords" is his title of deity, and King of Kings is his title as head of humanity. Our commanding general is the unique person of the universe - Jesus.

It is the truth of this that overwhelms both Arab and Jew in the terrible days of the Great Tribulation. They see he is far more than they have been taught to believe in that day. They see the truth of the biblical words, "If God be for us who can be against us?" His victory is total at this time, but until this time we must all face the reality of continued and vicious opposition from Satan and his followers. The malice of the enemy is strong, right up until they are destroyed to a man and demon by the Lord's return, and so the Great Tribulation believers must fight until that very last day.

**19:17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 19:18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.**

The angel standing in the sun is an angel with a very bright countenance. The brightness of the angel is in stark contrast to the darkness over the earth during the Great Tribulation period with its massive tectonic activity and spiritual darkness. The sun has broken through when the Creator-Saviour returns to judge and rule the earth. This angel however has a serious announcement; he sends an invitation to the fowls of heaven to come and feast on the bloody carnage of the battlefield of Armageddon. Refer to Jeremiah 12:9 and Ezekiel 39:17.

Here we have seven categories of people; kings - the supreme rulers, captains which are army chiefs or chiliarchs, men in charge of one thousand men, mighty men are the fit people of the armies, horses which is the army transportation,

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them that sit upon them are the military commanders, the freemen, and the slaves. The words “small and great” indicate those who are unknown and those who are prominent. All who have served the Anti-Christ were determined to wreck evil havoc upon God’s people and they are scythed down and are food for carrion birds. No matter how great they thought they were, they are destroyed by the words from the Lord’s mouth.

This certainty of final triumph and abject defeat for the enemy will be a great encouragement to the persecuted believers of all ages who read this book. We must wait for this day, but we can be sure it is coming. For those in the Great Tribulation period these words will bring hope and confidence. The slaughter that occurs here is totally just and totally encompassing; no unbeliever escapes to contaminate the future Millennial Age and no believer is caught up in it and hurt. All unbelievers are removed from the earth, for the Lord is bringing in an era of righteousness, a new civilisation that like the one after the Flood, will start with believers only. Luke 17:34-36.

**19:19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 19:20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 19:21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.**

The slaughter of His enemies will be the very basis of the peace, which will last for a thousand years in His earthly kingdom. Only the total elimination of evil men and women produces lasting peace and security for the righteous. We kid ourselves with our “war on drugs/crime” policies, for the elimination of evil alone will eliminate drugs/crime and violence.

The kings of the earth are the rulers/kings who are ruled by the Beast. The armies of these kings are concentrated around Israel on the Anti-Christ’s orders and so they are situated in the right place for their slaughter to be complete. The verb “sunago” is in the perfect tense, meaning that they have been gathered in the past, with a result that they are where the Lord wants them to be when He returns at His Second Advent. They think that they are in control of events, but the Lord is in control and will eliminate them all.

When the armies of the Antichrist are destroyed, the beast (Antichrist), and the false prophet of Revelation 13, are cast alive into the Lake of Fire. They suffer the ultimate fate of those who have hated their creator and waged war upon his people. They will still be there one thousand years later to welcome Satan himself, Revelation 20:10, for whom the Lake of Fire was originally created. Matthew 25:41.

The verb used to describe the action here (“the Beast was taken”), is in the aorist passive indicative, which indicates that the beast received being taken at a point in time, with the indicative mood the reality of this action. He is powerless to stop the Lord’s action over him. These words capture the absolute dominance of the power of the Lord, and the total deception of the Anti-Christ, that he could even think he could stand against God the creator of all things, (including himself).

When the Lord judges he does so thoroughly. He winnows the wheat from the chaff and the chaff is burnt with unquenchable fire - Matthew 3:11-12. We see again that the birds receive feeding as the word for feeding “chotazo” is in the passive voice. If you think a nuclear holocaust is a horrible thing to consider, compare the description of how the enemies of Jesus will suddenly die in Isaiah 29:5-6, and Zechariah 14:12-15.

As for the unbeliever, this is only the beginning of eternal damnation, as they are destined to spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. They have chosen this fate rather than bow their knee to their creator. They will not worship God, but they have worshipped the beast! The word “worship” is used with a dative case (of advantage – by choice); the combination of which in the Greek means divine honour whilst with the accusative it means to do worship or obeisance to another. The dative case is used for the worship of the beast in Revelation 13:4, 16:2, and this verse indicating that they worshipped him as god and have receive the payment for their false worship. Their slaughter is complete and total for they are beyond all hope, having placed themselves there by deliberate worship of evil. The earth has been cleansed of a great evil and the wedding supper of the Lamb is about to begin.

### **Matthew 24:29-31**

**29 Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:**

In this verse we have celestial disturbances that occur in conjunction with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are two aspects of these disturbances; firstly there will be unnatural darkness with the sun and moon failing to give light to the earth, and secondly there will be meteor showers as seen in the phrase “stars falling from heaven. As we have seen above, the point when the darkness ends is when the angel announces the “feast” for the carrion birds, when the judgment of evil men is complete.

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The darkness of the day of the Second Advent assists those believers who are fighting in Jerusalem as with total darkness it is impossible to fight effectively. The lack of light is throughout the world and could be compared with the three hours of darkness that shrouded Golgotha for three hours of the crucifixion from noon to 3 pm. The darkness being complete is confirmed in other Scriptures. Isaiah 13:9,10, Ezekiel 32:7,8 Joel 2:10-11, 3:15, Amos 5:18, Zechariah 14:6, Revelation 6:12.

**30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**

The darkness throughout the world will allow everybody to see the Lord Jesus Christ returning in glory to set up His kingdom and to bring judgment to His foes. With the tectonic disturbances for the previous months/years the upper atmosphere is filled with volcanic clouds of ash and so there are unusual refractions of light when the Lord returns. It may be possible for people to see his coming from all points on the earth simply because of the atmospherics at the time, let alone any television/internet/phone coverage.

He is the only shining light in the darkened sky until the angel announces victory and the darkness is broken up finally and completely. The evil "tribes of the earth" are all in mourning because they realise that judgment is on its way. All have heard the good news and the requirement to repent as given by the evangelists, Revelation 7-11, and the mighty angel in Revelation 14:6. They are all people who have heard the truth, hated the truth, rejected the truth, persecuted all who believe the truth, and now face the truth of their judgment!

**31 And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**

Here we see the restoration of the Jews from throughout the world to the Promised Land as well as the results of the resurrection of the believers from the Age of the Jews and Gentiles. The Jews are all regathered before the separation of the Baptism of Fire. The elect are born again believers only. The believers go into the Millennium while the unbelievers are removed from the earth.

The resurrection of the Old Testament saints and the Tribulational martyrs is the third part of the first resurrection to eternal rewards. In **1 Corinthians 15: 23,24**, *"But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power."*

The order of resurrection is therefore Christ the Firstfruits in 32 AD, Church age believers at the Rapture of the Church, the Old Testament saints and Tribulational martyrs at the Lord's Second Advent (although they may be also raised at the Rapture and be in heaven for the "Marriage Supper of the Lamb" also – only at the time will we be 100% sure of this) and fourthly Millennial saints at the end of the Millennium. The second resurrection which is one for condemnation occurs at the same time just prior to the Great White Throne judgment in Revelation 20:11-15. All who enter this judgment, enter it to end in the Lake of Fire with the satanic trinity and Satan himself.

There will be tremendous disturbance to nature at the Second Advent of Christ. It must be remembered that the Creator is returning to judge the earth and to set up His long awaited Kingdom on earth. A major feature is that the great created light, the sun, is darkened so that the light of the Lord returning with His Shekinah glory may be seen by all. At the Second Advent also the dispersion of the nation Israel will be over and Jesus Christ will send out angels to guide all of them back to Israel.

### NOTES

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## **SECTION 11 Summary of “Daily Orders” for all Tribulational Believers**

The Situation for people becoming believers in the days after the Church has been removed from the earth will be perilous. Multitudes will perish as martyrs for their new found faith, and the pressure upon all who express faith will be extreme. **Revelation 7:9-16**. The believers of those last days will be looked upon by Anti-Christ's servants as dangerous people following, (as far as the Anti-Christ's people are concerned), a dangerous, past, and bankrupt ideology.

Biblical Christianity will be universally hated, and hatred of any who follow the historic Jesus in those days will be taught as the correct viewpoint to the entire unsaved world population. The believers of those days will be portrayed as enemies of the last hope of mankind.

The “world ruler”, the Anti-Christ, will portray himself as the “last hope of man”, and as we have seen above, will give strong evidence that he is a unique, gifted and powerful individual capable to achieving what he claims to be aiming to do. He will give evidence that he intends to solve the problems of mankind including “global warming”, famine, disease spread, war and international crime. He has no such plans; rather he uses each of these things as tools to gain more power and control. His evil plan of deception will deceive the majority of mankind, but believers will still be numerous and many will survive to welcome the Lord's Advent by following the simple instructions of scripture.

The danger believers will face through these years is direct persecution for practising any faith in the Coming of Jesus. The Anti-Christ will seize control by guile of the great majority of governments through the first three and a half years; the “Tribulation”. He will gain control by appearing to be starting to meet many of mankind's pressing problems, bringing a peace to the Middle East like no other person has been able to achieve. He will have the Arab and Israeli people sign a peace treaty that will appear to resolve the threat of nuclear war in the Middle East. He will gain control of world trade, use the economic policies of the United Nations to expand centralized control of finance, and manipulate world finance.

He will insist upon a “cashless society” to eliminate organized crime and control the activities of “undesirables”, but he will be resisted in this, and will not be 100% successful. It is crucial that believers maintain a cash economy and base most trading for survival on untraceable bartering between themselves. He will try to identify all who become followers of Jesus and eliminate them as the “enemies of peace and order”, but all this is but the prelude of his evil. Initially masquerading as “good for the world crises” the mask will fall off when he unveils his new “world religion” at the mid-point of the Tribulation period. The real pressure will come on all believers in Jesus at the point when the Anti-Christ sets up his idol in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

At that point he launches his new world wide religion to replace all others. It is the worship of him, and the satanic force that is behind him. This lunatic act is a turning point for many, and the Arab nations, with their hatred of idolatry from Islam, will immediately see that he is indeed the servant of Satan, and so reject his control of their nations. They will embrace the Jewish refugees that flee from his control from Israel and hide them in their mountains. At that point the count down to the end truly begins, and any who believe in Jesus need to be instantly ready to flee into isolated and wild places in order to survive, because world wide violent persecution is unleashed within hours or days of this world changing event.

After the rejection of worship of him by many, his hatred of believers in Jesus will explode in a world wide orgy of violence towards any who will not worship him. **Revelation 13:7-18**. He will even turn upon the leaders of other religions at that point destroying all who will not bow their knee to him as supreme being. Too late those who compromised realise they were duped by evil and they are swept away in his executions of all who refuse to worship him.

He uses the world wide economic system of control of points of sale to monitor people and check their compliance with the new religion. Those who need to purchase any item officially in the EFTPOS and CCTV controlled cities will be able to be investigated constantly as to their beliefs and their acceptance of the new religion. Those who do not accept the “mark of the beast” on their forehead or the back of their hand to be able to be “scanned” at all official points of sale and monitored will be threatened with their loss of access to food, medicine and all goods.

If they reject his control over their beliefs, and are unable to flee his net of control, they will be imprisoned in his concentration camps and later executed. Those who are able to flee and patiently wait for the Lord in wild and secret places are delivered by the Lord on his return, but they need incredible patience and fortitude, for they must remain “invisible” to the authorities for the last three and a half years of the history of this fallen world. **Revelation 14:9-13**.

As we have seen, all this happened before in the Roman Empire. In the pagan Roman Empire the Christians were executed as “enemies of mankind”, and so it will be again world wide at that later time when Anti-Christ gains control of the majority of countries and forces his new religion upon mankind. As we have seen above, many Arab countries immediately reject his idolatry and he cannot fully control their nations. **Daniel 11:41-45**. He launches war against these places but is unsuccessful.

These Arab nations to the east of Israel become the hiding places for many believers through these last dark three and a half years. The enforcement of his religious edicts are patchy world wide, and some believers escape in all nations, but they can escape only by being able to avoid the official economy of their nations for the three and a half years that are to

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run until the Lord's return. He is not as successful as many have believed he will be, and finally he is totally destroyed, with all who stand with him.

Remember, the believers in this day are people who had rejected the Gospel message from Christians, but after the Church has been removed from the earth at the Rapture, they have found the truth and accepted Jesus is indeed the Messiah and the Saviour of mankind. They express this new faith in these dark days, and many appear to be martyred through the subsequent years. Becoming a believer in Jesus in the last days of the Church Age was reasonably cost free for the majority. Believers may have been mocked, but their lives would continue normally afterwards with few economic or political consequences in most places. All that is changed in the Tribulation period; becoming a believer is costly indeed for any who repent at that time and accept the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. They must truly count the cost, but the Word of Scripture is clear, and their instructions are precise. If they study them and are obedient they are delivered.

The believing survivors of this time period are those who can isolate themselves and live well under the devil's technological system of control ("below his radar"). They must avoid the official economy of their nations, and literally fall off the computer screen of the EFTPOS and AP (automatic payment) based world economy. Everyone within the official system (controlled **then** by the Anti-Christ) receives a number and must use it to pay official bills, and buy any commodity from an official and EFTPOS controlled shop. The "mark of the beast" is applied only at this time.

Those believers who survive this time are those people who can disappear from the "card carrying" "mark wearing" society, not pay rent, rates, or taxes in any way that would enable them to be traced and found by officials. They must be able to suffer great hardship and privation; use the shoes/clothes they have through this time, or make their own, and grow or barter food in an unofficial economy that does not require the worship of the Anti-Christ to operate.

### **TEN "DAILY ORDERS" FOR BELIEVERS IN THESE LAST DAYS**

1. Stay as fit and healthy as possible, and become medication free if possible. This way you will not need the official economy. If medication is needed, then at least three and a half years of it will need to be stockpiled before the image of the Anti-Christ is set up in the rebuilt temple of Jerusalem. The signs are there to see, and so believers of this day can be prepared, but they must apply themselves 100%. They must be ready to disappear from public sight and have the means of survival "under the radar" of the enemy. Slackness of any sort means death in these days.
2. Stockpile food, water, appropriate shoes, clothes, medicines, and weapons for the last days in a secret place away from the control of the government where you can "disappear" when the time comes. Believers must be ready to "disappear" from their economy before the "mark" is required for all financial transactions. They must not tell any unbeliever their intentions or they will be betrayed. They must take any means for resistance to the enemy with them also, for the enemy in those days will be people who were their neighbours and friends. Once they have taken the mark of the beast, they have become their enemy, and they will hand them over to be killed. Believers must have the means of transport to be able to reach their prepared destination quickly and without requiring assistance from anyone else.
3. If they are a couple, they must not get pregnant through this time, as carrying a child or caring for a child that might cry aloud at the wrong time may lead to the discovery and death of the group. Also pregnant women cannot move quickly in difficult terrain or situations.
4. Believers need to train in privation and patience. They must be able to go without extra goods, the comforts of home, and the social pleasantries of society. The early church had two fasting days a week to maintain mental and physical toughness and this will be needed again. They must be able to be electronic technology free, for all electricity supplies connected to any grid will be traced and the people found. Believers must be self sufficient through these last years.
5. The Lord's Command is clear to all who are in the land of Israel when the Idol of the Anti-Christ is set up – "Flee to the mountains". This is to be instantly obeyed as the enemy's control over transport and movement of people will be quickly established to prevent escape within hours. In Israel the mountains are the Arab controlled areas to the south and east of the land of Israel. Believers must express great faith in the Word of God to flee into those areas at that time but if they do, they will be safe. They must have a pack ready, with all their supplies ready to go at a minute's notice.
6. World wide, believers are to flee to any place where they can disappear from official society and governmental control. The book of Revelation describes the great plagues that will be unleashed by the Lord upon the earth to punish those who follow the Anti-Christ. From a study of these waves of punishments it is clear that the only safe place is well away from sea level, active volcanoes and dangerous fault lines that will trigger tsunamis. Believers must be patient through this time. The word translated "patient" is hupomone in the Greek language, and it means, "big souled". It is the ability to handle the most extreme pressures and have and hold faith in a greater power than what they see around them. The mountains will fall in this time, but those who trust the Lord, and are under canvas or the stars, will be kept safe, even though the earth shifts beneath them. They must have patience and absolute faith in the Lord their God and be well away from the buildings of man, for they will all be flattened! **Revelation 16:17-21**. The earthquakes described here are Richter Scale 10 quakes and will induce fear at a level never seen on the earth before. Faith-Rest in the arms of the Lord in open spaces is the only hope for believers lives and sanity through these last days. **Hebrews 3:14-4:12**.

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7. Study the Bible with focused attention. There will be two categories of believers in those terrible days; the living ones who know the Bible and obey it, and those awaiting execution or already dead, who didn't know and obey God's Word! The Bible will be the only book that believers need at that time, and they will be advised to be constantly reading and rejoicing in its comfort and its clear instructions for survival through this period.

8. Hide from officials of the government. Reject all offers to surrender and "meet the Lord", for the enemies of the Lord will deceive any who do not know the scriptures in that day. It will feel like being in self imposed jail for three and a half years, but be patient, for the Lord will come for those who are patiently waiting, and are obedient to his words through these terrible days. Stay hidden and secret if at all possible through these last three and a half years. Avoid the company of all but your believing group or family, for all others who have accepted the "mark of the beast" are required to betray you and hand you over for execution, and they will do so, for their doom is sealed by the Lord's Word.

9. Do NOT trust any person who is not a genuine believer. Resist the enemies of the Lord if you must to survive. Violent resistance to the forces of the Anti-Christ will be **crucial for many in various places**. In the Church Age there is no warrant to resist evil by the sword, but rather to give the Gospel and accept death as a martyr if required, but all is changed once the Church is raptured and gone. There is no mercy to be shown to any believer by the forces of Anti-Christ once his idol is set up, so those who cannot hide and stay away from the enemy must fight until the end of this period or accept martyrdom will be their lot. If you must fight the enemies of Jesus, fight them with all the force and strength you have. Those Jewish believers who have not fled to the mountains when the idol is set up must congregate in Jerusalem and fight to the death there in the last months of this final period of history before the Lord's return. There is no option to surrender! Surrender is death, so fight on and die fighting, facing the enemies of the Lord. Do not surrender and die in weakness. Do not allow the enemy any rejoicing or victories in those days.

10. Wait with patience for the Lord's Return. When he comes it will be seen by all of mankind and you will be delivered if you have waited patiently for Him. Remain in hiding until he personally calls for you. Do not expose your position even on the last day until the Lord himself arrives to deliver you. God's Word and its instructions must be more real to believers than any events occurring around them. Those without doctrine will unhinge, but those who know the Lord, His Word, and His Plan will rest upon him until they are delivered. **Deuteronomy 33:27.**

### NOTES



## Section 12                      Ezekiel 38-39                      The Next Prophetic Event to Occur

The Prophet Ezekiel saw the vision of the horrific details of the last major invasion of the land of Israel (and the entire Middle East) before the Tribulation itself begins. It is the great assault by the Shiite forces, led by Iran, to conquer Israel and her Allies, the Sunni Arab Nations. It is a prophetic word that occurs in a set sequence, after Ezekiel 37, which describes the nation Israel coming back to life after being dead for a long time. We have seen that occur since 1948, with the re-establishment of Israel as a nation for the first time since the collapse of the Great Rebellions against Rome in AD 70 and AD 138. At EBCWA we believe that the events described below, as recorded by Ezekiel will occur within the next few years and open the door for the temple to be rebuilt with Sunni Arab support.

The clock began ticking for these things to unfold in September 2020 with the signing of the Abraham Accords. God's "hook" is in Iran's nose, and she will move with demon possessed malice against the Middle East in coming days.

### **EZEKIEL CHAPTER 38**

#### **VERSES 1 – 13**

**"1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: 5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togarmah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. 7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them. 8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee. 10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: 11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwall'd villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates, 12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?"**

#### **REFLECTION**

**1. And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, 2 Son of man, set thy face against Gog, the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him, 3 And say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal:**

This appears to be an abrupt shift in the prophetic flow, from Israel's future destiny to suddenly mention strange peoples who attack Israel, but it is in direct relation to the previous chapter, as it describes one of the final assaults upon God's people Israel, after their restoration as an unsaved nation, before their spiritual revival, and before the Second Advent of the Lord. Some argue this will occur at the end of the Millennial Kingdom but that makes no sense at all in light of its proximity to chapter 37 and the time to burn the weapons. Logic indicates that it will occur at some point before the Great Tribulation, and be a part of preparing the way for that time. We face here a great attack upon God's plan and God's people; not the worst attack, but one that we believe prefigures the worst, and sets the stage for it.

On mature reflection, having completed commentaries on all the books of the Bible, and now in my sixties, having studied ancient history for over forty years, I believe that this chapter applies to the years just before the Great Tribulation period, when a group of nations try to destroy the unbelieving modern state of Israel (and the surrounding Arab nations) and are frustrated in so doing. It is the aftermath of this attack, as described by Ezekiel, that makes me believe it must occur before the days of the Great Tribulation and set the stage for the Tribulation Temple to be built alongside the two mosques, or their ruins, as they are also rebuilt. I believe the events described in these two chapters set in place all the last pieces on the stage for the end game of the Anti-Christ.

The nations of this penultimate great rebellion against God's plan are more numerous and murderous than those who have assaulted Israel at any earlier point in her history. What is described here has most certainly not occurred to this

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point in history as I edit this again in early 2021, but the alliances described are now in place since the “Abraham Accords” were signed September 2020. Also, at the time of Ezekiel around 560 BC, some of these people groups would only have just heard of Israel due to their involvement in the armies of Nebuchadnezzar, but they play a minor part then. For the others mentioned here it was a “far, far away” place of no real significance to them. This passage was not fulfilled in any way by the invasions of 605, 597, 586 BC, nor have they been by anything since in history.

This great campaign will occur at a time when hatred for Israel is at an all time high amongst the States/People Groups that join this assault upon the land of Israel. This is a prophetic vision of Ezekiel that makes the hairs on my neck stand up in 2010-2021 as I write/re-write these words. Nebuchadnezzar was a Shemite, who used these Japhetic (Scythian) people as part of his army to destroy Jerusalem, but this invasion described by Ezekiel is totally Japhetic and they are fighting the sons of Shem, and are to be destroyed by the time they have some units arrive at/outside Jerusalem.

Let us look at the nations/people groups that gather to fight against the people of Israel, and the Lord in these last momentous days, declaring war on the Plan of God laid down from Genesis, and actually declaring war on the King of all kings, and the true Lord of all lords. The first mentioned and apparent leaders of the “rebellion” (it is a war – but more it is an active and malicious rebellion against the true plan of God) are the ruler(s) of the southern states of the old Soviet Empire. The official leader is called “Gog”, from the land of Magog. Genesis 10:2. This may be a Russian or Ukrainian leader, but he works to weld together an alliance that involves all the older Scythian-Parthian peoples in a hate filled invasion of the Middle East. The passage below tells us that it is driven by simple lust for goods, money and hatred.

It is distracting at this distance in time to try to be too specific in the identification of people and places here, but the names are Scythian in origin and that gives us the major clue we need to interpret this. The people groups involved are descendants of the Japhetic Line (Indo-European people group) of the Scythians, not of the Shemite line from which the Arabs and Jews descend. It is an “end time” attack upon the line of Shem, and an attack upon the very plan of God by evil north-eastern men of Japheth, and it will be destroyed by God. God’s Plan calls, from the very beginning of the post-flood civilization, for the blessing and power of Japheth to be only “in the tents of Shem”. **Genesis 9:27**. The power of the Indo-European peoples is only as they worship in the manner/revelation given to the sons of Shem (the Holy Scriptures). This invasion is led by people who reject this biblical direction.

These names appear to refer to the descendants of the Scythian peoples who inhabited the lands from the Carpathian Mountains in the West, through the Ukraine, lower Russian Steppes to the Hindu Kush - Tien Shan Mountains of China along the borders of Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The next group is made up of Rosh, Meshech and Tubal. These also appear to refer to the people of the old Scythian areas (Moschi/Muschki and Tibareni of the Romans) who dwell in the region of the Taurus Mountains and north of the Black Sea. These regions are mixed Sunni-Shiite Moslem today, and it may be that what Ezekiel sees is the attempt by these States to join together with “radical” and other hate filled recruits from other areas and gain renown/fame by attacking Israel, but as we will see below, not only Israel.

Do an internet search of these names but be careful of the anti-Biblical bias of Wikipedia (which will edit out any believing comments, including all that do not down-grade trust in the historicity of the Holy Scripture and mock Daniel and Ezekiel). The past and present Moslem clerics of this old Scythian area have many “Hadiths” (commentaries, prophetic words, teachings) on Magog and Gog also. These dominantly northern commentators and prophetic voices of Islam combine discussion of the two names with end times, with Jesus, a beast/smoking evil figure from the West, and the end of the Hajj and worship at the Kaaba.

Many of these Hadiths are Shiite, but some are Sunni, and often details are confused, but some may record the alternative to Ezekiel’s words, and some were certainly quoted by the ISIS group, who believed they were called to fulfil them, and end the Hajj and Kaaba worship (as they as extremists see it). These radicals still believe they will destroy the corrupt Sunni Moslem states, and kill all Sunni/Shiite who oppose them, all Jews and Christians, but then be delivered by Jesus! This sort of evil mix of minimum truth and maximum falsity is to be expected from any alternative commentary on a prophetic word that is as significant as Ezekiel’s words are here. Do not spend too much time making sense of these Hadiths, as they may not make sense at all, except as a clue to the importance of Ezekiel! Evil doesn’t waste time producing alternative “scripture commentary” unless it is important. This is also why Daniel is so attacked. Sensible and stable Moslems (99%!) value Daniel and Ezekiel as prophets, and ignore the dodgy extremist views that are hate filled.

What we read in these two chapters, occurs after the “dry bones” of the state of Israel (Ezekiel 37) is established in unbelief and awaits the breath of the Holy Spirit to bring back spiritual life to them. Zechariah 12:10ff, 13:1ff. The placement of this prophetic vision by Ezekiel is of great significance, and its perversion by the Sunni Al Queda and ISIS people is the clue to its importance. Liberal/unbelieving church seminary based commentators argue it is a late addition, but that simply betrays their unbelieving bias. It is significant that some of the prophetic statements of the false Hadiths relating to Gog/Magog identify the destruction of areas in Syria and Saudi Arabia, battles from Yemen to the Mediterranean Sea, and the climax of it all on the mountains of Israel, at the very mountains of Jerusalem, before the war ends in “fire and smoke” with the destruction of the forces of Gog and Magog. This all agrees with the Biblical visions.

The Lord makes it clear here in Ezekiel that he is personally against these named people group’s plan, and all they stand for in their rejection of his Word and his will. Those who stand against the Lord, and that means also against all the Sons of Abraham, will not stand! This prophecy will be an important one as all people face these specific battles (and tactical nuclear exchanges) of the days leading up to the Great Tribulation period. This prophetic word from Ezekiel tells us that

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we will see tactical nuclear warfare and possibly millions killed in the Middle East as a result of Iranian Clerical evil and foolish Scythian People Group, and other's plans. All those preaching lies and deceit today will be exposed as fools and fantasists, but those who read, believe and apply Ezekiel, Zechariah, and the other prophets, will demonstrate that God's Plan is indeed being worked out in spite of the murderous malice of evil and stupid men.

It will be a significant piece of biblical evidence for the accuracy of biblical prophecy, and the Lord's intervention in the affairs of men, and all people will see that the Bible alone provides full knowledge of the biblical truth concerning this world's final end! What happens during this great attack upon Israel (and the Arab States – all the "sons of Abraham") is that the teaching of the biblical prophetic books receives significant evidence of its vital importance.

**4 And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords:**

These people are almost "drawn forward" into their evil by the Lord. How can this be, and these people still be free, and yet the Lord be just in condemning them? The answer comes when we remember the concept of the "hardening of the heart". Pharaoh had his heart "hardened" by God during the days leading up to the Exodus, so that he would not let the children of Israel go. He was "hardened" into his deepest resolve, and had to show his full malice and be judged in it.

As a result of this, the Pharaoh opened the door for total judgment upon the land of Egypt, and all the gods of Egypt were judged through the plagues that occurred. What then does this phrase mean? How can people who are "drawn by hooks", or "hardened in their hearts" still be free? The answer comes as we focus on the meaning here of the words involved. Refer to the BTB studies on GOD – DIVINE INSTITUTIONS – FREE WILL, and also HEART.

To harden a wet washing towel and thereby squeeze all the water out of it, you twist it, or wring it out. In this process the soft cotton towel becomes hard and all the water that is in it is wrung out. This is the concept of "hardening the heart"; God puts enough pressure on the person so that what is really within them is "wrung out" of them. It is the process whereby the true thoughts, intents, feeling and malice is forced to be disclosed by the Lord. No excuses, and no escape!

Pharaoh hated Israel and God, and so by Moses and Aaron's words he was forced to really confront his true feelings and his desired decision making. He was not allowed by the Lord to be hypocritically polite, and just do the right thing for appearances sake, but he was forced to really disclose his true attitudes and intentions. This becomes clear when he pursues after the Israelites determined to kill them all. Exodus 14. Refer to BTB study of PHARAOH – GODS POWER

The same process occurs with the hate filled peoples of the places described and the period of time we face here. It would be easy for them to keep "play acting" religious tolerance and diplomacy, but the Lord does not give them that option; they must disclose themselves and openly proclaim their true feelings and the extent of their evil malice. They are "drawn out" to rebel against God's Word and God's Plan and so disclose the true desires of their hearts. The "nut bars" of the extremist world join with them to fully express their hatred of Israel and the wealthy Arab States, and so they are also judged in their evil. It is a rebellion against God that clears away a great deal of extremist evil in one sweep, but through great suffering in the Middle East. From the Houthis, Somalis, to Lybia, and to the far north; all are judged.

The attackers are free agents, who then fully disclose the truth of their malicious evil, just as for years they have been free to hide their true feelings, but that freedom is now over, and they must disclose their heart's true contents, for only those who love the Lord find any eternal or temporal spiritual blessing. As the days draw closer to the Great Tribulation all mankind is forced to take sides regarding the blessings flowing from Abraham, the truth of the Holy Scriptures, and the true identity of Jesus. We see this process seriously beginning with the questions raised by the Covid-19 crisis.

**5 Persia, Ethiopia, and Libya with them; all of them with shield and helmet: 6 Gomer, and all his bands; the house of Togamah of the north quarters, and all his bands: and many people with thee. 7 Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them.**

There are more nations that join the rebels, trying to attack Israel from all directions simultaneously. Such a concerted attack requires great arrogance, and long incubation of hatred. This tells us that the rebels have had to consciously decide to hate the Lord, and act against him and his people over considerable time. The nations here are a varied group. From the North-East come the Persians, and from the west the Libyans (or from the south-east the Yemenis/Houthis – the word here may indicate Yemen rather than Libya), and from the far south the hate filled war lords of Moslem Ethiopia/Somalia. They are all there as part of the great unholy alliance of the people groups who have hated the people of Israel, indeed all the sons of Abraham, and all their hatred and lust for plunder is focused in this venture.

Gomer is the Cimmerian peoples, and the house of Togamah, the people around Armenia; these people groups live in the north, and to the north of what is now Turkey and are close by the others mentioned above. The Lord warns them that they had better be well prepared for what they will face. The warning is deeply sinister, for their preparation needs to be to guard themselves, from themselves, for they are not united, as the satanically motivated are always self-centred and narcissistic, and so they don't form good "team work", but each fight for their own ends, and so are self destructive.

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They are without excuse before God, for the Lord warns them that all they purpose will implode, and they will all die in the midst of their evils. Such a gracious and bluntly serious warning will fall on deaf ears, for they are determined, but have no hope of victory at all, for they are fighting against God in fighting against Israel and the Sunni Arab States in a way that has been prophesied so clearly. The “sons of Abraham” will win – God’s Word says it – “It is Written”. The precision of the words below will shock and amaze, and when the battles foretold unfold as predicted 2500 years before, all who have open hearts and clear thinking minds towards the Scriptures will be on their knees praying to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through whom came Jesus/Isa/Y’Shua as Saviour, King and Lord of all.

**8 After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. 9 Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee.**

Verse eight reminds us that the hatred of Gog has been a long time in the making, and they have had ample opportunity to turn away to another course and repent of their evil. They have had the chance to worship the Lord their God, but have failed to do so. It is of note that these southern “Stans” of the old USSR have been the recipients of extensive evangelism by evangelical Christians since the collapse of the old USSR in the early 1990s. They will in these latter years of history launch their attack onto the ancient “mountains of Israel”, and they will try to do what so many have done before them, and they will lay the land waste. These mountains are also always “waste land”, very rocky, and very easy to defend as a result. This is not an “easy campaign” for the attacking troops, even though the Arabs and Israelis may not be 100% prepared for the numbers that assault them in this attack.

At this time the Jewish people are living in apparent peace; after many years of warfare they have found some level of rest in the land, and the evil leader Gog tries to disturb this peace. It is the peace of God, and so Gog is in for a shock (although they will read these words and feel smug and secure in their lies and self deceit, just as all rebels against God have felt through the centuries).

They will come up like a storm, with speed that is as fast as a violent storm approaching the land. They will be a vast host, for in numbers they deceive themselves into believing they will be victorious. They think that by sheer weight of numbers they will overwhelm what the mechanized Arab armies have failed to do in every war since 1948. The Arabs stand with Israel for this battle, and they fight together from this point to the end of the Tribulation also.

**10 Thus saith the Lord GOD; It shall also come to pass, that at the same time shall things come into thy mind, and thou shalt think an evil thought: 11 And thou shalt say, I will go up to the land of unwalled villages; I will go to them that are at rest, that dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates,**

At least two thousand six hundred years in advance, the Lord tells the evil armies of this still future day, that they will think an evil thought at this time, and their thought will be to kill all those who live in apparent peace and security in the unwalled, and apparently undefended villages of the land of Israel. After many years of relative safety, the people dwell in a security that is untroubled by thoughts of such levels of extreme violence, but also the words here indicate the defences of the land of Israel are there. The majority of people are peaceful and do not think that anyone will do what these evil people from the named nations try to do. While most do not think this attack possible, they are ready to resist.

The evil men think in terms of lust for goods, and genocidal malice towards Arabs and Israelis, but their hatred is misplaced and their intentions known well in advance, and the Lord has already thwarted their plans. Most observers will be surprised at the sheer malicious power of this attack, but the defences of Israeli are not in walls and gates, but in secret strategies and hidden and deep defences, and they will hold. The enemy don’t think the Israelis are prepared, but they are, and the hidden and deep defences are strong, and the tactical nuclear counter-plans are well laid and executed in the end to defend the Jewish people and the surrounding Arabs, who also are on the receiving end of this assault.

**12 To take a spoil, and to take a prey; to turn thine hand upon the desolate places that are now inhabited, and upon the people that are gathered out of the nations, which have gotten cattle and goods, that dwell in the midst of the land. 13 Sheba, and Dedan, and the merchants of Tarshish, with all the young lions thereof, shall say unto thee, Art thou come to take a spoil? hast thou gathered thy company to take a prey? to carry away silver and gold, to take away cattle and goods, to take a great spoil?**

What foolishness and what evil; to think that these lust filled forces can invade the lands of the Arabs and the land of Israel and seize their goods and make their people slaves and actually get away with it! Man’s self centred evil is the heart of rebellion against the plan of God, and satanic over-estimation has always been a hallmark of evil plans since the beginning of time. Prosperity is not a cause of holiness, nor is peace and security the cause of goodness. Many today argue that if the world was a financially better place then the world would be a peaceful place. They argue that if there was peace and prosperity for all then there would be no crime and evil.

Even in today’s world we can see that such a statement is a terrible and devious lie. In my own country a week does not go by when I do not read in my newspaper of a millionaire being charged with theft or immorality, or violent crime. Most criminals are not poor people, but wealthy, and with their satanic self centred malice desire more and more. Wealthy

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people persecute the poor, and rob from their own business partners, and fraudulently steal from their government and their own families, and in their narcissism don't think they will be caught. Proverbs 6:16-22, James 2:1-7, 4:1-4, 5:1-6.

Sadly all the nations listed by Ezekiel here are nations that are poor due to their religious and politically corrupt systems. They are locked in the past, living in a primitive manner in the midst of the modern world, and their satanic sense of "entitlement" means they act as if they can invade other nations as their ancestors did several hundred years ago. While the attackers are all backward looking Shiite and even Sunni Moslem people groups, many of the more modern Moslem countries **do not join** the evil invaders, and we will note that below, for they will actually support and fight with Israel in that day.

Nothing changes in the Old Sin Nature of men and women, and all the wealth and prosperity that is possible to receive, does not change it. When the past American president, Bill Clinton, was asked why he had some form of sex with an intern on his staff, he initially lied, but when he finally was honest, he gave good insight into why the wealthy and most powerful man in the world would do such a foolish and evil thing. He said, "I did it because I could!" This is what the evil men of this day do and what they have always done. Evil is defined as "I" trouble – it is narcissistic self centeredness. Isaiah 14:12-15, Ezekiel 28:2-19. Evil distorts logical thinking, creating tunnel vision that excludes reality – they will fail.

This is an evil at the heart of us all, and the filling of the Holy Spirit alone keeps us from such self centred evil and sin. We are to be wary of temptations, and never feel superior to them, but walk humbly and quietly before our God. 1 Corinthians 10:12, 1 Timothy 3:6-7, James 5:12. In this evil day, as these evil men, the rebels against God's Plan, determine to advance and commit evil, the other people groups from the Japhetic lines stand up and oppose them.

The Bible believing merchants from the western nations who all trade with the Arabs and Israel, even from far away nations, will all challenge them, and will ask them why they do such an evil thing, to believe that they can get away with this? It is so preposterous a plan that it will catch most by surprise, for none want to believe such an enterprise could happen in "modern days". These dominantly Shiite invaders of the mainly Sunni Middle East are foolishly arrogant and do not see the whirlwind they reap until too late for their armies. I had initially thought it was a Shiite-Sunni divide, but the Middle East and the different people groups are not that simple; it is a mixed group of attackers, driven by lust and hatred. It is possibly an invasion that is used by God to sort out those extremists driven by emotion and malice, and those with intelligent faith based thinking, preparing many for tribulational days, who may then be led to saving faith!

Notice the nations that do not join in with the invaders, who argue with them, and then fight against them. Sheba, Dedan, and the "merchants of Tarshish", all oppose the invasion, and their "young lions" (soldiers) oppose them actively. The "merchants" may be the Nato/European Union trading bloc that actively opposes them, and applies a trade ban on the invaders. Tarshish was a way of describing Western Europe in Ezekiel's day, as the nations of the far West before arriving at the Atlantic Ocean. The indication is that they do far more than just institute a trade ban, but send armies.

Sheba and Dedan are names that incorporate all the nations/tribes of the Northern Arabian Peninsula. This is intriguing, as they side with Israel against these other predominantly Shiite Moslem States. This includes Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other Gulf States, Jordan, and possibly may include parts of Syria, although probably does not include the Yemeni States and Aden, as these appear to be listed with the Somalis as part of the enemy forces. The battle lines are dominantly Shiite versus Sunni/Israeli in nature, although remember in the Moslem world nothing is as simple as this for longer than a few months.

### PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. **ECONOMIC POVERTY OR PROSPERITY DOES NOT MAKE PERFECT CHARACTER.** People are not changed for good/bad by their finances or environment, but by their righteous relationship with the Lord God alone, and their obedience to the Holy Spirit alone. The "fruit" of their lives proves the source of their inner power. Galatians 5:12-26. Obedience to the commands of Jesus is required of all the servants of the Lord, and if we resent the Lord's righteous demands we will pay a terrible price for our foolishness. John 15:1-17.

2. **THE TEST OF SPACE-TIME IS VOLITION; WHAT WILL EACH PERSON DO IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CREATOR AND SAVIOUR?** The Lord seeks for our response to his character and work, and right until the end of our brief journey through space-time he asks us to confront our sin, bring it before him, and to serve him in the beauty of holiness. Our choices determine our outcomes in this life and the next; temptations are to be faced and beaten until the end of our journey – careful – as we cannot be sure that any "mistake" might not be a "fatal error".

3. **THE PRESENT MOSLEM WORLD WILL SPLIT INTO TWO WARRING CAMPS, AND THE ARABS WILL SUPPORT THEIR BRETHREN IN ABRAHAM, ISRAEL, IN THE END.** Do not be caught as a pastor of God's Word preaching against the Arab sons of Abraham, for they will stand with Israel at this great time of testing and carnage. They also are blessed in their father Abraham, all receiving the promises of Genesis 12-14, as all his sons were "in his loins" at that point. Preach the truths of the Word to the Arab world, for we have God's Word on it, the Arab Sunni nations will support Israel and many amongst them will come to faith. Remember that God's Word is more real than today's newspaper, and is to be believed against presently seen evidence. September 2020 saw the open recognition of a treaty between UAE and Israel, with the other Sunni States to join in public announcements later – Iran is now openly

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seen and named by all as the threat. Ezekiel gives a glimpse of things to come, and so as teachers of the Word, let us rejoice in this truth. Let us truly be "People of the Book", and preach it as it is, not be as the mockers who doubt it!

### EZEKIEL 38:14 – 23

**"14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army: 16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes. 17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? 18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face. 19 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. 21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. 23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD."**

### REFLECTION

**14. Therefore, son of man, prophesy and say unto Gog, Thus saith the Lord GOD; In that day when my people of Israel dwelleth safely, shalt thou not know it? 15 And thou shalt come from thy place out of the north parts, thou, and many people with thee, all of them riding upon horses, a great company, and a mighty army:**

Having seen the full extent of the evil of the Gog led invasion, the prophet is given the message to announce to them. Now pause a moment and reflect; this possibly is only a few years away as I revise these words 2013 through 2021, for it occurs well before the Great Tribulation and Millennium, yet Ezekiel, 2600 years at least before it, is given the message to address to the attackers. God's grace is seen in this, and the certainty of his plan being victorious is to be proclaimed loudly. God in grace seeks for these people to be saved, even though most will die in their freely chosen evil path of theft and murder. **2 Peter 3:1-9.** Peter's words remind us that "mockers" of the truth will multiply, but grace is offered.

Remember that the evangelism of these backward mixed Sunni and Shiite areas has been extensive in recent years through cable television networks, and this evil invasion is clearly going to lead to the salvation of many, for the Lord's "Word does not return to Him void". **Isaiah 55:11.** The invitation to join this invasion is given by its leaders to all the people groups of the area, and some join but others heed the Word of Word and pull back from involvement. Those joining it mostly die, and those who pull back live. We are called by all means at our disposal to warn these people groups of this great evil that they will be invited to join.

This is the Lord's reminder that his eternal plan is the correct one, and he alone determines who will win and who will lose, and it is all in relationship with the volition of individuals towards God. These people think they are numerous and powerful, yet the prophet of 2600 years before condemns them! Do you see the power of this? This is a reflection of the Holy Character and Plan of God, both his sovereignty, but also his mercy and love, for to warn such people for so long indicates just how many barriers of love and truth they must break to rebel against his Word and reject his Plan in such a way as they do. They will all stand, without exception or excuse, before the throne of God. **Revelation 20:11-15.**

**16 And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.**

They will actually launch their attack upon the people of Israel and upon the land of the Lord God, and the time is referred to as "the latter days" – the days just before the Tribulation period, possibly only a few years before. They will come as a vast multitude against the Arab lands and Israel, murdering all those they resent as they advance. These people hate Israel, but they also hate the wealthy, successful, and modern Arabs also; it is sheer satanic malice that drives them. Their satanic malice brings together the sons of Abraham in unity to fight for the first time since his days.

The Arab peoples targeted on the way to Jerusalem are also the sons of Abraham, and so they also come under God's care through Abraham, and so when the Arabian nations support Israel, they enter the covering of the Lord's protection. The Abraham promise of protection and blessing applies to the Arabs and the Jews, for all of them (Ishmael, Isaac, and the sons of Keturah) are all "in the Loins of Abraham" when the initial promises are made. Genesis 12:2-3, 12:7-9, 13:14-17, 15:1-7.

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The Lord gives the attackers no option but to express their hatred of Him and his people in open war. They are denied their use of hypocrisy and double talk any longer, they must launch their attack, and instead of repentance, they sweep towards and over the ancient borders of the land of Israel. Remember these borders are the ancient ones, not the modern ones, and so vast areas of Jordan, Syria and the Lebanon are involved in the fighting.

They try to destroy the Jewish people, who they resent, and the wealthy and modern Arabs who they also hate, but the Lord God will be sanctified through their evil! They will see the Lord's glory, and the entire world of non-Jewish/Arab people will see that God is Lord, and the "heathen" rebels will surely know the judgment of God upon them. The evil men look around and see their mighty army, and know others are gathering to resist them, but they believe they have enough of a "head start", and so having little time before the arrival of the western forces, they move in malicious and murderous haste.

The evil men see their vast numbers and trust their malice and power, but they do not look up and remember that they fight against the Creator of the Universe and author of the Plan from eternity past. The Lord blessed Abraham and his descendants and any fool that forgets this is doomed. The Lord will use this invasion to glorify his holy name and sift the evil of the nations, making it harder for the Anti-Christ in the days that follow, for many of his would be allies are dead or thoroughly disillusioned and later accept the Lord Jesus Christ.

God is Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, and He will make an end of their plans and schemes and all mankind will draw breath and see that God is indeed powerful. This is the last great demonstration of God's power and plan openly before the Anti-Christ reveals himself to deceive the evil remnant of mankind later.

**17 Thus saith the Lord GOD; Art thou he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them? 18 And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord GOD, that my fury shall come up in my face.**

The Lord will at that time refer back to these days of Ezekiel and remind Gog and his host that he had moved the prophet 2600 years before to proclaim their fate. All Moslems honour Ezekiel and so to assault the land in this invasion is to despise both the prophet and God who gave him this message! He assures them that their fate is sealed in their invasion, as is the fate of all who rebel against the will of the Lord their God and assault his people at any time in history.

As the Arab world says, "It is written" – there is no hope for these evil people, for the Plan of God has been revealed by Ezekiel and they will lose; it is certain, because God said it! There is no hiding and no escape from the judgment of God, for He is the one who made the universe and all that there is in it. God knows the end from the beginning all all points between – Satan doesn't, and in his arrogance he deceives himself and his followers.

All the prophets record the Lord's judgment, but this invasion will reap a terrible judgment for those who attack, but will also be used to set all the pieces in order for the final act of man's evil, the Great Tribulation itself! Gog is but another pale imitation of the Anti-Christ to come, and both will be crushed by God, for they are both, like all who have gone before them, simply Satan's fools.

**19 For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; 20 So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground.**

The start of the judgment of the armies of Gog is that every wall in the entire land of Israel is shaken down by God. There would appear to be a vastly powerful (Richter Scale 8+) earthquake. This may also involve the collapse of the great mosques and 16<sup>th</sup> century walls of Jerusalem. The entire land has many of its walls and buildings flattened, even before the enemy army enters it. The earthquake is centred in Israel, as the "Great Rift Valley" fault runs through it, but will be felt around the entire Middle East, and it may even go wider – as these events here appear to be a prelude to the events of the Great Tribulation. This event is a true tectonic "beginning of sorrows" for mankind, the majority of whom are determined to be without God. In every part of the land, the foundations of all buildings are shaken and many fall. Later Ezekiel will speak of the "isles of the sea" (Cyprus and Crete especially) also being judged, possibly by earthquake triggered tsunamis.

The saved people are safe in this as they take the Word seriously and move away from the coastal death zones, but they are confronting the fact that they are entering the last stage of the history of humanity upon this earth in this present universe. This earthquake in Israel is a sign to the unsaved Jewish and Arab people, and a reminder to all the saved of the earth that this world is to be shaken and finally imploded, and a new one created, with the saved of all the ages alone entering the new one. **2 Peter 3:9-18, Revelation 21-22.** It is mankind's last "wake up call" before the Anti-Christ.

The earthquake however will make defence for the Israelis and Arab forces easier, as rubble makes good cover. It makes the attacker's job harder and the defender's job easier. The earthquake seriously slows the enemy's advance,

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with roads blocked and passes through the mountains covered in rubble. The time it buys means the Western European-American Powers are possibly able to arrive in time in force from the sea to later play a decisive role.

**21 And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: every man's sword shall be against his brother. 22 And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. 23 Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the LORD**

There is total war declared upon the attackers, with the entire population taking up arms in the lands attacked to fight against all who have opposed the Lord their God, even to traitorous members of their own family/neighbours. The Lord also rains fire and hailstones of burning lava (? numbers of artillery delivered tactical nuclear 1 KT weapons I suspect from their description ?) upon the enemy forces, and the army of the satanically inspired invaders are wiped out with few survivors (next chapter).

The end of mankind's time upon the earth, even well before the Lord's return, is soaked in blood because of the rebelliousness of unsaved man. This "prelude type" war is a bloody one, with the invading army nearly all destroyed. The "beginning of sorrows", likely beginning in 1917, when America's entry into WWI makes it truly a World War, is but the start of the judgments that find their end in the Great Tribulation period. **Matthew 24:4-8.**

The start of all this is the carnage of the two World Wars, leading to the deaths of over 100 million people from the warfare and the resultant diseases and famines that flowed from each war. This great Middle Eastern War is the third continuation of these earlier world wars, but it is also the "beginning of sorrows", for the Great Tribulation is far worse than any war to date upon the earth.

The devastation of this war is such that many of the people of the earth will open their Bibles and read the words of Ezekiel and seeing them fulfilled, they will then read Revelation and shudder. Let us hope and pray that they do more than shudder, but actually accept and worship the Lord. **James 2:19, Acts 4:8-12, John 3:16.** This great war is the greatest encouragement to mankind to read the Bible literally ever received by human beings world wide. In the midst of the judgment here there is the last great grace encouragement for each person to see that God has a plan written in advance, and that it has been revealed in ages past for each generation to respond in their own day with faith that will save them! It is the last chance for the foolish unbelieving theologians who have peddled their "figurative" explanations to lay them aside and embrace a literal hermeneutic, and be saved from fear and death.

All will know that the Lord is truly God of all, as this act of man's evil history upon this earth is played out. In some way, not revealed to us, or known at the time by the prophet, this invasion prepares the way for, both tremendous evangelism in the Great Tribulation, and for the acceptance of the one world ruler, the Antichrist. The two paths are starkly drawn attention to by events. **Matthew 7:13-23.** The choices each person makes here are eternal in significance.

It is a watershed event; dividing people into two opinions about God and the needs of mankind, and about the Word of God itself. It may also be the first step leading to the later salvation of the 144,000 Jewish evangelists who will witness during the Great Tribulation. **Revelation 7:1-3.** Clearly the events within the Middle East change all these lands and in Israel may lead their later corrupted leadership to believe they need the Treaty that the Antichrist is going to negotiate, promising false peace between the Western Powers and Israel. Decisions from this time onwards are either fatal or saving! The days of casual living are over for all after this war, and it starts mankind thinking about the "last days".

These events also lead to the rebuilding of the Temple, and peace between especially Sunni Arab and Jew (although there may be a building of wide reaching peace before – like the treaty between UAE and Israel in September of 2020). There is a lot more in this vision than we see at our point before events unfold, but at the time it unfolds, the Lord's godly prophets and preachers will see, and preach, and many will have their eyes opened then and later through it. **Ephesians 2:4-13.** God will bring glory from this apparent disaster. **Romans 8:28-39.**

### PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. **GOD'S FOREKNOWLEDGE IS SEEN IN THIS PROPHECY.** At least 2600 years before it occurs, the fate of Gog and Magog and their allies is foretold in full. God's grace is such that none in their armies, and the armies of the Arabs and Jews are left without excuse for any rebellion they raise against his Plan, and all who assault God's people Israel are judged. This rebellion against God's clear Plan and purposes is a full and final warning not to mess around with Arab or Jew! It is evidence for unsaved men to see during the Great Tribulation, that attacking Israel is a wrongful thing. It may be the piece of evidence that leads to the salvation of many in that even more terrible time of Great Tribulation. God truly will turn the awfulness of this time into glory for many; cursing will become blessing to all those who accept the Lord as a result of seeing these things.

2. **THE END OF MAN'S TIME UPON THE EARTH BEFORE THE LORD'S RETURN IS A TIME OF REBELLION AND DESTRUCTION, BUT ALSO OPPORTUNITY/EVANGELISM.** This earth is not eternal, and nor are the unsaved and evil rebels, for they all perish with the earth in the end. Satan and all his followers are tied into the present universe, and their power and influence ends at the end of space and time. In the new universe dwells righteousness alone.



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Those who hated God and His people exist only within the eternal judgment of the “Lake of Fire” in whatever form it takes within the New Creation. Revelation 21:4, 8, 27.

The end of humanity’s present time upon the earth before the Lord’s return is a time of great carnage and sadness, and finally all of saved mankind will be ready to say “goodbye” to this old tired and sin filled planet/universe, with all its memories of evil and the Fall. We still love this earth now, but the events of the years leading up to the Great Tribulation and then its evils, eliminates all that in the end from all the saved of mankind. By the end of the Millennial Kingdom all are ready for this universe to perish and be replaced by the next and greater creation. 2 Peter 3:10-18, Revelation 21-22. Truly the best is yet to come.

## **EZEKIEL CHAPTER 39**

### **EZEKIEL 39:1- 10**

**“1. Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel: 3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. 5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. 6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. 8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken. 9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years: 10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD.”**

## **REFLECTION**

**1. Therefore, thou son of man, prophesy against Gog, and say, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: 2 And I will turn thee back, and leave but the sixth part of thee, and will cause thee to come up from the north parts, and will bring thee upon the mountains of Israel:**

Verses 1-20 contain more judgments upon Gog. Why would the prophet apparently “waste his powder” on such repetition? Surely what we have read in the chapter before is enough; what he has said only needs to be said once, does it not? This is a challenge to us all to repeat vital messages in slightly different ways to reinforce the truth. By deliberate repetition we do not insult people; rather, we honour them, taking their plight seriously and giving them several opportunities to come to the truth and be delivered. God is gracious and his Word is always open to lead to salvation until the day of death. The vital importance of this prophetic word is also underlined by this repetition here.

The exact figures of survivors from the evil armies are given here. The Lord will bring the enemy forces right through to the mountains of Israel, which will be their death zone, and there they will be defeated, and 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the invading army alone survives. Now this passage that records the 1/6<sup>th</sup> survival, is a question filled passage, and it may be that none of the evil army that murders and pillages survive at all. Who are these survivors? Are these the believers amongst them, forced to accompany the army, are they the baggage train servants only, or are they the ones who repent and withdraw?

We do not know, but the justice of God is such that these are the most likely options as to the identity of the survivors. Two Psalms used by the people of Israel through this time are **Psalms 40:14-17, 68:1-4**. Also refer to **Isaiah 37:27-29**.

In some powerful way these events form the pre-evangelism of Israel that will lead during the Great Tribulation to the salvation of the people. Zechariah 12:10ff. Another thing to reflect upon is the identity of the “Mountains of Israel”. Look at your Bible Maps, not your modern ones, and reflect that under the kingdom of David and Solomon the “mountains of Israel” incorporate much of the mountains of Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, not just the central spine of Israel. Ezekiel in the following chapters of his prophetic work will reflect the larger view of ancient Israel, not the reduced “rump” of Judah!

**3 And I will smite thy bow out of thy left hand, and will cause thine arrows to fall out of thy right hand. 4 Thou shalt fall upon the mountains of Israel, thou, and all thy bands, and the people that is with thee: I will give thee unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured.**

Their weapons will be blasted out of their hands, and they will fall to the ground like ripe fruit. Their bodies will fall upon the mountains by the judgment of God and the birds of Africa and Arabia will gather to devour them. The Jewish people and their Arab supporters and fellow targets at this time, are clearly looked after through this terrible period of invasion

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and carnage. The Lord removes most of his people from harms away, so that the cleared mountains become the fields of death for the invaders only. Psalms 46:6-11, 76:1-12, Isaiah 34:1-8. Do they flee underground to shelters?

This judgment is a “Day of the Lord”, and he will judge the people of Gog, but not stop there, for he will judge all who sought to bring comfort to those who practised this evil hatred of the sons of Abraham. The Lord is going to judge these people and through that judgment He is going to give evidence to that last generation of his power, majesty, and just plan. This is not the final judgment, which will occur at the end of the Great Tribulation, but it prefigures it in many ways. The events described in these two chapters of Ezekiel sets the stage for the last great judgment before the return of the Lord, and the message is clear; there is no escape for those who work evil.

The Great Tribulation is in many ways prepared for by this great invasion and all the nations of mankind are polarized as to attitude to Israel and the Word/Plan of God.

Refer to the BTB for studies of the three greatest judgments upon the earth and see the similarities and differences. COVENANTS – NOAHIC, JUDGMENT – BAPTISM OF FIRE, DAY OF WRATH, and also JUDGMENT: GREAT WHITE THRONE and CHRIST: RETURN OF OUR LORD.

**5 Thou shalt fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD. 6 And I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly in the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD. 7 So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel.**

The Lord has spoken the judgment and it will happen because of this, for the Lord’s words express truth and certainty. The judgment will fall upon the land of Gog; and even upon the land and cities of Magog itself. Fire will fall upon them and they will know that the Lord is their God, but they will see the truth too late to save themselves from the judgments that will fall upon them. These nations are severely damaged by the wrath unleashed upon them. Is this a nuclear exchange and/or severe earthquakes and other tectonic activity? It is clearly so violent and sudden that it opens the door later to more acceptance by most nations of a one world leader in the Great Tribulation period, and so it is most likely a mix of both, but these events leave possibly hundreds of thousands, or even millions dead!

The judgment also falls upon the “islands of the seas”. In these far off islands, the people have become careless of morality and casual about holiness, and so they have sinned in the same way the people of Isaiah and Ezekiel’s days have sinned. They have become immoral and disobedient in their worship to the Lord. Their slackness in following the truth has led them into the path of lies, sin and death.

In some way the “isles” are disciplined by the Lord directly; possibly by volcano/earthquake/tsunami. The earthquake that flattens many of the walls in Israel at this time may be repeated world wide and such quakes set off tsunami, just as we have seen in 2001, 2005, 2009 and 2011. A major quake in Israel rupturing the Great Rift Valley fault line could set off tsunami in the Mediterranean at least, hitting Cyprus and Crete (the original “Isles of the Sea”). The “far isles” (New Zealand) in the South Pacific have violated God’s Laws by approving Abortion, Same Sex Marriage, forbidding anyone to speak against LGBTQ viewpoints, Marijuana is on the edge of approval with only 50.7% opposed to it, and NZ has just approved Euthanasia by 67%, and also voted for Hamas (still firing missiles into Israeli settlements weekly) against Israel in the UN! We are all in the Western nations ripe for judgment after such great evils, and it may be that great judgments unfold upon us at this time – we don’t have long to wait before we see.

The unbelieving Israelis world wide are also judged in this process, and as for the non-Jewish people upon the earth, just so for the Jewish people. All are challenged by the Lord to reflect upon their evil ways. The Lord will not allow any to pollute his holy name much longer. This invasion and its earthquake precursor is a “wake up call” to the wavering people of the nations, to either get their hearts right with the Lord, and so ignore the “Politically Correct/Popular” options, or they will later throw their lot in with the dictator of the West, who will become the Antichrist.

The events of Ezekiel 38-39 mean that the people of the earth cannot sit on the spiritual fence much longer; they are either for the Lord, or for the enemy. Thus the stage is set for the Great Tribulation. We need to be more vigilant over the details of our own life every day, and let prophetic study purify our daily lives. The fruit of prophetic study is that we do not let the Lord’s name be taken in vain by ourselves; either in the words of our lips, or by our sinful actions. **Isaiah 43:1-7, 55:1-9.** The fruit of all walking with Jesus is assurance; “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of Power, Love, and a Sound/focused Mind”. **2 Timothy 1:7.**

**8 Behold, it is come, and it is done, saith the Lord GOD; this is the day whereof I have spoken. 9 And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years:**

The prophet speaks now from the perspective of the completed work of God upon these evil people. In a vision he sees the Lord’s judgment completed. We must remember that the prophet “sees” all these things, and the shock and the horror of the nuclear blasted deaths of hundreds of thousands would have stayed with him. This is why he is urgent, even 2600+ years before the events, to record every detail that will help these people resist the temptation to join this doomed rebellion against the Holy One of Israel.

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Remember many of the Persian and old Scythian peoples join this evil expedition and the prophet sees that and desires to warn them all, that they might avoid joining the armies. Many will heed the prophet's warning in Iran and the "Stans" and be saved as a result. Though dead for 2600 years the prophet Ezekiel still speaks words of salvation to those who love and serve God in these areas. Ezekiel is seeing this vision in Babylon, the very region that the armies will initially sweep over and he sees that in the vision and is horrified by the carnage. Many believers are in these areas today, and these two chapters stand as God's warning – do not join this doomed invasion of the Middle East!

He also has a glimpse of events after this time, and is even more urgent that the people return to righteousness, so that they are ready to play their part in facing this great satanic assault upon Israel, for this is not the last one, the Great Tribulation is the last one! Remember, great revival can be followed quickly by great apostasy, as the days of Josiah were followed quickly by the days of Zedekiah! The events described here are momentous and may produce temporary revival, but it may last no longer than Josiah's did before the Anti-Christ moves.

The amount of weaponry involved is extensive, with seven years "fuel" in the supplies that are gathered by the Israelis after the battle. It is this comment regarding the time for the burning of the weaponry that sways me from the view I held previously, that this was a rebellion at the end of the Millennial Kingdom (Revelation 20:7-9 is clearly another incident involving the same and other people groups), for this prepares the way for the events of the Great Tribulation.

If the Gog-Magog Rebellion/invasion occurs at the end of the Millennium, then my previous comments from the first edition of the Ezekiel commentary would apply. "From this comment it would appear that (if) this war occurs at the end of the Millennium, there is a clean up and settling period after it, perhaps while the Great White Throne judgment occurs for all the unbelievers of history. The Great White Throne Judgment is described in Revelation 20:11 and it may involve a seven year period, or more, to ensure every unbeliever of history is dealt with personally by the Lord."

While this is logical I no longer believe this to be the case, as the "plain sense" of these chapters indicates that this great invasion occurs in such a way to set the scene for a greater event to follow, and that event is not the Great White Throne Judgment, but the earlier Great Tribulation. These visions are positioned by Ezekiel in his book **after** the "Dry Bones" prophecy, indicating the re-establishment of the unbelieving State of Israel, and **before** the Chapters describing the Lord's rule over the earth, and so logical sequence indicates things will unfold in this order.

So the context indicates these events are a prelude to the Great Tribulation – which ends with the Lord's return to rule from the Millennial Temple (Ezekiel 40-48). As we have seen, the events here will prepare all earth's people groups to make their final choice regarding the true identity of the Lord Jesus Christ, and decide whether they will accept and worship Him or the human-demonic alternative – the Anti-Christ. It is the ultimate prelude to the events described in the book of Revelation. As we always note, we will not "fall out with brethren" who disagree with us on these matters.

**10 So that they shall take no wood out of the field, neither cut down any out of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire: and they shall spoil those that spoiled them, and rob those that robbed them, saith the Lord GOD**

The weapons that are gathered provide the fuel for fires, and the food and money that the army carry provides the living expenses of the Lord's people of the land for the next seven years. Those who came to spoil the land are themselves spoiled and destroyed. The wealth of their army provides the means for the Israelis to rebuild their land, buildings, and industry/farming so that they are more ready for the events of the Great Tribulation.

The extensive damage they experience may explain why they think, in their vulnerability, they really do need the treaty with the Western Powers leader who will later be revealed as the Anti-Christ. Those who have read their bibles as a result of this invasion however now know what is to come, and will ensure the rebuild of the land includes good defensive positions for the last great attack upon the land at the end of the Great Tribulation period.

## PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. THE LORD'S PLAN IS A PERFECT PLAN AND ENDS WITH A FINAL JUDGMENT. All who do not do the will of the Lord will face him, from the least to the greatest. Revelation 20:11-15. The great revival of these days after the invasion of Israel does not last, but those who repent and read their Bibles are prepared for the even more momentous days that quickly follow thereafter. The Word protects, when it is read, believed, and applied into daily life. In the Great Tribulation period one third+ of the nation Israel are going to be saved. Zechariah 12:10ff. Sadly what this means also, is that 2/3 of the people believe and follow the Anti-Christ and his second in command, the Jewish False Prophet.

## EZEKIEL 39:11- 20

**"11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog. 12 And seven months shall the house**

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of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. 13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. 14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. 15 And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog. 16 And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land. 17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. 19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD."

### REFLECTION

**11. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog. 12 And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land.**

The stink will rise up from the land for many months, from the remains of the bodies of the fallen, and they will all be buried in the land of Israel. Their remains will be granted decent burial there, in the land they came to destroy they will lie in their graves, and there await their turn to be called to the Great White Throne before being sent to the Lake of Fire. All who travel through the land to the feasts in the last years of peace before the Great Tribulation begins will have to block their noses, the smell of death will be so heavy in the air.

It will take seven months to bury all the obvious corpses (given the means of their death - the body parts of the dead), there will be so many "bits" of them, but the terrible job is to be done, and the land is cleansed of the blood that has polluted it. If tactical nuclear weapons are used, as it would appear from the text, then the time frame is understandable, as a thorough search needs to be made for body parts, and some will pop up for years to come. It will be a time of holy actions by the believing Jewish people, as they bury the dead, and then, after seven long months undertake a solemn seven day purification of the land and people from the blood shed. Numbers 19:16-22, Deuteronomy 21. This marks a turning point in the religious life of the land itself, with a priesthood now starting to operate fully in a Mosaic manner as a result of these events. (Levitical Priesthood is already being trained, and a Chief Priest appointed in 2019.)

My suspicion is that the nature and carnage of this invasion and its clear fulfilment of these two chapters move the Israeli people to return fully to the Law of Moses and apply its rituals, even to the rebuilding of the Temple on the Temple Mount. The support of the Arabian nations at the outset of, and all through the invasion, may also point to this. If the Saudis support them, and they are "guardians of the holy places of Islam", then a treaty may be envisaged that would allow the new temple to go up alongside the Mosques (if they exist - or be rebuilt at the same time), with peace between surviving Jew and surviving Arab, for all have been through this invasion together and buried family members together.

It appears that the Sunni Moslem Arabs share the battles and their lands experience the carnage of this invasion/earthquakes as does Israel. There are many world changing things behind these verses that will only be clear when they occur! The great earthquake that starts the battles may even flatten the ancient mosques and the whole site may be a rebuilding site for the two great religions, but certainly a new temple rises here, I suspect with the other buildings (mosques and churches) rebuilt in their present places. Jerusalem then becomes immediately the focal point for all three great monotheistic religions, as it unifies all three on one extended site.

**13 Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD. 14 And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search.**

All the people of the land will be involved in this task, under their political and religious leadership. It is vital that all take part, horrible though it is, for it underlines the disgusting and nasty consequences of evil/sin. Every person will have their stomach turned by this work, and so after a short time there are special "decontamination teams" set up for the task of flagging, identifying, then burying the remains of the dead when they are found.

This would be expected especially if the dead are contaminated by nuclear fallout and special training and processes are needed. Normal work on the land would be disrupted for seven years while trees are replanted and land cleared of contamination from dead bodies of humans and animals, incinerated vehicles, fuel dumps, and munitions.

There is enough time during this clean up period for all the survivors in the land to fully understand God's holiness and his reasons for this judgment, for they have seen the consequences of their own sin upon their land. There is a special group of body buriers (decontamination teams) who travel the land even after the seven months is up to search out for

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any remnants/piles of bones left behind after the initial seven months, to ensure all are buried. They will purify the land of the bodies of the fallen, and the land will have material prosperity again for the last years of this Age, underlining the grace and mercy and provision of the Lord, in his ability to restore all things to peace, ready for the last acts of the age.

**15 And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man's bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog. 16 And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah. Thus shall they cleanse the land.**

The bones of the dead are to be identified and all buried in one spot by the special burial teams. Even though the peace upon the earth may last only a short while before the Great Tribulation begins, the purity of the land is to be maintained. In these little things we see the care the Lord wants us to take of all things in our own lives, to root out thoughts of evil and so keep ourselves pure before him.

It is like the cleansing of the temple by the Lord before his ministry and just before it ends to ensure that the message of the temple sacrifices gets clearly out to all. The cleansing of the land at this time is a preparation for the Israelis for the days soon to come upon them in the tribulation period.

All travellers through the land will be briefed on what they are to do if they come upon a bone or body part, and every fragment of bone seen is to be marked (small flags on marker sticks) and the teams of buriers will search and find them and bury them immediately. With smart phones and GPS this is now easy. They will cleanse the land, and live in the city named in verse 16 as Hamonah (the place of the multitude), in the Valley of burial, until the work is done. These people do a dirty and defiling job, but they do it as unto the Lord and they are all blessed/honoured by their obedience. The city of Hamonah becomes a memorial, as does the valley of burial; a reminder to all mankind of the terrible consequences of fighting against God. Even so the Great Tribulation will still be a "sifting time" for volition for/against God, and sadly the majority of mankind ignore the lessons of the "Gog-Magog" invasion/destruction.

This is a vital piece of evidence for the people entering the Great Tribulation, so that they have a physical witness to the Lord's power to judge, so that anyone who seeks the Lord may remember. They can know that He will indeed be victorious, as He was against Iran-Gog-Magog, and they can be assured that there is solid evidence from this invasion described in Ezekiel, that the Antichrist is a liar and will also fall just as Gog did in his evil plans! Even then **only one third of Israelis are saved** in that Tribulation time! **Zechariah 12:10-14:9.**

One commentator has "worked out" if a million able bodied men are in the land, and each one buries one animal/human corpse per day over seven months, then with Sabbath days off work the total could be over 180,000,000 contaminated corpses of men and animals! The valley described is filled to the top with the dead of the rebellious nations! The vastness of this carnage and its aftermath is staggering, beyond words, but the figures given by this commentator are vastly overstated for after nuclear weapon use, it is parts of bodies that are being identified and buried but the numbers of people killed is clearly excessive.

**17 And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. 18 Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan.**

The birds of the lands close by the nation Israel are gathered to eat the flesh of the fallen and they feast themselves for the seven months of the burial process. The Lord offers the birds this sacrifice as a gift to them for these last years of the final Age of rebellious man upon the degenerate earth. They not only eat the flesh of men, but also of all the animals of the land that have been caught up in the carnage.

The battles and the use of fire-based (Nuclear) weapons indiscriminately kill all living things over the mountains that are not hidden by the Lord. The blotting out of all life upon the hills of Israel is total, with hundreds of thousands of people and animals slaughtered in a day, and buried over the next seven months.

**19 And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. 20 Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord your God.**

The "table" for the feast of the birds is groaning under the weight of the corpses of the fallen. The earth itself "groans" at the carnage. There is a total end of all invasion forces here, and as we have already seen, with only 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the soldiers who came against the land of God alive at the end, if that. It may be that all the evil invaders are killed by the weapons used against them and only their support units well back from the front escape.

Only at the time will the figure of 1/6<sup>th</sup> be seen and understood, and form more evidence that the words of the Bible hold true (as this equation of survivors is unusually precise and a strange percentage), and so people will surely know that the book of Revelation is to be fulfilled literally, just as Ezekiel has been! It is this result that we see being the main thing in this prophetic word – it is a last, definitive word to the people who figuratively interpret scripture – they are proved wrong

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– but the majority of religious people will keep following after lying deceit – and so the Anti-Christ has very full powerless liberal churches throughout his reign (until he kills them all) – with his false system of on-world-religion fooling the majority. Tranquilizing moral, religious people with pleasant half truths has always been Satan's strategy and it continues to the end.

## PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. TO OPPOSE GOD'S WILL IS A FOOLISH AND FATAL THING. All who rebel against the PLAN OF GOD are cast down, and all who hate God must face their maker and realise their hatred was an evil and stupid thing for which they are rightly judged. The end of this invasion is the last great prophetic trumpet call to mankind before the Rapture/Great Tribulation.

2. SOME JOBS ARE DIRTY AND HARD, BUT THEY ARE TO BE DONE. The burial parties are doing a job that hinders their eating, their sleep, and their worship, but the job is to be done "as unto the Lord", and these people do it cheerfully before the Lord, and make their prayers to the Lord as they go. The Lord may call us to dirty work, and if so, we are to relax, and freely serve the Lord in joy and peace.

## EZEKIEL 39:21 - 29

**"21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward. 23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. 24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them. 25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. 27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD."**

## REFLECTION

**21. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. 22 So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward.**

The Lord acts to ensure all know the truth about who rules and who is God. The fallen proclaim his power in their deaths and the living praise him for their life and deliverance from/through such carnage. Psalms 76:1-12, Haggai 2:21-22. Those nations and people who remain "heathen" will know before their judgment that they are judged by the God they have ignored, and that their judgment is righteous. Also, the saved of Israel will praise the Lord, and for the rest of time will affirm the truth about the character and acts of Almighty God. The great mystery of human free will is that though people may be forced to recognize truth, they may still hate it, and refuse to embrace and act upon it. **James 2:19.**

The writer here records these things as if even the people of God have forgotten the truth. After 2000 years of wandering the earth for Israel it is possible to forget the Lord's character, as the daily grind of life distracts from holiness, and people fall into a formalistic religious observance rather than a living faith. This great invasion is a wake up call to Israel and appears to prepare them for the last great challenge they face before the godly remnant of 1/3 of the people welcome their Messiah. Zechariah 12:10ff.

The terrible Holocaust of 1942-1945 saw the establishment of Israel as a nation again, but as a secular State, in "dry bones" unbelief, exactly in accordance with Ezekiel 37. The events described in Ezekiel 38-39 appear to move the nation towards the revival that breaks out in the Great Tribulation period, Zechariah 12:10ff, and prepares them, by their return to the Law of Moses, for the return of the one Moses spoke of. Deuteronomy 5:22-33, 18:15-22.

Today, Israel, like most other nations is secular and narcissistic in its life style and religious life. A sense of "entitlement" to good things is one of the diagnostic pointers to the problem of Narcissism. In the Bible such an attitude is simply referred to as "pride", "evil", and arrogance. It is the root of the Devil's problem, and is the destroyer of blessing, and the bringer of judgment upon those who have become so self centred.

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This great invasion of Gog-Magog is the end of narcissism for many in Israel, and the start of a revival of interest in spiritual things that leads to the salvation of one third of the nation in the Great Tribulation period. Zechariah 12:10ff. It may also lead to the last great evangelistic push before the Church leaves the earth!

Christ/Messiah centeredness is the only remedy for self centeredness; for if the Lord is our centre, then we have true stability, and a true assessment of our worth and place in the world. This issue of self centeredness remains the great challenge to all mankind, throughout all the ages of history. We are challenged to daily turn from preoccupation with self, and lean upon, worship, and depend upon, the person and power of the Lord Jesus Christ and so position to truly bless and assist others. Psalms 9:9-10, 15-20, 32:1-11, Jeremiah 31:34-35, John 17:1-5, 1 John 5:20. This great invasion, the major earthquake, and the carnage filled conventional and nuclear war at this time is the last "wake up call" for all men and women before the Anti-Christ makes his move.

**23 And the heathen shall know that the house of Israel went into captivity for their iniquity: because they trespassed against me, therefore hid I my face from them, and gave them into the hand of their enemies: so fell they all by the sword. 24 According to their uncleanness and according to their transgressions have I done unto them, and hid my face from them.**

Having spoken of things yet 2600+ years away, the prophet now turns things back to the Exiles of his own day. None there know that these events are so far away, and so without the reference point we now have from the writings of John the Apostle, they can apply the prophecy directly to themselves. This is all right to do. All prophetic truth is to be applied directly into the present day, with it's lessons of power and encouragement applied into the daily life of the people of God. All scripture is for us, even if its primary application is not "to us".

The people in the Exile of Ezekiel's day need to see that their slavery is a means to bring glory to God; that their apparent curse, is indeed a blessing in the Lord. In the plan of God, the Lord brings good out of apparent evil, when his people turn their lives and ways over to him. They have suffered exactly what the Lord through Moses said they would; they have no complaint against the Lord, for he warned them thoroughly. Leviticus 26, Deuteronomy 31:17-18, 32:19-30.

This later invasion described by Ezekiel is the start of the breakthrough of the Holy Spirit's ministry of conviction upon Israel and the nations that will lead to the salvation of multitudes during the Great Tribulation period. As the Exiles looked back to the words of Moses, so the people of the yet future day will look back to Ezekiel and bow before the Lord as God indeed.

The unbelieving nations of Ezekiel's day saw that the Israelites had gone into captivity due to their sins, and they will all learn from this fact. The question remains, will Israel learn from these terrible coming events also? They rejected God, opposed his will, and disobeyed his commands, and so they perished at the hand of their enemies. They have been punished in direct relationship to their evils. Sin separates us from blessing. Psalms 66:18, Isaiah 1:15, Jeremiah 2:9-19, 5:25, Habakkuk 1:13. There is hope for Israel as the Holy Spirit begins his work upon them as a direct result of this great invasion. It will bear full fruit in the midst of, and at the end of, the Great Tribulation. Zechariah 12:10ff.

The way is open for restoration of blessing, and it remains the same throughout history; it is the way of repentance and forgiveness. Isaiah 1:16-20, 3:10-11, 59:16-19. In Ezekiel's day they had all these words of Isaiah, and could have turned to them at any time and changed their viewpoint. After the news of the fall of the city of Jerusalem in 586 BC they will indeed return to the Lord through the ministries of Jeremiah's words, and Ezekiel and Daniel, and blessing will flow again to them and then to their grandchildren, as they return to the land in 535 BC. The revival that Ezekiel leads is just a foretaste of the great revival that will flow directly from the Gog-Magog invasion, but it is of short duration, and the majority still are led astray by the satanic deception, distraction and distortion of truth that is his strategy. The end has all the signs that Noah and Lot's world had, and the majority will, like then, still be "too busy" for God! **Luke 17:26-32.**

**25 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; 26 After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.**

The promise of return is again given. Both Jeremiah and Ezekiel, as we have seen so many times, remind the people that they are not totally cut off, and that they will return to the Lord their God. The Lord will bring them all back to the land and rebuild the nation from this remnant, and he will remain "jealous for his holy name". The standards of God will not change throughout history; they will remain the same, and all men and women must come to terms with God in truth, not expect God to change to make it easier for them! It is this pride, when a person thinks God should change for them that leads to disaster.

That viewpoint leads people to join satanic plots and plans, and finally they join Satan in the Lake of Fire, for that was his sin. Isaiah 14, Ezekiel 28. Satan expected God to change the rules for him, and to lift him up and share his glory with him, but God will not share his glory with any who demand it. The great good news of the Bible is that God gives us of his glory in and through our relationship with Christ Jesus. We receive glory in Christ by grace, but we are to receive his glory in humility and truth. The truth is we remain his creation, and do not lift ourselves up above our place in the order of created beings. He lifts us up; we do not lift up ourselves! **1 Peter 5:5-9.**

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The people Ezekiel speaks to will be blessed in the day when they return from Babylonian Exile, and when they return again after the Lord's Second Advent, and when they return to their hills after the defeat of Gog and his army. Three times will they return to the mountains of Israel, and three times they will be blessed by the Lord and will dwell in safety again. Each time will be after great pressures have been applied to them and they have faced their sin and dealt with all that has separated them from fellowship with their maker and their Saviour. Psalms 99:1-9, Jeremiah 3:22-24. Just as Moses had recorded the Lord's Word regarding restoration, so they will be restored; but after their repentance! Leviticus 26:3-6, 40-45, Deuteronomy 30:1-10. This occurs in 535 BC and will occur again after the Great Tribulation ends with the return of the Lord. Zechariah 12-14.

**27 When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; 28 Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. 29 Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD.**

The restoration of the nation will be full and final in the end, with no Israelites left in any other land than Israel after the Lord's return. From this passage it may be that the invasion of Gog leads to the capture of many Israelites, and if that is so, then there is a promise of full restoration of them all. In each earlier time of invasion there was a dispersion of the Israelites, and the Lord promises a full restoration of them all.

In the return of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century BC, 535 BC, the majority of the Jewish people stayed behind in Babylon, and the colony of Jews there remained strong until the Medieval period. There were more Jews in Alexandria in Egypt than in Jerusalem when the last great revolt began in 67 AD, and the numbers of the Diaspora exceeded the number of Jews in Israel until 2019. The Jews world wide today are slightly less than the numbers in the land in 2020 for the first time since 605 BC.

The return in the days after the Lord's Second Advent is full, final and complete. They will then have a thousand final years of blessing in their land before this old world and its tired universe is wound up. **2 Peter 3:10-18**. There will be a full and final last pouring of the Holy Spirit upon all the surviving believers in the end of the ages of mankind upon this present earth. The ages of fallen man end in blood in the Tribulation, but are finished in the fire of the Spirit before the last day of the winding up of all things associated with this present creation, and it's replacement by another eternal one.

## PASTORAL APPLICATION

1. **EVIL IS FINALLY TO BE REPLACED BY WORSHIP in TIME and ETERNITY.** The end of this phase of the history of fallen mankind is God's judgment. The Lord wipes all tears away, and the world finally completes it's life with the blessing of the creator upon it and it's surviving people, and he brings them through into a new universe, where the limits of space and time no longer apply, and where Satan and all his angels and human servants are no more remembered.
2. **PRE-OCCUPATION WITH SELF HIDES MAN FROM FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD.** We must challenge all people to step outside their own self centeredness and worship the Lord in spirit and in truth. The Devil always tries to get people to be preoccupied with their own things, and all our efforts are to be directed at this challenge; to lift the eyes up and see God for who He is.
3. **THE PLAN OF GOD IS CERTAIN.** From 2600+ years in the past, the words of Ezekiel will burn into the hearts and minds of the people of the closing days of the world before the Lord's Second Advent, and they will all know that this is truly the work of God. There will be plenty of evidence of God's work to counter the satanic deception of those days.

New Zealand - The "Biblical Ends of the Earth" – furthestest nation from Israel.

Easter 2021