

**THE BOOK
HAS BEEN
OPENED**

**“And he had in his hand a little book open”
(Revelation 10:2)**

**Prepared by
The-Latter-Rain.com**

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Published by The-Latter-Rain.com

Please send questions or comments to
contact@the-latter-rain.com

First Version

Printed in the United States of America

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1 CHAPTER

Blow the Trumpet in Zion

The Bible is a complex book filled with difficult language and plenty of seemingly insignificant detail. This is because God has written it in a way that has enabled Him to hide a great deal of information from mankind until He decided it was time to open up our understanding. We didn't even realize God was hiding truth until relatively recently, but now He is revealing a lot of previously hidden information to us.

We now know that the Great Tribulation is exactly 23 years in length, not seven like many of us previously thought. Contrary to what most of us have been taught, the Great Tribulation has absolutely nothing to do with the politics of this world. Instead, it is a spiritual tribulation. The Rapture will occur at the end of the Great Tribulation (again, contrary to what many of us have been taught). We can discover in the Bible that we are currently living in the 23-year Great Tribulation, which means the Rapture is just around the corner.

There was a time when if I had opened a book and read the kinds of things stated in the previous paragraph it would've been enough to make me seriously doubt the author's grasp of truth. I grew up in the church where my parents held teaching and leadership positions. I was a leader in the youth group during and after high school. My best friends have become pastors. I understand the mindset of a typical churchgoer. I know what it's like to immediately be skeptical of any teaching that contradicts what I've grown up believing.

I realize this information does not line up with most people's current understanding of the end-times timeline. Most churchgoers would probably ask questions like, "What about the antichrist?" and "What about the mark of the beast?" Those are fair questions because what we've always been taught about the end-times events seemed biblically accurate. (And we will address those questions in this book.) We can't fault the theologians of the past for their interpretations of the end-times events. The Bible is filled with confusing language and they did their best to piece it all together, but they were living in a time when the end-times prophecies were sealed by God. Therefore, even the most diligent theologians didn't stand a chance at understanding them. But now we have reached the time when God has removed the seals and is revealing that much of how we've previously understood the end-times prophecies has been completely wrong.

Remember, the Bible is the living Word of God. It is not a dead book that we just read like any other book. The Bible is God speaking to us. We have to ask ourselves, "Do I really take that fact seriously?" Most churches will call the Bible the living Word of God, but in practice we have been taught to study it in a way that is not dissimilar from how we'd study any other book.

I strongly encourage you to set aside a few hours of your life to read this book. I realize it's not a short book and I know it's hard to find the motivation to spend time reading something that, so far, appears like it's going to present teachings that you perhaps don't agree with. It's natural to want

to close yourself off to it and not take it seriously. It is my hope that, in spite of all that, you will read through this book carefully and then prayerfully consider the information presented within it. I'm not suggesting that you take my word for anything that is written on these pages. In fact, please do not do that. You should examine this material on your own by checking it all out in the Bible.

I am not claiming to have received special information from the Bible that others have not seen. I'm nobody of any significance. God is revealing these previously hidden truths to careful Bible students around the world. A search on the internet will reveal that there are a number of websites out there discussing these very same things. We are all learning from each other because there is just so much new information pouring out of the Bible in our day. There isn't an "About the Author" page in this book because it doesn't matter if someone is a college professor or a high school student. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), so our level of intelligence or position in the world is irrelevant when it comes to God's program of revealing of truth to believers.

One purpose of this book is to take a look at the wrong doctrines held by most churches in our day. The church as a whole has gradually slipped away from teaching truth. This is not new information to many of us. We look around and on every corner is a church teaching different doctrines, all from the same Bible. When two churches teach conflicting doctrines, at least one of them must be wrong, so, obviously, there are a lot of wrong doctrines being taught out there. As it turns out, this is a much more serious matter than many of us previously thought. With the unlocking of previously sealed information comes the realization that God has a lot to say about this in the Bible. We just couldn't see it before, but now that we can He commands a warning must be proclaimed:

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand. (Joel 2:1)

We will see in this book that Zion and the "holy mountain" are the churches today. God is declaring that people in the churches need to be warned. God has predicted that the majority of those in the churches will continue to think there is peace and safety in the churches when there is not:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

We are going to spend some time together going through the Bible to see how we can know that the statements you've read so far in this book are accurate. The Bible has a lot to say about all of this and that's why this can't all be covered in just a 20-page booklet.

We are going to start with some basic Bible study principles, and then we will examine some wrong doctrines nearly every church holds today because this will assist in shedding light on the end-times events. Next, we will examine the end-times prophecies now that we can finally understand them, followed by mapping out the end-times timeline. This book is progressive in structure, meaning that each chapter builds on the chapters that precede it. Therefore, it should be read from front to back like you would any other book.

It bears repeating that we can't fault the Bible students of the past. It is not because we are smarter today that we are now able to understand the end-times prophecies; it is simply because we are living right near the end. God has concealed a great deal of information with the plan to reveal it in our day:

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Daniel 12:8-9)

In Revelation we read about a book being sealed that only Christ can open. That book is the Bible, and now that it has been opened it is almost like we have a different Bible. However, we must approach God's Word very humbly in these days because it is God who grants understanding. If we approach it with a prideful attitude, thinking, "I already know what the Bible teaches," then it will continue to be a sealed book to us:

For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. (Isaiah 29:10-11)

This is why we don't see people throughout the churches suddenly coming to understand all of these newly revealed truths. They are continuing to read the Bible in light of what they already believe it teaches. They've locked themselves into the doctrines they've grown comfortable with and so to them the Bible remains a sealed book.

I know most of us were not taught that God conceals and selectively reveals truth in the Bible. Therefore, we are going to spend a few chapters examining this fact. Let's begin our study...

2 CHAPTER

Seven Guidelines for Bible Study

The first thing we need to do is make sure we are all on the same page when it comes to how we approach Bible study. This chapter will cover seven guidelines we should all keep in mind as we study God's Word.

Acknowledge and Treat the Bible as the Accurate Word of God

Many people will say they believe the Bible is the Word of God, but we have to ask ourselves, "Do I really believe that or do I just read it like any other book? Do I trust that every single word in the original manuscripts comes directly from the mouth of God or do I think that perhaps God has allowed some errors to occur so it's no longer 100% accurate?"

The Bible was not written by man. True, man physically put the words on paper but every single word came from God:

...holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:21)

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)

The fact that all Scripture is inspired by God is not to be understood the way we understand it when a fiction author says he or she was inspired by such-and-such. When God says all Scripture is inspired by Him He means that the scribes wrote down word-for-word what God wanted to be written:

And the LORD said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. (Exodus 17:14)

Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book. (Jeremiah 30:2)

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. (Jeremiah 36:2)

For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God. (1 Kings 8:53)

Moses is the one who physically put the words of the first five chapters of Genesis on parchment. He was not around to see or gather that information himself, but God told him what to write. Likewise, in Luke chapter 22 Jesus said a prayer that no one else could hear; yet, we have the exact words of His prayer recorded. This is because God wrote the Bible, not man.

Most professing Christians would agree that the original manuscripts were completely accurate. However, many today will question the reliability of the copies we now have because they think a scribe may have made an error while writing a copy. We must remember that God preserves His Word and would have ensured that even the copies were made with 100% accuracy. We have examples of this in the Bible itself. When the original copy of the Ten Commandments was destroyed God ensured that a copy was made exactly like the first:

And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the LORD spake unto you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly: and the LORD gave them unto me. (Deuteronomy 10:4)

When Jehoiakim burned the roll containing God's Word, God ensured that a copy was made exactly like the first:

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned. (Jeremiah 36:27-28)

In fact, Jesus read from a copy of the Bible in Luke chapter 4 and His reading is recorded, which indicates that what He read was the accurate Word of God. God has proven that we can trust that the Hebrew and Greek copies we have today are 100% accurate.

Approach the Bible with an Open Heart

If we really are interested in finding truth in the Bible, then we must be willing to accept that what we currently believe or what we've been taught may be wrong. This is difficult to do because we trust our teachers and family. In the busy lives we all lead it's admittedly easier to simply assume that what we're being taught is accurate, but we should be spending time studying the Bible to ensure we are being presented with faithful doctrines.

Our teachers and families don't intentionally teach us falsehoods. Pastors teach what they were taught in seminary, and seminaries teach what their founding fathers believed to be accurate. These teachings all appear to make sense to the student because the student is listening to the supporting Scripture under the assumption that the teaching itself is accurate. Then they read the Bible and interpret it in light of the doctrines they assumed were accurate. This is why, even though we have so many conflicting doctrines in the church community, most people do not question their particular church's teachings.

We have to set our feelings and logic aside when we study the Bible. We have to be careful not

to interpret God's Word in light of what we feel is right or logical. There are many truths in the Bible that are scary or difficult to comprehend. If we find ourselves thinking, "I just don't think God would do that so I must be reading this wrong," then we need to take a step back and reassess our approach. This kind of statement indicates that we are reading the Bible in light of what we feel is right, rather than letting God's Word alone guide us. We have to be careful that we aren't accidentally trying to be wiser than God:

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise. (Proverbs 12:15)

Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight! (Isaiah 5:21)

Approach the Bible with Patience

The Bible is difficult to understand, not because it's old, but because God purposely wrote it that way. He could have written the Bible so that any child could understand it, but it was God's intent that truths in the Bible be hidden and only revealed to believers:

And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (Matthew 13:10-13)

We also find this fact taught in the Old Testament:

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9-10)

It's not by chance that the Bible can easily be used to support numerous contradicting doctrines. Diligent and careful study is required in order to discover truth within it. Unfortunately, a common study method is to assume that if we can understand the surface teaching of a passage, then we shouldn't look for a deeper spiritual teaching. This approach causes us to dismiss the richness of the Bible's content.

Remember who wrote the Bible. There are doctors who spend half of their lives learning about the human body and even then they only have a pretty good understanding of it. To really be an expert they have to narrow their focus to just one organ or one physiological process and specialize in it. The same is true of scientists. They typically have to narrow their focus and specialize in a specific area of their field because a lifetime is not enough time to become an expert in a broad focus. This sheds light on the complexity of God's creation. The same God that created this intricate world also wrote the Bible. It should come as no surprise that a passage can reveal facts about a historical event, present a moral lesson, and provide us with a hidden spiritual teaching all at the same time.

God reminds us that we cannot know everything the Bible teaches in a short period of time. It takes a lot of careful study, time, and patience:

Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts. For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little (Isaiah 28:9-10)

God here is saying we are like little children being raised and slowly learning. Young children are not capable of writing the next great fiction novel by the time they are 3 years old. In order to write a story they must first learn the rules of grammar, and before that they must learn to read and write, and before that they must learn the alphabet. This is also how we learn from the Bible. We don't read through it once and understand every teaching it has to offer. Instead, we must learn little by little, building one truth upon another. Therefore, the Bible must be approached with great patience and care.

Remember What Comprises God's Word

We must keep in mind that the entire Bible is God's Word, not just the New Testament or Jesus' red-lettered words. We must also remember that only the entire Bible is God's Word. We shouldn't be looking to any other source for spiritual truth. This is a relatively simple fact that most professing Christians acknowledge, but it's inadvertently ignored when we allow our experiences to mold our understanding of what's spiritually true. For example, if we allow a dream to play a role in our foundation of spiritual truth, then we have effectively expanded what we hold to be God's Word. Then to us the Bible is no longer our sole source; it is the Bible plus something else. This will be developed further in later chapters.

Remember the Applicability of All Scripture

Second Timothy 3:16 says it best:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)

Passages in the Bible do not expire as the world's culture changes. It is true that certain laws in the Bible no longer apply to us today, but it is not because our world's culture makes them irrelevant. Rather, it is because somewhere else in the Bible there is additional information instructing us that God has modified His law. We have to be careful that we don't assume that parts of the Bible can become obsolete.

Let Scripture Interpret Scripture

The Bible is its own interpreter:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:13)

God doesn't always use words the same way we do in everyday speech. When we need clarification on a word or passage in the Bible we shouldn't turn to a dictionary or reference book. We should check where else in the Bible God has used that word or phrase to help us gain an understanding of what God means when He uses it. The Bible is its own dictionary.

When we do these word studies it is important to keep in mind that we often need to go back to the original languages. A particular Greek word may have been used ten times in the original manuscripts, but when translated to English those ten occurrences may not have all been translated into the same English word. Likewise, just because we find the same English word in two different verses doesn't mean they both were translated from the same Greek word. When it comes to word studies we should look up all occurrences of the original Greek or Hebrew word regardless of the English words into which they were translated.

Don't Confuse Popularity with Accuracy

Just because a doctrine is widely accepted doesn't mean it is Biblically accurate. We might be tempted to think, "Surely not all of these theologians and pastors can be wrong about this," but we need to be careful not to base our beliefs on what others believe. We may also catch ourselves thinking, "God wouldn't let so many people believe something that's wrong," but the Bible contains many statements warning that the world is filled with false doctrines:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

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. (1 Timothy 4:1)

First Kings chapter 18 tell us about the time Elijah was on Mount Carmel with 450 other prophets. The 450 prophets were those that the people of Israel trusted in and those prophets all agreed theologically, but Elijah disagreed. Yet Elijah was right and they were wrong. Consensus is never a basis for truth.

It's human nature for us to believe that which sounds pleasant to us. We don't want to hear bad news and we certainly don't want to be presented with teachings that contradict what we'd like to believe.

Think about the story of Micaiah in First Kings chapter 22. The king of Judah came to seek Israel's assistance in battle. The king of Israel sent for 400 prophets to determine if this was a wise move and all of them agreed that the king would be victorious. However, the king of Judah didn't trust these prophets and asked for another prophet. The king of Israel said, "There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil." Nevertheless, a messenger was sent to bring Micaiah and that messenger told him that all 400 prophets prophesied favorably for the king and that Micaiah should do the same, but Micaiah said, "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak." He didn't care what the popular prophesy was; He was going to stay faithful to God's Word and so he told the king that they would be defeated. The king's reaction was, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" The king then put Micaiah in prison, but we later discover that Micaiah had the truth and the other 400 prophets that spoke favorable words did not.

We must always remember that the popularity of a doctrine doesn't validate its accuracy. Sometimes God's Word presents us with very unattractive truths and often these are ignored, side-stepped, or refuted by churches that don't want to teach doctrines they don't like. Please understand that this statement is not meant to offend anyone. The plethora of conflicting doctrines across the church community indicates that a lot of wrong doctrines are being taught. So where is truth? Though they conflict, all the doctrines can sound biblically accurate when presented by their teachers. If nothing else, this should at least make us want to double-check our approach to the Bible. Do we really approach it with an open heart or have we locked ourselves into the doctrines with which we're comfortable?

I'm not pointing the finger at any particular denomination. This goes out to everyone. We all need to set our pride aside, take an honest look in the mirror, and ask ourselves, "Who is really my teacher? Is it God? Or is it my pastor? Or perhaps it's my family or friends?" Every single one of us has been guilty at some point of trusting what some other person has taught us without seriously examining that teaching in the Bible ourselves. That is why I stressed in the first chapter to not trust what I say in this book. Read through it and then prayerfully consider it as you check it all out for yourself in the Bible.

3 CHAPTER

God Speaks in Parables

The Bible is historically accurate in every single detail. However, God's purpose for writing the Bible was not to entertain us with a history lesson. God speaks to us in parables, which are physical stories with spiritual meanings. This is not limited to just the parables we find in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

The Bible teaches that Christ spoke in parables and without a parable he did not speak:

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them (Mark 13:34)

We also read that Christ is the Word of God in flesh:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Therefore, we should expect the entire Word of God to be written in the form of parables.

Sometimes these parables are not events that actually occurred (such as the parables Jesus spoke while on Earth) and other times they are true historical accounts. Many events have taken place over time. God chose certain stories to be included in the Bible because, when examined carefully, they contain spiritual teachings that we should be searching out. We should always be asking ourselves, "Why did God put this in the Bible?"

We find that spiritual teachings are given to the world in the form of parables, but the hidden spiritual teachings are revealed to true believers:

Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old (Psalm 78:1-2)

And with many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to hear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples. (Mark 4:33-34)

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 13:35)

Having spent most of my life in the church, I know this is not how we have been traditionally taught to study the Bible. In fact, we've often been cautioned against looking for spiritual meanings to passages. Most pastors and theologians will say that we should use what is called the grammatical-historical method of Bible interpretation. This method does not permit searching for a deeper spiritual teaching within a passage. Instead, it focuses on the surface meaning which is often a historical or moral lesson. It also often places a heavy focus on answering the question, "What did this passage mean to the people of that day?" This can lead to the assumption that certain passages are almost irrelevant to us today insofar as spiritual application is concerned.

This method of interpretation cannot be supported with the Bible. Nothing in the Bible says that we should use this mindset when reading God's Word. However, as we've seen, there are many passages that say God speaks in parables, that He hides spiritual truth and reveals this truth as He wishes. So the method of looking for hidden spiritual meaning can be supported with Scripture. Many see the grammatical-historical method as a "safe" method of Bible interpretation, but in actuality it blinds the Bible student to a great deal of spiritual truth and that can be dangerous.

Given that there is no biblical support for the grammatical-historical method we might ask, "Why is it so popular? In fact, why is it seemingly the only accepted method of interpretation?" Originally, the church believed and taught that the Bible has spiritual meanings which need to be sought out through careful study. When the Reformation came along in the 1500s the reformers felt too many liberties had been taken when searching for spiritual meaning in the Bible. In an attempt to stop this from happening, John Calvin and Martin Luther championed the grammatical-historical method which does not encourage the idea of searching for spiritual truth beyond what can be seen on the surface of a passage. Unfortunately, this approach empties the Bible of much of its content.

Having said that, we have to be very careful as we go about seeking spiritual truth or we might come to some wrong conclusions. We must always make sure we are interpreting a passage in light of the whole Bible. It can take a great deal of patience, time, and prayer before we properly understand the spiritual meaning of a passage. When we think we've reached understanding we must always ask ourselves, "Does this conclusion square with the rest of the Bible?"

Let's look at a quick example of a historic parable. We find the brief story of the sunken axe in Second Kings 6:1-7. The passage states that Elisha's accompaniment set out to build a new dwelling place near the Jordan River. As they were chopping down wood, one of them dropped an iron axe into the river. Elisha asked where the axe had fallen in. He then cut a stick off a tree, threw it in the river, and the axe floated to the surface. The axe was then removed from the water.

Out of the countless events that have occurred throughout time, why was this seemingly insignificant event put in the Bible? It is because it contains a spiritual message.

The water represents the wrath of God as it often does in the Bible. For example, think of the flood waters of Noah's day, which represented God's wrath being poured out on the world. Water is used in connection with being delivered from God's wrath:

Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children (Psalm 144:7)

The axe represents the believers. It is impossible for iron to float and so too it is impossible for us to get ourselves out of the wrath of God on our own. The stick represents Christ. The Bible often refers to Christ as a root (Isaiah 11:10; Revelation 22:16), branch (Isaiah 11:1; Zechariah 3:8), or vine (John 15:2-5). Since this stick was cut from a tree it was either a root, branch, or vine.

In order to save His people from the wrath of God, Christ Himself had to be thrown into it. He stood in their place so they could be rescued.

Consider the story of the ten lepers in Luke 17:11-19. In that story, ten lepers came to Jesus asking to be healed. Jesus said, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests." All ten walked away, but one of them returned to Jesus and fell before Him in thanks. Jesus' response was, "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." Jesus is the true High Priest (Hebrews 9:11). The one leper understood that when Jesus said, "Go shew yourselves unto the priests," He was referring to Himself. The other nine lepers understood the literal meaning of Jesus' statement but missed the point completely. Christ speaks in parables so that He can hide His messages when He desires to do so.

4 CHAPTER

God's Use of Numbers in the Bible

Why does God tell us there were 153 fish caught? Every word in the original Greek and Hebrew texts of the Bible was carefully selected by God so there must be a reason for God to include this numerical detail. As we study the Bible more and more we begin to realize that God doesn't include irrelevant details just to spice up a story. Even if we can't readily see it, there must always be a reason.

We might argue that the above reference doesn't actually teach us that numbers convey anything more than just a historical fact. However, we must also consider God's use of numbers in verses such as these:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22)

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands (Revelation 5:11)

Verses like these teach us that God does apply some kind of spiritual meaning to numbers. Otherwise, they would be entirely meaningless in these passages. When God says, "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousand of thousands," that statement has meaning. We do the same thing in everyday speech. We'll say, "I've told him a thousand times." In that sentence, "thousand" can be defined as "a lot." Sometimes we may want to express our heightened frustration by saying, "I've told him a bazillion times!" When we do this we are using a number in place of a non-numeric word or phrase.

Even before we recognize that numbers in the Bible hold spiritual significance we notice that God focuses on using specific numbers such as the numbers three and seven. Almost anyone who frequently reads the Bible senses that God intentionally uses these numbers more often than others.

Admittedly, the first few times we look for the spiritual meaning of numbers in the Bible it is easy to write it off as mere coincidence. It is only as we look at more and more passages that we start to sense that these apparent coincidences must not be by accident. Couple that with the realization that these numbers must be included in the Bible for a reason and we begin to feel more confident that we can define these numbers like we could define any other word.

It's important to note we are not talking about traditional numerology here. There is a difference between traditional numerology and studying God's use of numbers in His Word. Traditional numerology applies meaning to numbers for many different reasons. Sometimes the application of meaning is based on what is witnessed in the world in the form of patterns. Other times the meanings

are just more-or-less randomly assigned, not based on previously observed patterns. Another form of traditional numerology called “digit summing” assigns numerical values to the letters of the alphabet (i.e. A=1, B=2, etc) and then looks for meaning in the sum of the values in a name or word.

When we study numbers in the Bible we aren’t looking for meaning in natural occurrences of numbers. The fact that a four-leaf clover has four leaves doesn’t hold any spiritual significance. The fact that a word has six letters doesn’t have any application in our Bible study. We have to be careful not to let a meaningless practice such as traditional numerology scare us away from discovering real truth in the Bible through God’s use of numbers in the Bible.

We conduct a number study the same way we would conduct a word study in the Bible. We look up all the passages in which we find a particular number to determine what spiritual meaning, if any, God has assigned to it.

For example, we can learn that the number 23 signifies judgment. God brings judgment to the sanctuary and the host for 2,300 days:

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? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. (Daniel 8:13-14)

God brought judgment through a plague which killed 23,000 people in one day:

Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. (1 Corinthians 10:8)

God speaks of 23,000 people who were not given inheritance and would die in the wilderness, and those 23,000 signify the unsaved individuals who will not inherit the Kingdom of God:

And those that were numbered of them were twenty and three thousand, all males from a month old and upward: for they were not numbered among the children of Israel, because there was no inheritance given them among the children of Israel (Numbers 26:62)

The last good king of Judah (Josiah) was killed in battle in 609 BC. The four kings who followed him were very wicked and reigned until 587 BC, which is when Judah was completely destroyed by the Babylonians. These 23 years between the death of Josiah and the destruction of Judah points to the judgment of God.

When we conduct this kind of study with various numbers in the Bible we arrive at the following spiritual definitions:

2	God’s people (earthly or spiritual)	10	Completeness
3	God’s purpose	13	The end of the world
4	Worldwide or fullest extent	17	Kingdom of God
5	Salvation and/or judgment	23	Judgment
6	Work	37	Judgment
7	Perfection	40	Testing

We are not going to spend the time in this book developing each of the above numbers' spiritual significance, but a study of each number can be found at the website The-Latter-Rain.com.

We also find that God uses numerical factors in illustrating spiritual truth. Factors are the numbers that make up a larger number when multiplied together. For example, the number 15 breaks down into the factors 3 and 5 because $3 \times 5 = 15$. Consider the following passage:

Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (Matthew 18:21-22)

Seventy times seven is 490. Is Jesus teaching that Peter needs to forgive his brother 490 times and then he can stop? No, of course not. He is multiplying significant numbers together to illustrate spiritual truth. If we were to spend some time on this we would discover that this number is illustrating perfect completeness.

John chapter 21 tells us of the disciples casting out a net and catching 153 fish. We know that fish represent believers:

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)

The number 153 breaks down into $3 \times 3 \times 17$. The number 3 signifies God's purpose and the number 17 signifies God's Kingdom. It is God's salvation plan that brings people to Heaven, and that fact fits very well with the context of the above verse.

If we had any doubt that God permits the use of math in search of spiritual truth we can look at the following verse:

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. (Leviticus 25:8)

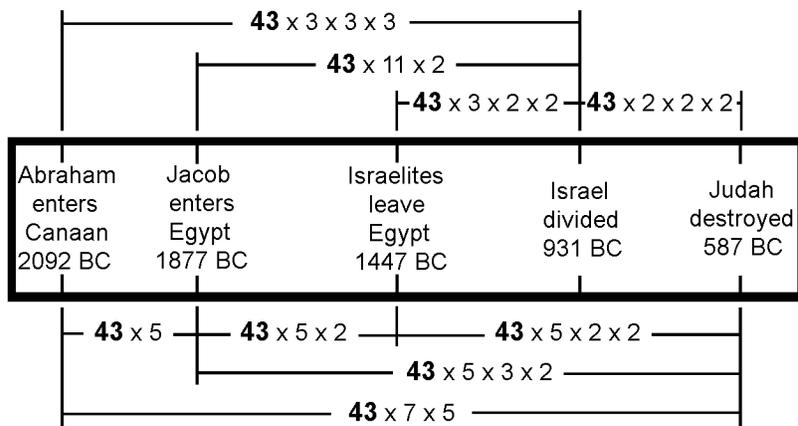
God is clearly doing some arithmetic here. The equation $7 \times 7 = 49$ is plainly spelled out.

God also uses numbers in the time intervals between significant dates. Consider the following five significant dates in the history of national Israel:

2092 BC	Abraham, the beginning of God's focus on Israel, enters the Promised Land
1877 BC	Jacob, the father of all Israelites, leaves the Promised Land and enters Egypt
1447 BC	The Israelites leave Egypt
931 BC	The kingdom is divided into two separate
587 BC	Judah is destroyed by Babylon

The total number of years from 2092 BC to 587 BC is 1,505 years. We've already seen that the Bible permits us to break numbers down to find significance. The number 1,505 breaks down into the following three prime numbers: $43 \times 7 \times 5$. It is interesting that 1,505 breaks down evenly into all spiritually significant numbers.

We might say, "Well, that could just be coincidence." However, when we plot these five dates on a timeline and examine the time intervals between them we arrive at the following:



Could all of that really just be coincidence?

Moreover, when we add up all of the total kings that ruled over national Israel we discover that there were 43. Saul, David, and Solomon reigned and then the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms. Then the northern ten tribes of Israel had 20 kings rule over them until their destruction and the southern two tribes also had 20 kings rule over them before their destruction. $3 + 20 + 20 = 43$.

As strange as it may seem to us at first, God does use numbers to convey spiritual truth.

5 CHAPTER

The Book Has Been Opened

It is important to understand that God has hidden certain truth in the Bible with the intent to reveal it at a later date. Please note that as we talk about God revealing previously hidden truths in His Word we are *not* speaking about new revelation coming through visions, dreams, tongues, or voices. The new information that is being revealed to diligent Bible students around the world is coming from the Bible *alone* as God opens their spiritual eyes to better understand it. We are living in a time when the Book (the Bible) has been opened and a great deal of new information is pouring out of it. This will make more sense as we progress through this book.

God Conceals and Reveals Truth

First, let's establish the fact that God does conceal certain information in the Bible:

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing; but the honour of kings is to search out a matter. (Proverbs 25:2)

The kings in view here are the believers. They spiritually reign with Christ (Revelation 20:4-6). They are the royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9). The Hebrew word translated as “thing” and “matter” here is *dabar*, which is most commonly translated as “word” and it is the word that is typically found in the phrase “the word of God” or “the word of the Lord.” In other words, Proverbs 25:2 can also be translated as: “It is the glory of God to conceal a word: but the honour of kings is to search out a word.” God is saying that it is His glory to conceal His Word, but it is our honor to search it out.

It is God who controls the revealing of spiritual truth:

Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets. (Amos 3:7)

We need to understand that in the New Testament era all believers are prophets. Prior to Pentecost, God would pour out His Spirit on the prophets so that they had a special ability to bring the Word of God:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

However, Pentecost brought about a change in God's plan to evangelize the world. He poured out His Spirit on all believers (Acts 2:17) so that now any believer is qualified to proclaim the Word of God. This does not mean all believers have sufficient knowledge of the Bible to be a teacher, but that all believers are qualified in God's eyes to share the Gospel:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

Amos 3:7 isn't saying that God will only reveal His secrets to "special" believers; it's teaching that this possibility is open to any believer who approaches the Bible with the proper attitude. We need to let God's Word teach us rather than reading it in light of what we already believe it says. We do not make sense of Scripture because we are smart. It is God who grants understanding:

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures (Luke 24:45)

Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. (2 Timothy 2:7)

But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. (Job 32:8)

Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God. (1 Chronicles 22:12)

Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart? (Job 38:36)

Therefore, it is God who controls the timing of when truth is revealed.

God Hides Truth Even in Simple Statements

The Bible is written with complex language so that we may read it and not understand it. Sometimes we discover that once we are granted understanding of a passage it seems like the teaching is written in very plain language, but until that time we had never understood it. The Bible is very mysterious in that way. God even hides truth within seemingly plain language.

For example, Jesus foretold to His disciples what would happen to Him:

And he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and of the chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. (Mark 8:31)

That was very plain language, but they did not understand the statement:

For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and after that he is killed, he shall rise the third day. But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask him. (Mark 9:31-32)

It was not until after Jesus had risen that the disciples were granted understanding:

He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words (Luke 24:6-8)

God Has Hidden End-Times Truth

The Bible was completed nearly 2,000 years ago and has been the same in its original texts ever since. In order for God to keep truth hidden, He had to write the end-times prophecies in complex language so that they would not be understood until His timetable permitted it.

God gave Daniel a vision regarding the end times and told Daniel that the understanding of such things would not be permitted till the end of the world was near:

And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. (Daniel 12:8-9)

We find a similar statement in Habakkuk, indicating that the understanding of end-times events had been locked by God till near the end:

For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:3)

We must understand the magnitude of this fact. We can't just gloss over these verses and ignore that God has stated that He would intentionally keep mankind from understanding certain information until right near the end. If God says He is going to hide something, then we had better not think we are somehow clever enough to figure it all out before God allows it. This means we must accept that at least some of what we have always believed may be wrong.

We are now living in a day, because we are right near the end, when God has removed the seals from the Bible so that the believers are able to more accurately understand it. These are new truths that were once hidden:

Thou hast heard, see all this; and will not ye declare it? I have shewed thee new things from this time, even hidden things, and thou didst not know them. (Isaiah 48:6)

We must approach the Bible with an open heart and let God teach us. If we continue to read the Bible in light of what we already believe to be truth, then we are putting ourselves in a position that prevents us from being shown this new information.

The Seven Seals of Revelation

Chapters 5 through 10 of Revelation speak of the seven seals. The first thing we must recognize is that the seals identify with the Bible. Revelation chapter 5 speaks of a book (the Bible) that is sealed with seven seals that no man can open; only Christ can open it:

And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside, sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. (Revelation 5:1-5)

When God speaks of a book being sealed it is identified with spiritual truth being hidden. The Bible is a sealed book when our eyes are not spiritually opened and therefore we cannot properly understand its teachings:

For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed (Isaiah 29:10-11)

After reading through the loosing of the seven seals we discover that the book, which was sealed in chapter 5, is now open in chapter 10:

And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth (Revelation 10:2)

And the voice which I heard from heaven spake unto me again, and said, Go and take the little book which is open in the hand of the angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth. (Revelation 10:8)

In other words, the opening of the seals identifies with the opening of the book.

It is important to note that the opening of the seals does not correlate with the actual fulfillment of the prophecies depicted along with each seal's opening. In other words, when the seals are opened (as they are today) we are able to understand the prophecies associated with the seals. Some of the actual events depicted have yet to come to pass, but we can now understand them because the seals of the book have been removed. The book is now open to us as God grants understanding of new truths that were once hidden.

This is why we read, "Come and see," when the seals are opened (Revelation 6:1, 6:3, 6:5, 6:7). We "see" in the sense that we finally understand them because God has opened our spiritual eyes so that we can understand:

And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them. (Mark 4:11-12)

Again, I must emphasize (and I do this because most of us have greatly misunderstood this until recently) that the timing of the opening of the seals does not correlate with the timing of the

events depicted in those chapters, nor do the events depicted take place in the order in which they are spoken about. God was able to hide the true meaning of these passages by numbering the seals and using language that led many of us to believe those chapters are depicting a chronology of events.

Ezra Opens the Book

In Nehemiah chapter 8 we read about Ezra opening the book among the multitude that gathered. We learned earlier that the Bible is written in parables and this passage in Nehemiah is a historic parable about the end times. In other words, the events really did take place, but God placed them in the Bible because they provide spiritual truth about another topic.

In Nehemiah 8:1 we read that the people gathered themselves together as one man before the water gate and Ezra brought the book of the law of Moses:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. (Nehemiah 8:1)

The multitude gathering foreshadows the great multitude that becomes saved during the Latter Rain portion of the Great Tribulation (We will examine that in greater detail in a later chapter). The water gate is Christ because He is the way (John 14:6) and provider of living water (John 4:10). The book of the law of Moses, of course, points to the Bible. The statement, “gathered themselves together as one man,” points to Christ because the believers make up the body of Christ.

Then in the next two verses of Nehemiah chapter 8 we read that those who could understand were attentive to the reading of the book:

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. (Nehemiah 8:2-3)

Those who could understand represent those whose spiritual eyes have been opened. Next we read that the book was opened:

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up: (Nehemiah 8:5)

We’ve already discovered that the book being opened represents new truth being revealed. Then the multitude read the law and understood it, but not because they understood it of their own ability. They were given the understanding:

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8)

The believers today who are diligently studying God’s Word are learning new truths, not because they are smarter than the theologians of the past but because God is giving them understanding.

The Roll of a Book is Spread Open

When studied carefully, we know that Ezekiel chapter 2 is actually speaking about the Great Tribulation. There we read about God telling Ezekiel to receive the Word of God so that he could proclaim it:

And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. (Ezekiel 2:1)

In this chapter we also read about a roll of a book being spread open:

And when I looked, behold, an hand was sent unto me; and, lo, a roll of a book was therein; And he spread it before me; and it was written within and without: and there was written therein lamentations, and mourning, and woe. (Ezekiel 2:9-10)

The roll of a book is the Bible:

Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. (Jeremiah 36:2)

And notice in Ezekiel 2:10 that it was God who opened the roll of a book. That harmonizes with what we read in Revelation chapter 5 where it says that only Christ could open the book.

God's Limited Revealing of New Truth

For those of us with a background in the church we may be asking ourselves, "Why isn't this a more commonly held belief?" A large majority of those in the Christian community scoff at this notion that God has concealed and is selectively revealing truth. This may cause some to disagree with the idea simply because it is not widely accepted.

The fact that the teachings presented in this study are not agreed upon by the churches may make some people cautious that perhaps these teachings are not biblically accurate. However, I again call our attention to Mount Carmel in 1 Kings chapter 18 where 450 prophets all agreed theologically while Elijah held a different belief. Yet, Elijah was the one with the truth and the 450 prophets Israel was trusting in were not. Also, remember in First Kings chapter 22 there were 400 prophets of Israel all bringing the same message, but Micaiah brought an opposing message and was the one with the truth. Remember, consensus is never a basis for truth.

Historically, God has often brought His messages of judgment through just a very small number of people. Think of Noah with the Flood, or Moses with Egypt, or Jonah with Nineveh, or Isaiah with Israel, or Jeremiah with Judah. With the exception of Nineveh, there have always been nay-sayers. The end times is no exception:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers (2 Peter 3:3)

Each denomination has a pre-established set of beliefs, often based on creeds that were written by the denominational founders many years ago. The pastors of these denominations are taught in seminaries that their creeds are accurate. Since the creeds seem to be supported by a few verses here

and there, pastors then teach their congregations based on these same assumptions. Then the church members read their Bibles in light of what they believe to be truth based on what they've been taught, and these sets of beliefs typically get passed on to their children.

What's happened is that the church has unintentionally put itself above the Bible. Every church will argue, of course, that its doctrines come from the Bible and so therefore the Bible is its ultimate authority. However, the doctrines of the church are never questioned because they belong to the denomination and must never be tampered with. So in essence their doctrinal statements are viewed as infallible

There are numerous denominations, each with their own set of unique beliefs, but they all have the same approach to the Bible: they study it in light of what they already believe to be true. They have closed themselves off to learning new things. If a new teaching arises that contradicts what they have believed for years and years, then they immediately reject it. They do not take heed to the fact that all Scripture is profitable for correction:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)

Non-denominational churches are not immune to this problem either. They may not have denominational creeds written by founders years ago, but their pastors always have their own backgrounds that have usually locked them into a particular set of beliefs. When was the last time you heard a pastor say, "I know I have been teaching thus and so for years, but I am now learning in the Bible that I was wrong and need to correct the doctrines of our church."?

6 CHAPTER

The Seven Churches

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we read about seven churches that existed at the time the book of Revelation was written. This was probably around thirty years after the cross. These were real churches, but they are in the Bible because they are examples of the churches that have existed over the last 1,900 years. One way we can know this is because seven times in these chapters God says, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” (Revelation 2:7, 2:11, 2:17, 2:29, 3:6, 3:13, 3:22). In each case God is addressing a single church, but He then reminds us that He is speaking to all churches.

It’s like when you were in grade school taking a math test. As the teacher walked around the class during the test she would notice that one of the students was just writing down the answers without writing out the steps he took to arrive at each answer. The teacher would say, “Just a reminder everyone, please show your work on each problem.” The teacher would use the single observed violation to address the whole class. Likewise, chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation are really addressing all churches.

Let’s take a brief look at each one because we can gain some necessary insight from doing so.

The Church of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)

God has good things to say about this church, but then He says they left their first love:

Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4)

When we read about the church of Ephesus we can clearly see that they had a strong interest in God, so at first glance it seems contradictory that God is saying they didn’t love Him. However, when we let the Bible define “love” for us we find that the way we show our love for God is by keeping His commandments:

He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. (John 14:21)

And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as ye have heard from the beginning, ye should walk in it. (2 John 1:6)

If ye love me, keep my commandments. (John 14:15)

By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. (1 John 5:2)

Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, always. (Deuteronomy 11:1)

And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments. (Exodus 20:6)

God did have some good things to say about this church, but it was not keeping His commandments. This church had only been in existence for about thirty years. In fact, possibly some of its members had even personally seen Jesus preach. Yet, they were already disobeying His commandments.

The Church of Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

Again, we find that God has some good things to say about this church, but we also find that Satan was already at work among this congregation:

I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. (Revelation 2:9-10)

If God allowed Satan's work to come into this church so early on, then this should concern us as to what God may allow in our day.

The Church of Pergamos (Revelation 2:12-17)

Once again, God has some good things to say about this church, but we find that Satan's work was present among this congregation as well:

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. (Revelation 2:13)

False doctrines were present in this church:

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. (Revelation 2:14-15)

This is another church where we find evidence that God allowed Satan's work to come into the church and bring false doctrines. The fact that God still had good things to say about the church

indicates that the Holy Spirit was still working in it so it was still a legitimate church of God. This was not a false church, and yet Satan's work was present within it.

It's important to note that the members of this church believed they were followers of God. They weren't openly worshipping other gods, yet there were false gospels there. The reason this is important to note is because it helps us understand God's view on false doctrines. Even if the church "means well," it is entirely possible for a church full of professing Christians to hold ungodly doctrines unbeknownst to them. This is not a matter to just shrug our shoulders at and say, "As long as I'm worshipping God..." This church's false doctrine is referred to as a doctrine of Balaam, which is not unlike the "doctrines of devils" we are warned about:

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 (1 Timothy 4:1)

Too many people read this verse and think, "I would know if a doctrine was of Satan," but that isn't what the Bible says. This church was not intentionally following doctrines of Balaam. It certainly did not intentionally allow Satan to influence it, but that's what happened.

Keep in mind it was still a true church because the Holy Spirit was still there, but how long do you think God would put up with that? How long did God put up with Israel's rebellion before His patience wore out?

The Church of Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)

We find that God has good things to say about this church, but we also read that the church chased after false doctrines:

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. (Revelation 2:19-20)

The fornication in view here is spiritual adultery:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. (Jeremiah 3:8)

Spiritual adultery has to do with, among other things, chasing after other gods:

Thou hast also taken thy fair jewels of my gold and of my silver, which I had given thee, and madest to thyself images of men, and didst commit whoredom with them (Ezekiel 16:17)

Thus she committed her whoredoms with them, with all them that were the chosen men of Assyria, and with all on whom she doted: with all their idols she defiled herself. (Ezekiel 23:7)

This doesn't mean that the church of Thyatira was blatantly worshipping pagan gods, but rather that it was tolerating false doctrines to be a part of its teaching. One thing we should be learning from this is that false doctrines are not a harmless thing. We once again find these false doctrines identified with the work of Satan within the church:

But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. (Revelation 2:24)

The Church of Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

This church had the name of Christ. In other words, it proclaimed and fully believed it was a church of Christ rather than a false religion. However, God says it was a dead church:

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. (Revelation 3:1)

This is a serious warning that just because a church truly believes it is worshipping Christ, that doesn't mean Christ is there. Though the church was a dead church, it did have some truly saved individuals within it:

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. (Revelation 3:4)

By placing this in the Bible God has taught us that it's possible for a church to proclaim to be a God-fearing church, and even have true believers within it, but still be a dead church.

The Church of Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)

God has good things to say about this church, but we find another reference to the synagogue of Satan:

Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. (Revelation 3:9)

Notice that God defines the members of the synagogue of Satan as those who say they are Jews but are not. This is being written after the cross when we know that God no longer has a special regard for national Israel. God is speaking here of spiritual Jews, which is a term God applies to the saved:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God (Romans 2:28-29)

So "the synagogue of Satan" is not a reference to a group of individuals who follow a clearly

man-made gospel such as the Buddhist or Islam religions. It is a reference to a group of unsaved individuals who claim to be followers of Christ, a group of individuals who believe they truly are saved. However, they are not, and therefore still fall under the rulership of Satan.

The Church of Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14-22)

This was a church that God refers to as having been neither hot nor cold:

I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. (Revelation 3:15)

The cold identifies with bringing the cool water of the Gospel:

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. (Matthew 10:42)

The Greek word that was translated “hot” is *zestos*, which is only found in this verse and the next verse. It comes from a family of words that mean “zealous.” We find an example of this four verses later:

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. (Revelation 3:19)

This verse also informs us that, even though this church was not zealous in spreading the Gospel, it was not a dead church because God was active within it as is evidenced by His chastisement.

God Warned the Churches to Repent

The seven churches presented in these chapters really did exist, but God put them in the Bible as an illustration of the kinds of churches we could expect to find throughout the 1,900 years that followed.

These churches were in existence shortly after the Holy Spirit was poured out in 33 AD. Some of the people within them may have even witnessed Christ’s miracles first hand. However, we see how quickly the church organization as a whole was already beginning to fall away. These weren’t blatantly false churches practicing other religions. They were God’s churches in which He was working, but even from the beginning of the church era Satan’s work could be found within them.

God tolerated this for nearly 2,000 years. In Revelation chapters 2 and 3 we read of God warning these churches to repent of their wickedness. Ultimately, these warnings were not directed at just these seven churches, but to the entire church organization.

God warned them that if they did not return to following His law He would remove their candlestick:

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:5)

The candlestick is Christ. He is the source of light in the churches. God also warned that if they did not repent He would fight against them with the sword of His mouth:

Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth. (Revelation 2:16)

The sword of His mouth is the Word of God:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Ephesians 6:17)

Remember that the Word of God does not only bring salvation but also judges man:

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

Unfortunately, just as national Israel did not repent the church has also not repented of its errors. They have continued to countenance man-made ideas, leading to wrong doctrines. Most people have been raised under these wrong doctrines without even knowing it. We are going to spend a few chapters examining some of these doctrines because it is important for us to understand that, in general, the church organization as a whole is not faithfully teaching the Word of God.

7 CHAPTER

Speaking in Tongues

The gift of tongues is one of the most controversial topics in Christianity today. With the gift, God would speak through a person in an audible heavenly language that was incomprehensible without supernatural interpretation. This is mentioned in the Bible and definitely did take place. The question is, is it still being administered by God today? We will discover that it is not and, in fact, it is a testing program God has established for the churches.

This is a sensitive and difficult topic. Please understand that nothing in this chapter is meant to offend anyone. The purpose of this study is only to show what the Bible has to say about this phenomenon.

Knowing that this chapter is going to teach that God no longer uses the gift of tongues, I know many people will get defensive at this point. I understand that reaction. Our experiences can have a powerful impact on how we understand reality, but that's exactly why we have to be careful. Our experiences can be misleading. Our imperfect minds sometimes misinterpret what we see and hear. This can be very dangerous when we allow our experiences to shape our understanding of biblical truth. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is that we set our feelings, logic, and experiences aside when we study the Bible.

When we say, "I know God is still using the gift of tongues today," we must ask ourselves, "Do I believe that because I've objectively and carefully studied it in the Bible, or do I believe that because I've experienced it and I know it was from God?" If it is because of the latter, then we are skating on thin ice. We simply cannot trust ourselves. The Bible says to let God be true and every man a liar:

God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar... (Romans 3:4)

We are going to go through this topic carefully. It is God's Word we must trust, not ourselves.

History of Tongues

It is interesting to note that tongues-speaking has not always taken place since the days of the writing of the New Testament. None of the early church writers (Polycarp, Papias, Cyprian, Chrysostom, Augustine, Origen, etc) even mention tongues.¹ There is no record of tongues being employed anywhere until the mid 2nd century AD with the Gnosticism and Montanism movements.²

Gnostics did not place any stock in Jesus. Many of them did not believe He ever existed, and the rest believed His existence was irrelevant. They believed Jehovah God was wrongly convinced of

1 MacArthur, John F. *Charismatic Chaos*, p. 232.

2 Hamilton, Michael P. *The Charismatic Movement*, p. 64.

His supreme rulership and that there was actually a higher-ranking god above Him. Montanism was the movement of the followers of Monanus. Both the Gnosticism and Montanism movements are widely regarded as heresies. These movements eventually dwindled to near non-existence around 600 AD.

After these movements there is little to no evidence of any tongues use at all anywhere in the world until around 1700 when a group of militant Protestants in France began promoting armed violence against the Catholic church. They were known mostly for their military activities, but they also claimed they were receiving visions from God and speaking in tongues.³

Aside from the short-lived movements mentioned above, there is no solid mention of tongues use in any historical records for the 1,600 years following the Bible's completion, until the early 1700s when Pentecostals made it a regular part of their worship.

There are only two books in the entire Bible that refer to speaking in tongues: Acts and First Corinthians. At first it may seem logical to connect these two references, but upon closer evaluation it can be readily seen that they are actually referring to two different phenomena. The "tongues" references in Acts are speaking of earthly languages. We know this because the hearers of the tongues in Acts heard their own native languages being spoken:

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? (Acts 2:8)

Furthermore, God mapped out the guidelines for the "tongues" referenced in First Corinthians, one of which was that there must always be an interpreter:

If any man speak an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. (1 Corinthians 14:27)

There wasn't an interpreter in the Acts events because an interpreter wasn't necessary; all the listeners heard their own languages being spoken.

Second, as we just read, in the "tongues" mentioned in First Corinthians God mandated that no more than three people could speak in a tongue at once. In Acts, however, at least 18 different languages were being spoken (Acts 2:9-11). God does not violate His own laws and so the events in Acts can't be the same as in First Corinthians.

The occurrence in Acts, as far as we know, was part of a one-time event: the spreading of the Gospel to the nations through the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, just as Jesus had promised would occur:

But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the world. (Acts 1:8)

It is important to note that the only biblical reference to "tongues" as a heavenly language is in First Corinthians. Throughout this study, when referring to "tongues" we will be speaking of this heavenly language, one that is completely incomprehensible and interpretable only by God Himself. The congregation in the Corinthian church is the only one we can be sure to have experienced this gift, so let's take a look at the church in Corinth.

3 MacArthur, John F. *Charismatic Chaos*, p. 234.

The Corinthian Church

Corinth was a large Greek city with a population of about 500,000. It was a very worldly city with many gods and idols. Many (if not all) of the members of the Corinthian church came from this background of worldliness:

Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. (1 Corinthians 12:2)

A great deal of problems existed in this church as listed below:

There were divisions and quarrels among the members	1 Corinthians 1:10-11
The church tolerated wrong doctrines	1 Corinthians 11:19
They were idolatrous	1 Corinthians 10:14
The church was filled with all kinds of sexual immorality	1 Corinthians 5:1
Many members did not honor their marriage vows	1 Corinthians 7
The church was filled with arrogance	1 Corinthians 5:2
Some members felt they were above the Word of God	1 Corinthians 14:36
Rather than focus on their problems, they judged others	1 Corinthians 4:3
They wronged and cheated each other	1 Corinthians 6:8
Rather than forgive one another, they took each other to court	1 Corinthians 6:6-7
The members were carnal and filled with envy	1 Corinthians 3:3
They sought after worldly wisdom	1 Corinthians 3:19
They partook of the Lord's Supper in a selfish & unworthy manner	1 Corinthians 11:21-30
There was disorder in the church services	1 Corinthians 14:40
They coveted one another's spiritual gifts	1 Corinthians 12
They shouted over each other, not listening to one another	1 Corinthians 14:26
They showed no interest in witnessing to unbelievers present	1 Corinthians 14:23
They had no interest in removing sin from their church	1 Corinthians 5:2

The Corinthian church is described as a church that was not worthy of praise:

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. (1 Corinthians 11:17)

What? Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. (1 Corinthians 11:22)

God has not placed these details in the Bible so that we can pass judgment on the Corinthian church or so we can pretend to be superior to them. We will see that it is very helpful in this study to have an understanding of the kinds of things that were going on in the Corinthian church and that is why we are looking at them. The truth is, we could probably go into any church today and find most of the things on the list above.

The Old Testament Church

It is important in our study of tongues to also take a moment and examine the Old Testament church, national Israel. God does test His people and the purpose of His tests is always to reveal whether or not their hearts are in the right place:

But, O Lord of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I open my cause. (Jeremiah 20:12).

Adam and Eve were tested in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-6). Abraham was tested concerning his son (Genesis 22:1-13). God also tested His church in the Old Testament, the Israelites, to see if their hearts were in the right place and to determine if they would follow His law:

And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou would keepest my commandments, or no. (Deuteronomy 8:2)

Even after they reached the Promised Land, God continued to test them to see if they would obey:

That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the Lord to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or no. (Judges 2:22)

God predicted that His people would eventually turn from His way. God promised that the means He would use to judge them would be a nation whose language they could not understand:

Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; Therefore shalt thou serve thine enemies which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things: and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. The Lord shall bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as swift as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand (Deuteronomy 28:47-49)

Remember that God split His people into two nations: Israel and Judah.

God allowed Assyria to become very wealthy (Ezekiel 23:6) and blessed it with political success (2 Kings 16:9). The Israelies saw how successful Assyria was and so they began to chase after the gods of Assyria (Ezekiel 23:5; 2 Kings 17:7-8), engaging in spiritual harlotry (Jeremiah 3:6) as they longed to achieve that which God's enemies had achieved. This was something God had thoroughly warned them not to do (2 Kings 17:15). As the Israelites continued to worship the gods of Assyria, God warned them to turn from their evil ways (2 Kings 17:13). This warning came through a simple prophecy that they could easily understand (Ezekiel 3:4), but they ignored it because they were too wrapped up in their carnal desires (Jeremiah 5:3).

All of this was as God predicted in Deuteronomy 28:47-49, and so the prophecy continued to be fulfilled as He brought judgment through another tongue (Isaiah 28:11-12). The Israelies lusted after Assyria, a nation whose language they did not understand, and so God used the very thing they lusted after to bring about their destruction. Assyria destroyed Israel (2 Kings 17:18-23).

Later, Judah began to chase after the gods of Babylon for the same reasons, because of Babylon's success and material possessions (2 Kings 20:12-14). So God, as with Israel, warned Judah to turn from their evil ways (2 Kings 21:8). However, like Israel, Judah ignored this warning (2 Kings 21:9; Jeremiah 8:5) so God brought judgment on them through another tongue:

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the Lord: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say. (Jeremiah 5:15)

Like Israel, the people of Judah claimed to be followers of God (Hosea 8:2) but failed to put aside worldliness. They coveted Babylon and so God used the very thing they lusted after as a means of judgment. Babylon destroyed Judah (2 Kings 25).

The New Testament Church

What happened with the Old Testament church gives us insight into what will happen with the New Testament church. We know this correlation exists because God equates the life cycle of the New Testament church with that of the Old Testament church:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. (2 Peter 2:1)

I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not. (Jude 5)

We know we can expect God to respond in a similar way to the New Testament church because God doesn't change (Hebrews 13:8). The following are some of the similarities that God mentions:

The Old Testament Church	The New Testament Church
Cluttered with false prophets (Jeremiah 5:31) who prophesied lies (Amos 2:4)	Also cluttered with false prophets (Matthew 24:24) who speak lies (1 Timothy 4:2)
Warned to beware of the false prophets (Jeremiah 23:16)	Also warned to beware of the false prophets (2 Peter 3:17)
False prophets were very persuasive (Jeremiah 12:6)	False prophets appear to be legitimate bringers of the true Gospel who will deceive many (Matthew 24:11; 2 Corinthians 11:13)
Even though they weren't following God, they still wholeheartedly believed they were (Hosea 8:2)	Many in the church will not realize they weren't following God until Judgment Day (Matthew 7:13-23)
Those who tried to warn Israel and Judah of their evil ways were mocked as they angered these nations (Jeremiah 18:18)	Those who teach truth today are frequently mocked, and believers of wrong doctrines are often defensive when the subject comes up.
Their hearts were hardened as they refused to correct their ways (Jeremiah 5:3)	God hardens the hearts of those who insist on following false doctrines (2 Thessalonians 2:11)

Not all of the problems that plagued the Corinthian church exist in every church today, but as a whole it's a foreshadowing of the New Testament church. Since the Old Testament church is also a foreshadowing of the New Testament church, it should come as no surprise that the Corinthian church shared many of the same issues that existed in the Old Testament church:

Issue	Old Testament Church	The Corinthian Church
Both were self-destructive	Micah 7:2	1 Corinthians 6:6-8
Both were idolatrous	Jeremiah 2:5	1 Corinthians 10:14
Both were corrupted with divorce	Malachi 2:16	1 Corinthians 7:27
Both shamed the poor	Jeremiah 5:28	1 Corinthians 11:22
Both were filled with covetousness	Jeremiah 6:13, 8:10	1 Corinthians 3:13
Both acted above the Word of God	Jeremiah 7:10	1 Corinthians 14:36
Both were filled with sexual sin	Jeremiah 5:7, 9:2, 25:10	1 Corinthians 5:1

Just as God brought warnings to Israel and Judah, God has been warning the New Testament church:

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. (1 Timothy 4:1)

No one would follow a “doctrine of devils” if they knew it was such. However, they are seduced into following such a doctrine:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

This is referring to those within the church. As a whole, the church has strayed from the truth and teaches doctrines that satisfy our feelings and logic. Unfortunately, many adhere to these false doctrines:

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 31:29)

The phrase “latter days” in this verse indicates that, though it is in the Old Testament, it is directed at us today. A study of this phrase would show that every occurrence of “latter days” in the Bible is a reference to the New Testament era. This is a warning for those in the church to be very careful that they are not blindly running into this corruption. No one who claims to be a follower of God would deliberately corrupt the church, but sadly this corruption is taking place. We will understand this better as we progress through additional chapters in this book.

Tongues as a Test

We will discover that the gift of tongues was given as a test to the Corinthian church and it is also a test for those in the churches today. In the days of the Corinthian church it was a legitimate gift from God,

but God is no longer distributing the gift.

The test for the Corinthian church was to see if the members got excited about the gift or the Gospel. The message delivered through tongues was intended for unbelievers (we shall examine this closer in a moment) and the form it came in served as a test. By reading First Corinthians chapter 14, it is obvious that the church members had little interest in the content of the message and were more interested in the spectacular excitement of the gift.

Think of it this way: as the name implies, the main purpose of a fortune cookie is the fortune inside. Suppose you were to take the time to think up a fortune, print it on a slip of paper, and insert it into a cookie. Then when you gave the cookie to your friend, he just tossed the fortune aside without reading it. All your friend was interested in was the tasty cookie part, and he gave no concern to the part for which the entire package was created.

The members of the Corinthian church were so eager to experience this gift that they even counterfeited it. God declared that no more than three people could exercise the gift:

If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three, and that by course; and let one interpret. (1 Corinthians 14:27)

However, many more than three members would speak in tongues in a service (1 Corinthians 14:26). God does not violate His own laws, so we know that some of the members had to be faking, though they may not have realized they were doing this. The mind is very tricky and we can convince ourselves of things that are not really happening.

Certainly it was a blessing to receive new revelation from God and we know that God does test through blessings:

Then said the Lord unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no. (Exodus 16:4)

God likely designed the gift of tongues to be impressive so that it would easily appeal to our nature. Receiving the gift would not indicate that one had failed the test. It was the heart of those who sought it that revealed where their spiritual priorities lay. We are told that spiritual gifts are distributed to God's people as He sees fit (1 Corinthians 12:11), and that the gift of tongues is the least important of them all (1 Corinthians 12:28).

The gifts of prophecy and tongues are frequently compared to each other in First Corinthians because they are very similar in some ways. The value of tongues was not in the experience but rather the content, and this is obvious because without interpretation tongues was considered useless (1 Corinthians 14:6-19). Tongues and prophecy were similar in that the main purpose was the message they contained. Consider the following similarities between the rules of prophecy and tongues:

Rule	Prophecy	Tongues
Only two or three were allowed to speak	1 Corinthians 14:29	1 Corinthians 14:27
They were to speak in turn	1 Corinthians 14:31	1 Corinthians 14:27
The purpose was to edify the church	1 Corinthians 14:31	1 Corinthians 14:26

We can be certain that God no longer provides additional revelation through prophecy:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book (Revelation 22:18)

In one sense, prophecy still continues today as believers proclaim God's Word, but the kind of prophecy where God provides additional words to mankind no longer takes place.

Likewise, He no longer provides additional revelation through tongues. Some may argue that the content of their tongue is nothing more than repetition of what is already written in the Bible and so it is therefore not new revelation. However, many things are repeated throughout Scripture. Much of the information in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is repeated amongst these books. Does that mean we can trim down the Bible a bit and remove these repetitions? Of course not. Many things are repeated in the Bible because God wanted to stress certain things. By claiming to receive a message from God through a tongue, even if it is just repetition of His Word, we would be claiming that God is adding emphasis to something that is already written, emphasis that wasn't there before, and that is adding to His Word.

What God is saying in Revelation 22:18 is that He has completed His Holy Word, and that if we think we've received some divine truth through a dream, vision, or tongue, then it wasn't from Him.

Take the following example: Elvis was alive at one point and many chased after him because of the intriguing spectacle that he was, because of the break from the norm and monotony he represented. Elvis is no longer alive, but there are many who are convinced he does and still seek him out because they want so badly for him to be alive.

Likewise, the gift of tongues was a legitimate gift from God, but it is no longer distributed. However, there are many today who strongly want it to still legitimately exist and so they have convinced themselves that it does. This is the test for us today. Are we going to be content with the Bible alone or are we going to look for more?

God warns us of signs and wonders (tongues is a sign, which we will examine next):

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. (Deuteronomy 13:1-3)

In this passage God tells us that He will allow signs and wonders to enter congregations of those who claim to be His followers. He warns that these signs will not be from Him, even though, as indicated by the statement of them coming to pass, they may appear to legitimately be from God. He tells us here that His reason for allowing all of this is to test those who claim to be His people. The verse that precedes this warning spells out exactly what the test is all about:

What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it. (Deuteronomy 12:32)

Will we accept anything in addition to the written Word of God as divine truth? Will we allow something else in addition to the Bible alone to be part of the foundation upon which we build truth? This is the test. Admittedly, the true Gospel is not very exciting, as we would define exciting. Many today want more excitement in their “walks of faith” so they look for God to do supernatural things to entertain our religious lives.

God allowed Assyria and Babylon to be very successful, which made their lifestyles even more attractive. Similarly, God has allowed false doctrines to be very successful as they sweep across this world. Unfortunately, as with Israel and Judah, an apostate church chases after the very thing that will eventually destroy it.

A Sign for Unbelievers

We need to take a careful look at First Corinthians 14:22...

Part A: *“Wherefore tongues are for a sign...”*

We should understand this phrase as “tongues are a sign” or “tongues fit into the role of a sign.” The word “for” in this phrase comes from the Greek word *eis*, which can also be translated as “into.”

Part B: *“...not **to** them that believe but **to** them that believe not; but prophesying serveth not **for** them that believe not, but **for** them which believe.”*

The words I’ve emphasized (to, to, for, for) all come from the same Greek word: *tois*. The original wording is such that “them that believe not” and “them that believe” are indirect objects, which places the emphasis of the sentence on the person for whom the action is being performed. In other words, this verse is saying that the gift was instituted on behalf of, or in the interest of, unbelievers.

This actually makes perfect sense. We already discussed the worldly nature of Corinth. Perhaps this gift was instituted as a means for God to get the attention of the unbelievers who might be present in order to bring them to faith. Whatever the reason, we know the message was intended for unbelievers.

The word “sign” in the above verse comes from the same Greek word as “miracle”: *semeion*. These two words (“sign” and “miracle”) are interchangeable in our English Bible. Jesus performed a great many miracles, all of which were done in order to prove He was Christ, and so that people would believe in His Gospel:

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

This again fits right in with the fact that the gift of tongues was instituted to bring a message to unbelievers.

God no longer performs miracles of a spectacular nature. However, Satan imitates God in order to lead people astray:

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. (2 Thessalonians 2:4)

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 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 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. (Isaiah 14:12-14)

Just as God proved the genuineness of His Gospel through miracles, Satan is attempting to do the same thing today. False gospels are not just those of obviously false religions, such as Islam and Buddhism. Any gospel that has a different authority than the true Gospel is a false gospel. Churches that teach that God is still bringing divine truth through tongues are teaching a different gospel because their authority is not just the Bible. They will, of course, say that the Bible is their only authority, but in reality it is not.

Suppose a debate was taking place between two students. The debate revolved around a new scientific theory set forth in a particular book. They both read the book, but one student was a cousin of the author and so he had some additional information given to him not found in the book. Do you see the problem? The two students do not have the same source of information. The cousin of the author is going to interpret the statements in the book in light of the additional information he has received from the author.

The situation in the previous paragraph is not implying that God is the bringer of these additional messages through tongues today, but simply illustrating that two gospels can use the same book as their source of truth and be different gospels if one of the gospels, uses an additional source. A simple example is Mormonism; it uses the Bible but it also use the Book of Mormon as a source of divine truth, and by definition that makes Mormonism a different gospel. Charismatic churches use the Bible, but they also believe there is divine truth in tongues and so that is also a different gospel. Any gospel that is not the true Gospel is a false gospel.

Remember that our faith is not to be based on what we see (2 Corinthians 5:7). We now have the completed Word of God and miracles are recorded in it as proof of its power. God is no longer providing any additional proof because all the proof we need is in the Bible.

Recall that in John chapter 6 we learn that Jesus had many followers because of all the miracles He performed, but when He began to teach, many of His followers left. They were only interested in the exciting miracles He was doing. This serves to support Jesus' comment that "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign" (Matthew 12:39). Take away the exciting spectacle and they lose their interest.

We should note that every single place the Bible speaks about signs/miracles in the end times (which we are in) is a reference to Satanic activity:

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders. (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do... (Revelation 13:14)

For they are spirits of devils, working miracles. (Revelations 16:14)

Let's assume for a moment that the tongues-speaking we are seeing in churches today really is being legitimately distributed by God. Let's examine how it is being used in comparison to God's instructions for the gift.

The Bible says that no more than three people are to speak in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:27), but it is very common today in tongues-speaking churches for far more than three to be speaking in tongues at once.

The Bible also instructs that there must always be an interpreter when someone is speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 14:27), but interpretation is frequently overlooked and often completely ignored today.

God ranks the gift of tongues as the least important spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 12:28), but today's charismatic churches will often claim that a believer has not been baptized in the Holy Spirit until they speak in tongues. Some more extreme churches will teach that a person isn't saved unless they've spoken in tongues.

God reminds us that spiritual gifts are distributed as He sees fit (1 Corinthians 12:11) and that it is not His plan for everyone to have the same spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:30). However, today it is very common for people in a charismatic church to strive for the gift rather than being content to let God distribute gifts as He sees fit.

The gift was instituted so that God could bring a message to unbelievers, not believers (1 Corinthians 14:22). We don't see this as the focus of its use today, but instead we see it being used selfishly. We hear comments like, "It makes me feel closer to God." It is even used as a personal prayer language by some, which completely contradicts God's initial reason for introducing it.

The point here is that the way people behave regarding tongues today is very similar to how people in the Corinthian church behaved. They ignored God's rules regarding the gift as they sought the pleasure and excitement of it. Because of its spectacular nature, they placed a high priority on it. They weren't satisfied with God's distribution plan but rather coveted the gift. In short, they abused the gift.

This should be a concerning realization for any of us who are interested in tongues today. Even if the gift of tongues were still being distributed today by God, just the way people are behaving regarding its use should sound an alarm for anyone who is seriously interested in truth.

Baptism in the Holy Spirit

It is sometimes said that speaking in tongues occurs when someone is baptized in the Holy Spirit, and that this is a special event that not all believers experience. Let's examine this for a moment.

First, the word "baptism" means "to be washed or cleansed." This has nothing to do with physical baptism, being baptized with water. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is a spiritual event. It means that our sins have been washed away:

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16)

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5)

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us,

by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5)

We know that every single true believer is filled with the Holy Spirit at the time of salvation:

But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)

We also know that there is only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5); there isn't a second or third baptism. We are baptized once in the Holy Spirit and that baptism is permanent. The Holy Spirit does not leave us and return on specific occasions.

The Bible tells us that not every believer received the gift of tongues, but every believer has received the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. (1 Corinthians 12:8-13)

We have evidence that the following people were baptized in the Holy Spirit and did not speak in tongues:

- The jailer of Philippi (Acts 16:30-33)
- The Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35-39)
- Lydia her family (Acts 16:14-15)
- The 3,000 in Acts (Acts 2:38-41)

There is a verse that is often offered to suggest that a person can be saved without having yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit:

He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. (Acts 19:2)

True, the above passage does refer to disciples who had not received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1), but one thing we must first remember is that not all disciples in the Bible were saved:

From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. (John 6:66)

Second, the word "believe" also does not necessarily indicate that a person is saved. Luke 8:13 tells us about those who "believed" for a little while but then fell away because there was no root. John chapter 2 tells us of those who "believed" but weren't saved because their faith was based on miracles. Acts 8:9-23 tells us of Simon who believed and was baptized, but was not saved because he thought

salvation could be bought with money. James 2:19 reminds us that even the devils “believe” but of course they are not saved. When not read carefully, the Bible does seem to teach: “Believe and you will be saved.” However, as we examine the Bible more carefully we see there is more to the story. We will look at this in more detail in a later chapter.

Verses in Favor of Tongues?

When we build our doctrines we must be willing to test them against any verse in the Bible. Therefore, it is important that we also examine verses that are often used to support the use of tongues:

I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that the church may receive edifying. (1 Corinthians 14:5)

I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all. (1 Corinthians 14:18)

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. (1 Corinthians 14:39)

We have to keep in mind that the gift of tongues was a legitimate gift from God in the Corinthian church because He had not completed His Word and was still sending divine messages. The fact that it's in the Bible serves as a test, just like how God placed the tree of knowledge of good and evil in the Garden of Eden. He could have easily left that out of the Garden, but He put it there to test them. He also could have made the tree less tempting by not giving it such an attractive name, but He did not. Likewise, He could have made tongues a less tempting phenomenon or left it out of the Bible altogether, but He did not.

When we read in the Old Testament that certain animals are not to be eaten (Leviticus 11), we know that is no longer a commandment of God because it foreshadowed the perfect bread of life that Jesus would bring. Later God declared all animals clean and fit for consumption (Acts 10:10-16; 1 Timothy 4:3). God modified His law. We have to remember to take the entire Bible into consideration and when we do so we discover that, though it was distributed back then, the gift of tongues is no longer being distributed by God.

Another passage commonly used to support the use of tongues today is Mark 16:17-18:

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them, and they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. (Mark 16:17-18)

Remember, Jesus spoke in parables (Mark 4:34). A parable is an earthly statement with a spiritual meaning. If we were to simply take these verses at face value, then we'd certainly run into some problems. “These signs shall follow them that believe.” It doesn't say that maybe these things will follow, or that only some of them will follow in certain congregations. No, all of these things will be present wherever there are believers. Let's look at these five signs more closely.

They shall cast out devils

This is not referring to the event of casting out demons such as we think of it. When we are saved it is as though we have cast out a devil, meaning that we are no longer subject to them:

And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name (Luke 10:17)

The unsaved are in Satan's dominion. When they become saved they are no longer under the power of Satan; a devil has been cast out.

They shall take up serpents

The serpent represents Satan:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world... (Revelation 12:9)

Before we are saved we are owned by Satan and under his power (John 8:34-44), but once we become saved we then have power over Satan and we rule over him.

They shall drink deadly things and it shall not hurt them

Can we as believers drink deadly poison and not die? No. The deadly poison in view here is false gospels. Recall that the true Gospel is living water:

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? (John 4:10-11)

Satan comes disguised as God with his false gospels and the Bible describes his gospels as bitter water which spiritually kills men:

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:11)

However, if we have truly become saved we can be under the hearing of false gospels and it will not affect our salvation because God protects His elect from being deceived by them (Matthew 24:24).

They shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover

We don't see believers everywhere walking around physically healing people. Rather, this is referring to the spiritual healing that is done when believers bring the Gospel and it is applied by God to the hearts of the unsaved:

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. (1 Peter 2:24)

They shall speak with new tongues

The Bible is really only concerned with two nations: the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. Every single person belongs to one of the two. Every nation has a language, or a tongue. Whatever language a person speaks indicates their nationality. When we become saved the Holy Spirit works in us and we understand things differently. We speak with a new spiritual tongue. Recall Psalm 40:3 which says, "He hath put a new song in my mouth."

A final passage that is commonly used to support tongues is Joel 2:28-32:

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. (Joel 2:28-32)

To understand this passage we must recognize that there are two days which Scripture refers to as Judgment Day. The one we normally think of is the one at the end of time. Christ stood before God as a guilty sinner on our behalf, was condemned for our sins, and God poured out His wrath on Him. This was demonstrated at the cross. That was also Judgment Day. We also see this correlation in that the sun is darkened for both events (Luke 23:44; Revelation 6:12), and a great earthquake accompanies both events (Matthew 27:51; Revelation 6:12).

Knowing that two different days fit the bill, we need to determine which one is being referenced in the prophecy of Joel. It says that following that day anyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Salvation does not occur after Judgment Day at the end of time, but it does occur throughout the New Testament era that follows the cross. When we recognize that Joel is speaking of the events surrounding the cross it makes perfect sense that there would be dreams and visions; these are avenues God was still using to bring additional revelation right up to about AD 95 when the Bible was completed. Acts 2:16 clearly tells us that the prophecy of Joel was fulfilled in AD 33: "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel."

Three Common Questions

There are three additional questions that commonly come up in a discussion on the topic of tongues, so let's get those out in the open and address them.

Question 1: "How can we pick out one spiritual gift and say that it is no longer given?"

Actually, tongues is not the only spiritual gift that is no longer given. The Bible mentions 13 spiritual gifts (Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10) and, of these, five are no longer distributed by God: prophecy of new revelation, tongues, the interpretation of tongues, healings, and miracles. We know that the first three in that list aren't distributed anymore because they add to God's Word, which God is no longer doing (Revelation 22:18).

As for miracles and healings, we have to define a miraculous healing. When someone has cancer and then all of a sudden they don't, that is not a miracle. Miraculous healings, as the Bible would define them, were such that someone with a withered arm or leg would suddenly have a fully

functional complete arm or leg (Mark 3:1-5; Matthew 15:31). That kind of miraculous healing is no longer happening today.

Incidentally, the miracle of salvation is still taking place today but that is not the kind of miracle most are referring to when they speak of the gift of miracles.

Question 2: "What if Revelation 22:18 is referring to the book of Revelation and not the entire Bible?"

The verse in question reads as follows:

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. (Revelation 22:18)

This is the verse that tells us God is no longer bringing additional revelation, making the gift of tongues an impossibility in our day. However, it is sometimes suggested that perhaps this verse is only referencing the book of Revelation and therefore God might only be stating to not add to the book of Revelation. We can get some clarification on this if we back up a few verses:

Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book. (Revelation 22:7)

Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am they fellow servant, and of they brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God. (Revelation 22:9)

We can clearly see, by allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture, that "this book" refers to the entire Bible. We are instructed to keep the sayings of the prophecy of the entire Bible, not just the book of Revelation.

Question 3: "Aren't we risking blasphemy if we speak out against tongues today?"

Some people today, even if they do disagree with the charismatic movement, will not speak out against it for fear that they may commit the unforgiveable sin of blasphemy. It should be noted that not all blasphemy is unforgiveable. Paul states that he was once a blasphemer (1 Timothy 1:13) and obviously he was forgiven for that. We are told that even to blaspheme Jesus Himself is forgivable:

And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. (Matthew 23:32)

The unforgiveable form of blasphemy mentioned in the above verse is to believe that Christ was under the power of Satan rather than under the power of the Holy Spirit. Even many who have no interest in Christianity would not claim that Jesus was under the power of Satan. The tongues doctrine is protected by this fear that is instilled in Christians suggesting that if they conclude a church or event is under the power of Satan they will not be saved if they are wrong.

8 CHAPTER

Eternal Torment in Hell

Next, we are going to examine the doctrine of hell. Nearly all of us have been taught that the unsaved will spend eternity being tormented in a place called hell. However, we will discover in this chapter that no such place exists now, nor will it ever. The unsaved will simply cease to exist after this world is destroyed.

I recognize that many people's reaction to the above paragraph will be, "Wait, what? No, that's wrong." But this is another time when I will encourage us to set aside preconceived ideas and try to let the Bible guide us from neutral ground.

This happens to be an area where God has kept truth hidden. It is not the fault of the churches that they were teaching the unbiblical doctrine of eternal torment in hell. There are a couple of denominations or gospels out there that God has allowed to catch a glimpse of this truth, but we will discover that even they did not fully understand it properly.

In the next chapter we will examine salvation. After we do that I think we will see a possible explanation for why God kept us from properly understanding eternal damnation until now, and why He allowed a couple of denominations to see some truth in this area.

Man Was a Life with Life

With this topic, it helps to go back to Creation and remind ourselves that man is no different than an animal, except that God has placed a spirit essence inside him. The Bible teaches that both animals and man were formed out of the ground:

And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air... (Genesis 2:19a)

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground... (Genesis 2:7a)

Physically, we are very similar to animals. Our physical bodies are kept alive through breathing and the pumping of blood through our veins just like animals. We get our physical nourishment from the ground just like animals. The fruit and vegetables we eat come from the ground. The meat that we eat comes from an animal that got its nourishment from the ground. But there is a difference between man and animals:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. (Genesis 2:7)

God did not breathe into the nostrils of the animals. When God breathed into man's nostrils it was His Spirit that He breathed:

And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost (John 20:22)

This is why we read in Genesis 2:7 that man became a living soul as a result of God breathing into his nostrils. This gave man a spirit essence so that he was no longer just a physical body like an animal.

In fact, the phrase "and man became a living soul" in Genesis 2:7 is more literally translated, "and man became a life with life." This is not necessarily an error in translation because either way the teaching is that man has a living soul unlike animals. However, when we read the phrase in its literal translation it really hits the point home that man was created as a physical being like animals, but with an additional life essence inside him.

It is this spiritual life that made man identify with God. God is entirely incapable of sinning (James 1:13). Since man was created with God's Spirit in Him, in man's spiritual essence he was created to be incapable of sin:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

Obviously, this verse can't be understood to be teaching that true believers no longer sin once they become saved because the simple fact is that they do. It's reminding us that when God indwells us our spirit essence is incapable of sin. However, even after we've become saved our body continues to lust after sin. This is why a saved person has a war going on inside him between his resurrected soul, which cannot sin, and his body, which still enjoys sin:

But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (Romans 7:23)

The Bible refers to Christ as the "last Adam" (1 Corinthians 15:45). This reminds us of how man was created. In a sense, he was just like Christ. When Christ took on a human nature, He was the Spirit of God in a human body. Likewise, Adam was a human body with the Spirit of God in him. God tested Christ through Satan, just as Adam was tested by God through Satan. We find that Christ was tested in all points just as man was:

For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)

We often think of Adam's sin and don't really pay attention to what mankind was before sin. Man was created to live forever with God, but then came the entrance of sin. The angels were created to be ministering spirits:

But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? (Hebrews 1:13-14)

They were not created to be rulers of any kind. However, unlike the angels, man was given the right to rule, and that rule was over this world:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth (Genesis 1:26)

Satan wanted to be like God:

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 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. (Isaiah 14:13-14)

God is the King, so to be like God Satan needed a kingdom to rule over.

Satan reasoned that if he could cause man to obey him he would become the ruler over man, and therefore he would also rule over Earth. We normally think of this act of rebellion as an act of stupidity on Satan's part, but really he had it figured out correctly. This is why we read that the serpent was subtle:

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field... (Genesis 3:1)

The Hebrew word for "subtil" can also be translated as "clever" or "wise." Adam and Eve became sinners and this rebellious nature has been passed on to every human being:

Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me. (Psalm 51:5)

God had told man that if he disobeyed God, then that same day he would die:

But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. (Genesis 2:17)

But Adam and Eve did not die that day because God wasn't talking about physical death. He was talking about spiritual death.

Remember that man was "a life with life." After he sinned, man continued to be a physical life just like the animals, but he ceased to be spiritually alive. The spiritual life force that was given to him by God and energized him spiritually was removed. He continued to have a spirit essence, but it no longer had life in it.

God did not need to hold a formal trial. When children are disobedient, their parents don't need to hold a trial before administering punishment. Adam and Eve were immediately punished with spiritual death. God warned Adam and Eve, they disobeyed, and God judged them immediately. Because we were in the loins of Adam, this spiritual death is passed on to every human:

For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. (Romans 7:9)

The verse above speaks of a time when we were alive without the law. There was only one period of time when there was no law and that was in the very beginning. As soon as God told Adam to not eat of the tree, He had laid down the law. Adam was still spiritually alive at this point because he had not sinned. The "I" in the above verse is every human being. We are all spoken of as having been present back there in the Garden of Eden, and when Adam sinned we all died spiritually:

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Romans 5:12)

Remember, the focus here is on spiritual death, not physical death:

And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins (Ephesians 2:1)

This verse is saying that every human being is dead before they are saved. People cannot become saved once they have physically died, so the only death that can be in view here is spiritual death.

As a result of being dead spiritually, all that is left alive is man's physical body, and it is in that part of man that he is vulnerable to sin. Because the sin-prone part of man is all that remains we find that the Bible has ugly things to say about man. Our minds are darkened by sin:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart (Ephesians 4:17-18)

Our hearts are corrupt and evil:

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, Thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Matthew 7:21-23)

We are slaves of sin:

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John 8:34)

Our greatest efforts are, at best, tainted with sin:

But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags... (Isaiah 64:6)

In our sinful nature, we are desperately wicked:

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

This kind of information quickly reminds us how imperfect our logic and feelings are. We can all think of someone we would define as “a really kind-hearted person,” and we would never think of that person as fitting the descriptions above, but that is because our minds are tainted with sin. We have to trust the Bible because our perception is flawed.

Man Will Be Destroyed

As a result of sin, man has lost his birthright. In Genesis chapter 25 we read about Jacob and Esau. Romans chapter 9 instructs us that Jacob represents the saved and Esau represents the unsaved of the world.

Satan correctly calculated that he could become the ruler of this world if he could get man to obey him, but this came with a large price. Satan lost the ability to live with God forever. This event is a perfect illustration of man’s thinking: “I’ll give up eternity to have what I want now.” Esau gave up his birthright so that he could briefly enjoy the pleasures and comforts that this life can provide:

Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles; and he did eat and drink, and rose up, and went his way: thus Esau despised his birthright. (Genesis 25:34)

This is a picture of mankind’s situation. He has chosen to act on the lusts of the flesh and, just like Satan, has given up his eternal inheritance:

For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Ephesians 5:5)

As a result of sin, mankind does not live forever as he was originally designed to do. Instead he dies, and the focus of man’s punishment is on the loss of eternal life:

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him. (John 3:36)

We very frequently read that God has “cut off” man because of sin. To be cut off identifies with death, which ties in with what we’ve just learned:

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. (Zechariah 13:8)

Being cut off identifies with an eternal consequence:

For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. (Obadiah 1:10)

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. (Isaiah 56:5)

To be cut off identifies with being removed from the Lord's presence:

Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 22:3)

This is further illustrated by the removal of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:24). To be cut off identifies with losing our inheritance, which ties in with what we learned with Jacob and Esau:

For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth. (Psalm 37:9)

To be cut off identifies with destruction:

And I will establish my covenant with you, neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth. (Genesis 9:11)

I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD. (Psalm 101:8)

But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off. (Psalm 37:38)

There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts. (Nahum 3:15)

I have cut off the nations: their towers are desolate; I made their streets waste, that none passeth by: their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man, that there is none inhabitant. (Zephaniah 3:6)

As a result of sin, the Bible teaches that man will eventually be destroyed by fire:

Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. (Psalm 21:9)

Man will be melted:

As they gather silver, and brass, and iron, and lead, and tin, into the midst of the furnace, to blow the fire upon it, to melt it; so will I gather you in mine anger and in my fury, and I will leave you there, and melt you. Yea, I will gather you, and blow upon you in the fire of my wrath, and ye shall be melted in the midst thereof. As silver is melted in the midst of the furnace, so shall ye be melted in the midst thereof; and ye shall know that I the Lord have poured out my fury upon you. (Ezekiel 22:20-22)

Man will be burned to ashes:

For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. (Malachi 4:1)

Man will not survive the fire any more than thorns can survive a fire:

And the people shall be as the burnings of lime: as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire. (Isaiah 33:12)

This destruction of man is permanent and, once again, we find that the focus of the punishment is on our loss of eternal life with God:

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 Thessalonians 2:19)

The Bible indicates that both the body and soul will be destroyed by fire:

Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer fainteth. (Isaiah 10:16-18)

We find in Matthew chapter 10 a reiteration that the soul will be destroyed along with the body:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. (Matthew 10:28)

The Greek word for “destroy” in the above verse is the same that is translated as “perish” in Luke 13:3:

I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish [be destroyed].

If we don't become saved we will be completely destroyed, both body and soul. This notion that man simply ceases to exist after physical death is hard for us to accept. This is because God has written eternity on our hearts:

He hath made every thing beautiful in his time: also he hath set the world in their heart, so that no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end. (Ecclesiastes 3:11)

The Hebrew word for “world” here is *olam* which means “infinite time” and is translated elsewhere in the Bible as “everlasting,” “evermore,” “eternal,” “for ever,” and “perpetual.”

Mankind senses that somehow he continues to exist beyond this life. What that means can vary greatly from one religion or culture to another, but mankind as a whole believes he will continue

on somehow after this life. This is because we were created in the image of God and designed to live forever with Him. When mankind sinned it brought spiritual death, but eternity is still written on our hearts as a result of how we were created.

For those of us who grew up in a church, learning that unsaved man will be destroyed and cease to exist may cause us to ask, "But doesn't the Bible speak of the dead being resurrected?" In fact, it does:

And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:29)

So we have to ask, "What does the resurrection of damnation mean?" We get a little help when we look in the book of Daniel:

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. (Daniel 12:2)

This language tells us that the resurrection of damnation is also a resurrection to be shamed. We read in Jeremiah about the shame that will be brought on the unsaved:

And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten. (Jeremiah 23:40)

We are going to examine this in more detail in a later chapter, but I will mention a few key elements here. There is no indication in John 5:29 above that the unsaved will be resurrected to any kind of life or conscious existence. We just read that they will be resurrected to damnation. We will later see that the resurrection of the unsaved has to do with their remains being spewed out of the graves in preparation for the final destruction that will come when this entire universe is destroyed by fire. Unsaved man was already spiritually dead when he was born. Then when he died physically he was entirely dead, both in body and soul. For all practical purposes, an unsaved individual's physical death marks the end of his existence. However, God's destruction of the unsaved will be a total destruction. Once their corpses have been spit out of the graves and destroyed on the last day, then all of the unsaved from the history of the world will have been entirely destroyed and truly cease to exist.

Our reaction to this might be, "Well, then man is no different than an animal." In a sense, that is true. In fact, God teaches that man's death is like an animal's:

I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity. All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. (Ecclesiasts 3:18-20)

Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. (Psalm 49:12)

Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish. (Psalm 49:20)

We have learned that as a result of sin man has been cut off. This is the same fate that befalls the animals:

Son of man, when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof, and will send famine upon it, and will cut off man and beast from it (Ezekiel 14:13)

We find this teaching reiterated in Ezekiel 14:17-21 and Ezekiel 25:13. The destruction of unsaved man is like the destruction of any other creature on this planet:

I will consume man and beast; I will consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea, and the stumbling blocks with the wicked: and I will cut off man from off the land, saith the LORD. (Zephaniah 1:3)

Notice once again we find the significant phrase “cut off.”

An animal lives for a few years and then it dies and that’s it. It does not continue to exist in any way, and so too is the case with mankind if he is not saved. The Bible teaches that we are spiritually dead. We’ve always known that, but we used to say that somehow an unsaved individual’s dead soul would be alive to experience eternal torment in a place called hell. Now we can see why that doesn’t make sense. To be spiritually dead means that man’s soul does not live on beyond this life.

What is Hell?

So, naturally, now we want to know, “Well then what exactly is hell?” We know that at least in one sense it is something that already exists because the demons are already in hell:

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2:4)

But we know they are still working on Earth, so what does this mean? We will discover that, in the broadest sense, hell is really the condition of being under the wrath of God.

We find the word “hell” 31 times in the Old Testament. It is the Hebrew word *sheol* and is always translated as “hell,” “grave,” or “pit.” As we study we learn that this “hell” or “grave” is not always a permanent dwelling place for someone. It can be escaped:

For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. (Psalm 86:13)

He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption. (Acts 2:31)

And not just escaped in the sense of avoiding it, but escaped in the sense of being there and then getting out:

The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath. (Proverbs 15:24)

If a soul can be removed from this hell, then that means it's at a time when salvation is still possible. Salvation is no longer possible after physical death, which means that this must be referring to a hell we can be in while we are still physically alive.

What is the only grave that we can escape from? Can we return from physical death? No. It is spiritual death that we can be saved from. We are born spiritually dead, but God brings to life the souls of those who become saved.

The "hell" we read about in the Old Testament identifies with spiritual death. It is a condition of being under the wrath of God. When we become saved we are no longer under God's wrath. He has raised our soul from spiritual death:

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Ephesians 2:5)

This is the hell or grave from which we have been rescued when we become saved. So, ultimately, hell has everything to do with death and being under the wrath of God:

The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. (Psalm 116:3)

The sorrows of hell compassed me about; the snares of death prevented me (2 Samuel 22:6)

Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on hell. (Proverbs 5:5)

Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves (Isaiah 28:15)

We understand this as spiritual death, but defining what hell is doesn't stop there. Earlier we looked at Matthew 10:28 and it's worth reading again here:

And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Elsewhere in the New Testament we find a similar statement where Jesus substitutes the phrase "destroy both body and soul" with "cast into hell":

And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him. (Luke 12:4-5)

In the above passage God is identifying hell with a time when both the body and soul will be destroyed. This is a reference to the destruction that comes upon this world at the end of time. It is the destruction by fire that we were reading about earlier. God calls it the second death:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)

After this universe is destroyed, God will create a new heaven and a new earth. We read that God's wrath (symbolized by the sea) will be no more:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

Recall earlier we saw that the sea signifies God's wrath or hell. Death and hell are destroyed at the time of the second death, which is the final destruction of this world:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:14)

With the exception of the believers, everything that remains of this creation will be destroyed. Even God's anger and wrath will come to an end:

Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy. (Micah 7:18)

Once this world is destroyed everything associated with it will not even be a memory. We might even say it will be as if it never existed:

For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. (Isaiah 65:17)

This does not leave any room to interpret a pouring out of God's wrath on the unsaved in a place of eternal torment.

What about Everlasting Fire?

A fair question at this point is, "Doesn't the Bible speak of an everlasting fire?" We are going to examine these passages in the Bible; we can't ignore them just because on the surface they seem to contradict our conclusion. That's not how we approach the Bible. We will discover that the everlasting fire is not a reference to a fire that burns forever, but rather it is indicating that the destruction is permanent. There are only two verses in the Bible that speak of hell as an everlasting fire:

Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. (Matthew 18:8)

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 (Matthew 25:41)

God gives us an example of how we should understand the phrase “everlasting fire”:

Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. (Jude 1:7)

(The Greek word for “eternal” in this verse is the same as in Matthew 18:8 and Matthew 25:41 where it is translated as “everlasting.”)

The fire in Sodom and Gomorrah is not still burning, but God tells us that this is an example of everlasting fire. “Everlasting fire” does not imply that the fire itself will burn forever, but rather that the destruction it causes will be permanent. In other words, there will never again be a chance for existence.

We read in more than one place that Sodom and Gomorrah were an example of the final destruction of unsaved man:

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly (2 Peter 2:6)

We also find a connection between the character of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the destruction of the world:

And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. (Genesis 19:28)

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (Revelation 9:2)

Just as was the case with Sodom and Gomorrah, everything and everyone will be destroyed except for a remnant, which is made up of the believers:

Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah. (Isaiah 1:9)

God is using the complete destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of the complete destruction of the unsaved. The destruction did not allow for any sort of existence thereafter:

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. (Isaiah 49:18)

The fire completely destroyed those cities so that nothing was left, and that is what it will be like when God destroys this world on the last day.

There are also three passages in the Bible that refer to hell as a fire that won't be quenched:

And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. (Mark 9:43-48)

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. (Matthew 3:12, also restated in Luke 3:17)

God again gives us some help in understanding the phrase "unquenchable fire":

But if ye will not hearken unto me to hallow the sabbath day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the sabbath day; then will I kindle a fire in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 17:27)

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man, and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched. (Jeremiah 7:20)

A fire that never stops burning is not what is in view here. The focus is on the absoluteness of the destruction. The unsaved will never again exist. They are eternally destroyed:

Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (1 Thessalonians 1:9)

What about the Judgment Throne?

In light of this new understanding of the punishment for sin, we certainly have some questions about judgment. After all, haven't we always been taught that the unsaved will stand before the judgment throne of God, answer for their sins, and then be cast into hell to be tormented forever? If the unsaved never again come to conscious existence after they physically die, then what about the judgment throne? Aren't there verses in the Bible that speak of that?

We have to keep in mind the way God wrote the Bible. We know for certain that it was His intent to hide certain things from mankind. Since we were going to have the completed Bible for nearly 2,000 years He had to use difficult and confusing language to keep these things hidden. Just look at all the conflicting doctrines today. One would think every church had its own unique version of the Bible. This outcome is a product of God's intentionally difficult Word.

It is not God's fault that there are so many wrong doctrines, but it is by God's design that His Word can be easily misinterpreted. It serves as a test. God is not the author of wrong doctrines. They

have grown as a result of mankind not properly understanding the Bible. Sometimes this is because mankind has interpreted the Bible in light of what he wants to believe and God has accommodated this by writing His Word so that it can seemingly support wrong doctrines. That is a test. Then there are other truths mankind hasn't properly understood because God has intentionally hid them from him. However, now that God has revealed these truths to us the test is, how are we going to react to them? Are we going to be led by God or by the mass of people who refuse to let God teach them new information?

We really have to study carefully and look at everything in the Bible that might relate to a particular topic. If the Bible seems to be teaching that the unsaved do not consciously stand before a judgment throne, then we have to face the verses that seem to contradict that. Everything must harmonize because, ultimately, there are no contradictions in the Bible.

When we think of a judge we normally think of someone who makes a determination of right or wrong and then declares a penalty. This is also how most of us (myself included) have always thought of God when the Bible speaks of Him as the Judge at the end of time.

However, now that we know the unsaved are not going to be thrown into a place of eternal torment we are compelled to look at this role as judge more closely. As it turns out, the Bible's definition of a judge does not entirely line up with our traditional thinking.

The Bible speaks of judges as being deliverers from the enemy:

Nevertheless the LORD raised up judges, which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them. (Judges 2:16)

The Bible also speaks of judges as going out on the frontlines and fighting the battles:

That we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles. (1 Samuel 8:20)

The judges also ruled as kings:

But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. (1 Samuel 8:6)

These are all roles that come to mind when we think of Christ. He is the King:

The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever. (Psalm 29:10)

He deliverers the believers from the enemy:

Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me. (Psalm 143:9)

One of His roles as Judge was to communicate the law to us:

For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us. (Isaiah 33:22)

We say, “OK, but doesn’t the Bible also say that God will judge the dead at the end of time?”:

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom (1 Timothy 4:1)

At first, this seems contradictory to the idea that once the unsaved die they never return to conscious existence to stand before a judgment throne. How then can they be judged as this verse is indicating? We get some help when we look at First Peter 4:5:

Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Here we find the same phrase, “judge the quick and the dead,” in connection with the unsaved giving account. We have always understood this to be teaching that the unsaved will have to consciously stand before God and answer for their sins at a judgment throne. The Greek word for “give” in this verse is *apodidomi* and we can get a better understanding of this if we look at how God uses that word in other verses. We see that it can be defined as making payment:

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay [*abodidomi*], his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment [*apodidomi*] to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay [*apodidomi*] thee all. (Matthew 18:23-26)

We also see that it can be defined as administering punishment:

But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render [*apodidomi*] to every man according to his deeds (Romans 2:5-6)

So, the phrase “give account” in First Peter 4:5 could be translated as “make payment on account.” What’s the payment for sin? Death:

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

The death in view is eternal death, and that is finalized on the last day when everything except the believers is completely destroyed:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:14)

In the end there will still be a huge population of unsaved people alive on this planet. They, along with the dead, will have to make payment at that point. The graves will open so that the dead can be exposed as they are shamed in their spiritual nakedness along with the living. Then both the living and the dead will be utterly destroyed on the last day.

There will be no need for a formal trial because the unsaved will have already been judged. Remember, the Word of God judges the unsaved throughout their lives:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Romans 2:12)

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

Then that judgment is finalized on the last day...by whom? We read that it is the Word that judges unsaved man on the last day as well:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

This is why we read that the unsaved are already condemned:

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. (John 3:18)

There is no need for a formal trial at the end. Mankind has already been declared guilty.

We might ask, "Why doesn't the law judge the believers then too? They're sinners as well." Before we become saved we are under the law of God:

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (Galatians 3:23)

Once we become saved we are no longer under the law of God:

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Galatians 5:18)

Instead, once we are saved we have come under the grace of God:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:5)

The Bible also speaks of this transition in terms of marriage. Before we are saved we are married to the law, but once we become saved we become married to another (Christ):

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Romans 7:4)

The situation with Adam and Eve is an example of how it works. God gave them the law: "Eat of this tree and you shall die." They broke the law and so the penalty was spiritual death. No trial held. Likewise, God gave mankind the law and declared that the penalty for breaking it is death. Mankind has broken that law so he pays the penalty. No trial held.

Another seemingly contradictory statement is found when we read that all must stand before the judgment throne of Christ:

But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (Romans 14:10-11)

Here we need to recognize that the word "all" is not always used in the Bible the way we traditionally understand it. For example, consider the following verse:

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. (Luke 2:1)

This verse is not teaching that Caesar Augustus taxed those living in North America or those living in South Africa. He taxed those that would have been subject to the taxation; namely, the entire Roman Empire. The word "all" in this verse is conditioned by its context. Likewise, consider the following verse:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Corinthians 15:22)

We know from the rest of the Bible that the first "all" does point to the entire human race because the effects of sin were passed on to every human being. However, we know that not everyone becomes saved as the second "all" would seem to indicate. Here again the word "all" is conditioned by the context and is referring to all of the believers, not all of the human race.

In the passage above (Romans 14:10-11) we find the phrase, "for it is written," which indicates that God has spoken about this before. We find that God is referencing Isaiah 45:23:

I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.

If we back up a few verses we can pick up the context and see that God is speaking of the believers:

Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, ye that are escaped of the nations: they have no knowledge that set up the wood of their graven image, and pray unto a god that cannot save. (Isaiah 45:20)

So when God says that "all" must stand before the judgment throne, He is once again referring to all of the believers, not all of mankind. Remember that in actuality Christ stood before the judgment throne in place of the believers, but in principle it was as though the believers were the ones who paid the penalty:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

In that sense, the believers have already stood before the judgment throne.

The last passage we will look at is Revelation 20:12-13, which appears to clearly indicate that the unsaved will be resurrected to some kind of conscious existence so they can be judged:

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. (Revelation 20:12-13)

This is a prime example of how God hid the truth. Only when we understand what the rest of the Bible says about judgment can we understand this passage's actual teaching. Twice this passage says, "and they were judged." When we don't compare it to the rest of the Bible we get the idea that God is saying here that event #1 happened, and then event #2 happened, and then they were judged, indicating a chain of events, at the end of which is the judgment of man.

However, the word "then" is not there. Careful review of the original Greek is a great help in understanding this passage. The Greek phrase translated "they were judged" is in the aorist tense in the indicative mood, which indicates that a past action is in view; it's speaking of something that has already taken place. In other words, the phrase, "and they were judged," should be understood as, "and they had been judged," or, "and they were already judged." The translation isn't wrong; it just isn't clear. We have always understood the statement to be, "the books were opened and *then* they were judged," when we should have been understanding it as, "the books were opened and *already* they were judged." It's referencing the judgment the unsaved received when the law judged them throughout their lives. No further trial is necessary. Their dead remains are resurrected only to complete the payment for sin: complete destruction.

9 CHAPTER

The Free-Will Salvation Plan

There are two primary doctrines of salvation: Arminianism and Calvinism. Since neither Jacobus Arminius nor John Calvin are the creators of these doctrines' fundamental beliefs (they are merely credited with publicizing structured doctrines based on them), we will refer to these doctrines by their more common names: free will and predestination.

The predestination doctrine dates back to the beginning of the New Testament Church. The free-will doctrine primarily has its roots in the fifth century and really grew in popularity with Arminius's teachings in the late 1500s. Today, nearly every church teaches the free-will doctrine because it is admittedly a more attractive doctrine to our human minds than predestination. Since the Bible clearly discusses predestination some churches teach a free-will doctrine that mixes in some elements of predestination. We will discover that this approach is really just a compromise between God's Word and what seems reasonable to us.

This is a long chapter because we are talking about salvation here. This is no small matter. It wasn't until years after I became saved that I properly understood how salvation works. There are many truly saved individuals in the world who do not necessarily understand salvation. Maybe they have not been exposed to theology and so all they know is that they have been saved and have a strong desire to do God's will. Or maybe they grew up in a church or family where they've only been exposed to an inaccurate understanding of salvation, so when they consider their own salvation they can only interpret it in light of what they've been taught.

Man Isn't Totally Depraved

John Calvin structured a predestination doctrine known as "the five points of Calvinism." Even though Calvin had a better understanding of salvation than Arminius, he still had at least one error in his doctrine: Total Depravity, which essentially states that unsaved man's rebellion against God is total. In other words, the doctrine teaches that an unsaved individual can't really have a serious desire to obey God's law on his own. This is where Calvin's system of beliefs got it wrong, and this is why, though teachers can be very helpful, we must never forget to go directly to the source (the Bible) and examine that teacher's statements.

For centuries churches have been full of people who attended church every Sunday. They'd been baptized. They partook of the Lord's Supper. They believed Christ is the Savior and read the Bible on a regular basis. They refrained from taking the Lord's name in vain. They didn't steal or behave in a hateful way toward their fellow man. Yet, not every single one of these individuals was saved. Mankind can, to a certain degree, have a desire to follow God's law, contrary to what Calvin's point of Total Depravity teaches.

For example, Cain was a religious person. We read that he followed God's law to a certain extent (Genesis 4:3). Yet, the evidence from the Bible is that Cain was not saved. In Numbers chapters 22-24 we read the account of Balaam, the soothsayer being hired by Balak to curse the Hebrews. Balaam told Balak that he would obey God (Numbers 23:26) and he refused to curse the Hebrews (Numbers 23:11) but, the evidence from the Bible is that Balaam was not a saved man (Jude 1:11, Peter 2:15).

Man was created in the image of God and so he can love and be kind. He can understand the concepts of patience and justice. Even though man became spiritually dead in the Garden of Eden, the fact that he was created in God's image remains. This is why mankind wants to be identified with God. Some choose Buddhism. Some choose Islam. Some choose Christianity. Even the pagans who knew nothing about the Bible offered sacrifices in an effort to appease the gods.

When we look at the world we find many unsaved people who are moral. Different factors can have an impact on our behavior. Sometimes it is the environment in which we are raised. Sometimes it is an event that causes us to rethink how we are living. Sometimes it is our genetics. Scientists have determined that some people are genetically more prone to abusing alcohol, being interested in homosexuality, or being quick to anger. Likewise, there are those to whom patience and a kind heart come more naturally. There are those who will read the Bible and realize they should be obeying God's commandments. Now, since they are spiritually dead they do not have God's Spirit within them helping them to overcome the lusts of the flesh. As such, they will only be able to obey to a certain degree.

The Bible tells us that God's law is written on the hearts of mankind:

This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them (Hebrews 10:16)

As a result, mankind knows it is wrong to steal, kill, lie, etc. Even an unsaved individual will obey God's commandments from time to time:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) (Romans 2:14-15)

And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst. (John 8:9)

And this is why even someone who has never heard of the Bible is still held accountable for sin. The point is, man is not totally depraved. However, he cannot get himself saved.

How Can I Become Saved?

You can go into any church today and ask, "How can I become saved?" and they will tell you how you can get yourself saved. Every church has a salvation plan that says, "You do this and you do that, and that's how you can get yourself saved." A common example is, "You say this prayer and get yourself baptized and you'll be saved."

However, that's not what the Bible teaches. Sure, we can pull a verse or two that seem to teach that, but that teaching won't harmonize with the rest of Scripture. The Bible teaches that man is spiritually dead. In order to become saved he must be brought to spiritual life. God is the One who saves someone, and that salvation is given totally independent of anything that person has done:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

To grasp the magnitude of this statement we need to make sure we understand a few salvation principles, but first let's summarize what we will discover regarding salvation.

Before time began God chose certain people for salvation, not based upon anything those individuals would do in their lives. Christ paid for the sins of just these individuals, not every single human being. At some point in each of these individuals lives God gave them spiritual life and began to draw them. God only draws those whom He previously chose for salvation and every single person He draws does become saved. Their faith and obedience to God's commandments are the result of having been saved. In no way have they done anything of their own will to get themselves saved. This salvation is permanent; it cannot be lost.

I grew up under the free-will doctrine so I am quite aware of how inaccurate the above paragraph sounds to anyone who has been raised in a church in our generation. We will work through the Scriptures to see how God saves someone, but first let's begin with the fact that the elect were chosen before time even began.

The Bible teaches that God chose the elect for salvation before the earth was even created:

According he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love. (Ephesians 1:4)

But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. (Ephesians 1:11)

He wrote the names of those He chose in the Book of Life before the foundation of the world:

And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him (referring to Satan), whose names are not written in the book of the life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8)

The beast that thou sawest, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that swell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Revelation 17:8)

There is a popular doctrine which mixes free-will with predestination by stating that God chose His elect based upon knowing in advance who would choose Him. However, there are plenty

of verses that make it clear that God chose His elect out of grace, not based on what they would do in the future. Their good works are the result, not the cause, of their salvation. We will see that even their faith is a result of God giving it to them and is not the cause of their election. God's election program is not based upon some foreseen merit. God's elect were chosen before they were born, not taking into account any future actions of theirs:

(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) (Romans 9:11)

God's salvation plan has nothing to do with our own will or whether or not we would run to or from God on our own:

So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. (Romans 9:16)

It is because of God's good pleasure that anyone is elected to salvation; it has nothing to do with their own actions:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will. (Ephesians 1:5)

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9)

A believer's future good works are a result of being ordained to perform them; they are not the cause of his or her salvation:

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10)

God clearly indicates that our salvation is based upon a decision He made, not a decision we may feel like we made:

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you. (John 15:16)

Anyone who has been previously chosen for salvation will eventually believe:

And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. (Acts 13:48)

We find out from other passages that this is a result of God causing them to believe. It is not an indication that God saw in advance that they would believe on their own and so He elected them.

So it can't be that our election is based on something God knew we would do. In fact, the Bible teaches that if God did leave it up to us and looked down through the corridors of time, no one would be saved because on our own there is none that wholeheartedly seek after God:

As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. (Romans 3:10-11)

The reason that mankind doesn't wholeheartedly seek God on his own is because he is spiritually dead. Many may wonder, "Then what does God mean when He says He foreknew the elect?":

For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. (Romans 8:29)

When we read the word "foreknow" here we should not be relating it to knowledge of future events. The verse that follows the above verse tells us that those whom God "foreknew" have been predestined for salvation. Since God knows everything we can easily conclude that just simple knowledge of events is not what this verse is talking about. Often when God talks about knowing someone He means that He has a special regard for them:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations. (Jeremiah 1:5)

The meaning in the above verse is not that God knew about Jeremiah, but that He had a special regard for him before he was born. We learn that God uses the term "know" in reference to His elect:

The Lord knoweth them that are his. (2 Timothy 2:19)

And remember that near the end many will cry out to God, but God will say, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity." (Matthew 7:23) God cannot be understood here as saying, "I knew nothing about you," but rather that He didn't have a special regard for them.

With all of this in mind we can now develop what it truly means to be saved by grace. No one can become saved until God draws them:

No one can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:44)

And everyone that God draws does eventually become saved:

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Romans 8:14)

This is because God causes His chosen ones to approach Him:

Blessed is the man whom thou chooseth, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy calling. (Psalm 65:4)

Furthermore, when we look at God's usage of the word "draw," we find that it always relates to an action that is irresistible to the person or thing being drawn. The word "draw" in John 6:44 above is translated from the Greek word *helkuo*, which is found 7 other times in the Bible. For example, Paul was irresistibly drawn out of the temple:

And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew [*helkuo*] him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. (Acts 21:30)

Paul and Silas were drawn forcibly into the marketplace:

And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew [*helkuo*] them into the marketplace unto the rulers (Acts 16:19)

The word is also used in the drawing of a sword (John 18:10) and the drawing of fish (John 21:6-11), and of course neither the sword nor the fish could resist those drawings.

As we study the Bible we discover that, as a part of this drawing, God grants spiritual understanding to those whom He draws:

It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh to me. (John 6:45)

We receive spiritual understanding as part of our soul, which was previously dead, being brought to life. It is because of what God has first done within us that we fully turn to Him in repentance:

And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and that thou mayest live. (Deuteronomy 30:6)

Anyone God chooses to work in does not get left behind:

Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)

Once we become saved, God causes us to have a desire to follow His commandments:

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. (Jeremiah 31:9)

God says that our salvation is entirely His doing. We can't claim we played any part in it:

For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you,

and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. (Ezekiel 36:24-27)

As we saw earlier, God makes it perfectly clear that our salvation is not based on some decision we made (John 15:16). If it was, then we could no longer say we are saved by grace:

Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Romans 11:5-6)

It's commonly quoted in the Christian community that we are not saved by works, but then the churches turn right around and say, "But here's what you can do to get yourself saved." According to the Bible, works are defined as any action that is obedient to God:

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. (Jonah 3:10)

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (Matthew 7:22)

The Bible commands us in many places to believe in Christ. The Greek word for "believe" is the same as for "faith," the only difference being that one is a verb and one is a noun. Since believing in Christ is a commandment, following that commandment would be a work, based on the definition of "work" that the Bible has given us. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Bible describes faith as a work:

Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father (1 Thessalonians 1:3)

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

Knowing that we are not saved by works, we know that our faith will not save us. In fact, our faith was given to us by God. It's not something we mustered up on our own:

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. (Phillipians 1:29)

This is why we can say that faith is the result, not the cause, of our salvation:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (Galatians 5:22)

This will not work for the free-will doctrine because that doctrine needs to be able to instruct its followers to do something to get themselves saved. It acknowledges that being a kind person or living a moral life is work and therefore will not save someone, but it has to leave something on the table as an

action we can perform to get ourselves saved. It therefore tells people that if they believe in Christ and say a certain prayer and maybe get baptized, then they will be saved. However, those things are also commandments of God, so obeying them is also a work and will not save us.

We still ask ourselves, "Well, then what can I do to become saved?" That's just it, we can't do anything. When we have an accurate understanding of the true nature of salvation we can really understand how powerful the following statement is:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

We have to wait and hope that God will save us:

It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD. (Lamentations 3:26)

We learned in the last chapter that mankind was created as a physical body with a spirit essence that, when alive, identifies entirely with God and cannot sin. We also learned in that chapter that as a result of sin mankind became spiritually dead. The part of his being that could not sin died. However, when someone becomes saved, God brings this part of his being back to life:

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Ephesians 2:5)

And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13)

This is why the Bible indicates that if we keep His commandments it is a sign that we may have become saved:

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:3-4)

Being spiritually alive, we find ourselves being happier when we obey God. However, we still have our physical body which desires to sin. Therefore, there is a war that goes on inside a saved individual:

For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. (Galatians 5:17)

In the last chapter I mentioned that in this chapter we would discuss a possibility for why God didn't reveal the truth about hell until our day. We have seen that false doctrines serve as tests. The point of these tests is to determine if we are going to listen to the Bible alone, or if we also listen to our pastor or our family or our logic or our feelings and experiences. The tongues doctrine is one example. God could have clearly said in the Bible that He would no longer distribute the gift of tongues after the Bible was completed, but He did not do that in order to accommodate those who want to build for themselves a doctrine that satisfies their own desires.

In a way, the ultimate false doctrine is the free-will salvation doctrine. It has been around longer than any other popular false doctrine that we find in the churches of our day. God has allowed this false doctrine to spread in the churches. Isn't it interesting that a crucial part of the free-will doctrine is the idea that if we don't get ourselves saved we will spend eternity being tormented in a place called hell? Ultimately, those who hold this doctrine place some stock in their own ability to impact whether or not another person becomes saved as they witness to them. To that end, as they witness they need to have a threat they can use to scare people into listening. I, too, remember using hell as a reason to pray for salvation. If we were to just say, "You will cease to exist after death unless you become saved," the majority of people would respond with, "So? That's not so bad." The free-will doctrine needs the threat of hell, and God has accommodated it by not granting understanding of what happens to the unsaved after they die. However, now we are near the end of the world and it is time for God to reveal previously hidden truth to the believers willing to listen.

Furthermore, the doctrine of annihilation has historically been associated with false gospels. Perhaps God allowed these denominations to catch a glimpse of truth in order to serve as a test in our day. Many people will quickly dismiss the doctrine of annihilation simply because of its ties to false gospels. The test is, will we listen to the Bible, or will we allow our prejudices to prevent God from teaching us?

Christ Died for the Elect

Based on what we have learned so far, we may be wondering, "Well, then for whom did Christ die?" It is commonly taught today that Christ died for the sins of every single human being, and it's understandable that we would assume this if our salvation doctrine is based on free will. However, when we understand the true nature of salvation we see that Christ only paid for the sins of the elect. Let's take a look at this.

Christ died for many, but not all:

Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28)

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:28)

Christ died for His people:

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. (Ephesians 5:25)

(speaking here of the eternal church made up of all the true believers)

Christ died for His sheep:

As the Father knowest me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. (John 10:15)

I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (John 10:14)

Christ prays only for those whom the Father gave Him:

I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. (John 17:9-10)

There are those who will say that perhaps Christ died for all sins except the sin of rejecting Christ, the sin of not believing on Him. Therefore, those who end up in eternal death do so because of one sin. This idea contradicts the Bible, which teaches that the unsaved are judged for far more than one sin:

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (Matthew 12:36)

If we believe that Christ suffered for every single human being and paid for all of their sins except that of rejecting Christ, then we now have a gospel that is based on grace plus works. If the sin of rejecting Christ was not covered by His blood, then that means ultimately we are the ones who merit our salvation. We end up being the ones who chose God, which we've seen is not biblical.

Advocates of the Christ-died-for-all doctrine will point to First Timothy 2:6, which says, "Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." At first, this does seem to be a direct contradiction of Matthew 20:28, but when we read it in light of the rest of Scripture we should read it as "all of the elect," not "all of mankind." We learned about this in the last chapter where we saw that the word "all" is sometimes conditioned by the context of the passage in which it is found.

Some will argue that election cannot be a biblical doctrine because, "it just isn't fair." In fact, this issue of fairness is why most will reject the doctrine of election regardless of what the Bible says. We must remember that our finite minds cannot comprehend an infinite God who is wise in all ways. We have seen that God warns us against being wise in our own eyes (Isaiah 5:21; Proverbs 3:7). Any time we read something in the Bible and modify it to mesh with our logic we are being wise in our own eyes.

Jesus declared that no man could come to Him unless the Father draw him (John 6:44), so it would be convenient to be able to blame God for those who do not go to Heaven. After all, they wouldn't be destroyed if God had elected to save them. But you see, God's justice demands that the wages of sin is spiritual death (Romans 6:23), and so if God left the whole human race in its spiritual death to be destroyed along with the rest of the universe, then we couldn't fault Him for that. Now, the amazing thing is that in His sovereign grace He decided to save some of us, and that is His business. We are not to question it. There is a passage in Romans chapter 9 that addresses this issue of fairness:

As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated. What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid. For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I

will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? Nay but, O man, who are thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why has thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? (Romans 9:14-21)

God is claiming full authority and the right to do as He wishes. We can't blame Him and it is not for us to question His actions. Choosing to save some and not others does not make God unrighteous.

Can We Forfeit Our Salvation?

It is often taught today that we can lose our salvation. It is understandable that this doctrine exists with the free-will doctrine because if we believe we have gotten ourselves saved, then it would seem logical that we could do something to lose that salvation. Wonderfully, the Bible teaches that once we have become saved we are eternally secure in Christ. We will first look at the Bible's teaching on eternal security. Then we will look at the verses that are commonly offered as proof that we can lose our salvation and examine what they are really teaching.

The Bible teaches that when we become saved we are perfected forever:

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:14)

Those that are sanctified are the ones who were chosen to salvation from the beginning, the elect:

But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13)

Every sin that the sanctified elect have committed and ever will commit were paid for by Christ. Therefore, they no longer stand condemned:

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. (Romans 8:1)

We must be justified to become saved, and we are not justified by following the commandments of God:

Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:20)

Rather, we are justified by faith:

Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Romans 3:28)

Our faith is a gift from God:

who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began (2 Timothy 1:9)

God does not give faith to His elect and then take it away.

As soon as we are saved we are sealed with the Holy Spirit:

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. (Ephesians 1:13)

Once we are sealed we are sealed until the day of redemption:

And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)

A true believer is born again of an incorruptible seed:

Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. (1 Peter 1:23)

Since we are born again of an incorruptible seed, it should come as no surprise that our salvation is incorruptible and cannot fade away:

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. (1 Peter 1:4)

This is why we read that our inheritance is eternal:

And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:15)

All believers receive eternal life at the point of salvation:

He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

Some people will then ask, "Well, then why do we even bother with refraining from sin?" You see, if we are truly born again then we will no longer want to sin. We will have a constant desire to keep God's commandments.

Sadly, many are taught, "Now look, you're saved, but you'd better be careful. You'd better keep God's commandments because if you don't then you're going to lose that salvation." The Bible doesn't teach that. We keep the commandments of God because we love to keep them, not out of fear that we

might lose our salvation. When we understand that our salvation is entirely God's work, and when we understand that Christ had to specifically pay for the sins of the elect, it is easier to understand that our salvation is permanent. To lose our salvation would mean that God changed His mind and undid some of the work that was performed to pay for our sins.

We can easily get confused when we look at someone and assume they are a true believer because of the decent life we see them living. Then if we see them slide away from that moral lifestyle and slip back into a life filled with sin we might say, "Oh, he must have lost his salvation." There is a parable in Matthew 13:3-23 that tells us that individuals such as this did not lose their salvation, but rather they likely were never saved to begin with.

More than just what we see around us, the doctrine that we can forfeit our salvation is also accompanied by some verses that are frequently offered to support it, so let's take a look at those. After all, we have to examine our beliefs in light of the whole Bible. Let's first look at Hebrews 2:1:

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

When presented in its original English translation this verse does not actually cause much confusion. However, later translations have caused misunderstandings. The New American Standard translation reads, "For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it."

The true meaning of this verse isn't speaking directly of salvation. It is simply stating that we should keep studying the Word of God so that we will always be conscious of it and desire to follow it. If we put the Bible on a shelf and let it collect dust, then we will fail to grow spiritually and maybe even regress a little.

Let's look at another controversial verse, Hebrews 3:14, which seems to indicate that we need to keep a grasp on our confidence in Christ until the end or we will not be partakers of Christ:

For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

We have to read this verse in light of the rest of Scripture. God is not declaring what someone must do in order to remain saved. Rather, He is noting the mark of a true believer. He is saying that if we hold fast until the end, then that is indicative that we truly are saved:

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:13)

The next controversial passage we are going to look at is Hebrews 6:4-6:

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

We should pick up the context of this. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 are talking about national Israel, which was in the wilderness in the days of Moses. They were eating of the heavenly bread. They had repented, in the sense that they had left Egypt. They were partakers of the Holy Spirit in the sense that

God the Holy Spirit overshadowed them in the clouds in the day and a pillar of fire at night. They were enlightened in the sense that Moses was there teaching them about God's law. But we read in Hebrews 3:17-19 that most of them perished in the wilderness because of unbelief. Their knowledge, their enlightenment, and the fact that they were in the presence of the Holy Spirit benefited them in no way as far as their salvation was concerned because these things were not accompanied by faith.

And so today, if someone grows up under the hearing of God's Word, if someone grows up in the presence of true believers, and in the presence of God as He operates, he might be very familiar with the Bible. He might have God's salvation plan outlined perfectly. But none of these things will matter insofar as his salvation is concerned if they are not accompanied by faith.

Another controversial verse is Philippians 2:12, which states that we need to work out our salvation:

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

This verse should not be understood as, "Work so that you may keep your salvation," but rather, "Work so that you may show your salvation."

The final passage we will examine is Galatians 5:2-4, which speaks of falling from grace:

Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

The phrase that is often focused on is, "ye are fallen from grace." This is very similar to the phrase we find in Hebrews 12:15:

Look diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God...

The Greek word translated as "fail" is *hustereo*, which is translated in other parts of the Bible as "come short," "be behind," "lack," "be in want," and "suffer need." So the implication in Hebrews 12:15 is not that someone has lost his salvation, but rather that this person has come short of the grace of God. He was never saved to begin with.

The phrase in Galatians 5:4 is also to be understood this way. We can see this by picking up the context from the previous verses that are talking about those who are trying to be saved by works. Anyone who believes they can be saved by following God's law (and therefore making Christ of no use) has fallen short of the grace of God.

Verses Supporting Free Will?

Now that we have spent some time looking at many of the verses that map out God's salvation plan, we should take a moment to address the verses that are often pointed to in support of a free-will salvation program. After all, these verses are also part of God's Word and any doctrine we are going to hold as truth must be able to harmonize with the entire Bible.

The first passage we will look at is Joshua 24:14-15, which some people will use to support the idea that our salvation is based on a decision we made:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

It is the the statement, “choose you this day whom ye will serve,” that is often zeroed in on. But notice, where does the choice lie? Is it between God and some other god? No. This passage is acknowledging that when we aren’t saved we do have the option to follow this false gospel or that one. If we have no interest in Christ, we can choose to devote our life to our career by being a workaholic, or we can spend all of our time playing video games. However, it does not teach that we have free will in salvation.

The next verse we will look at is John 1:12, which seems to indicate that we are saved by receiving Christ:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:

When skimmed over, this verse does seem to imply that God is holding out the free gift of salvation and if we want it, all we have to do is go receive it.

There are two ways by which we can receive something: actively or passively. To illustrate this, suppose you are sitting in a chair on one side of a room. On the other side of the room is a table full of gifts. One way you could receive a gift is if you were to get up, walk over to the other side of the room, pick up a gift, and walk back to your seat. That would be an example of actively receiving a gift. However, suppose you remained seated in the chair and someone were to bring a gift from the table and set it in your lap. Then you have passively received that gift. You are the recipient of that gift based on no action of your own.

So with this in mind we turn elsewhere in the Bible to let Scripture interpret Scripture. How is it that we receive the gift of salvation? We discover that we receive this gift passively:

John answers and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven. (John 3:27)

In fact, John 1:12 is not even a complete thought. The second half of the sentence is located in verse 13, and when we put them together we get a clearer picture of this:

But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name, which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Our salvation is not based on our will but on God’s.

The next verse we are going to look at is Second Peter 1:10, which is sometimes offered to support the teaching that our actions play a role in our salvation:

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fail.

This is similar to the statement we find in Second Corinthians 3:5: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith.” God is telling us to not take our salvation for granted. It is tempting to trust our feelings, but we can’t assume we are saved just because we felt spiritual at some point. Our feelings can be misleading. God gives us principles to help us know if we really are saved:

He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4)

Next, let’s take a look at Second Peter 3:9, which some will argue indicates that salvation is possible for every person:

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Second Peter chapter 3 is dealing with the ungodliness of the world in the last days (2 Peter 3:3). God is writing here to the brethren, that is, the elect. As the world dives deeper and deeper into sin it will displease God more and more. God will, in a sense, be suffering. God, being Absolute Ruler, could just end the world so He would no longer have to witness His creation plunge further into rebellion against Him. However, if He were to do this, then there would be certain individuals whom God had planned to save that would not be able to come to repentance if the world were to end sooner than God originally planned. This would frustrate God’s election program and He would lose some of His elect.

God is not going to allow that to happen. He is going to suffer the anguish of watching mankind follow Satan, and we are told He is enduring this for the sake of the elect because He is not willing that any of them should perish. That is how much God loves us.

Another verse some will use to support the teaching that every person has the opportunity to become saved is First Timothy 2:4:

Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.

As we learned earlier, the “all” in First Timothy 2:4 is conditioned by the context and is referring to all of His elect. Incidentally, when God wishes that all men would be saved we must also understand that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezekiel 18:32), but this does not mean that He has made provision for every single human being so that everyone can be saved.

The last verse we will look at is Revelation 3:20, which is very frequently offered in support of the free-will doctrine:

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

This verse is not teaching that Christ has done all that He can and now it’s just up to us to accept Him. The verse says, “If any man hears my voice,” and if we pick up the context of the passage we will read in verse 22, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.”

You see, the only ones who can hear His voice are those who have been given ears to hear. The Gospel call goes out, but only those with spiritual ears to hear will respond.

The Age of Accountability

There is a doctrine commonly taught today stating that a baby is innocent of sin until a certain age, meaning that if that baby dies before reaching that age then he or she will go to Heaven. Of course, we'd like to believe this because it makes us feel better about any dearly loved child we may have lost. Also, if we are going to believe that our salvation is based on something we have to do in order to complete it, then of course we need to come up with an answer for the question, "What if someone dies before they are old enough to make that decision?" Most churches in our day have adopted the "Age of Accountability" doctrine to answer that question. However, this doctrine doesn't square with the Bible. Sure, our logic will tell us, "Babies don't know any better," but we have to place our logic aside and let God's Word be our source of truth, even when we don't like what it has to say.

First of all, the Bible does not teach that babies are innocent of sin. Actually, it teaches the opposite:

The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent: they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear. (Psalm 58:3-4)

This is ugly language, but these are God's words. When we look at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah we read that, with the exception of Lot's family, there was none righteous in those cities. This means they were all unrighteous, and the unrighteous do not enter into Heaven:

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?... (1 Corinthians 6:9)

Everyone that died in the destruction of those cities, including the babies, did not end up in Heaven.

Likewise, God destroyed the entire world with a flood and the only people who were spared were Noah and his family. The babies in the world were destroyed along with everyone else, and there is no indication that they went to Heaven.

Consider this: if all babies that die end up in Heaven, then it must follow that all babies are saved. It must also follow that we can lose our salvation because not all adults are saved. This contradicts the Bible's teaching that we cannot lose our salvation.

It is only when we understand that God does all the work of saving someone and that we have no control over it whatsoever that we can easily understand that a person's age is irrelevant when it comes to salvation. Remember, God saved John when he was born:

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. (Luke 1:15)

God can save someone the moment they are born or the moment before they die. God can save the greatest genius in the world and He can save someone who is mentally incapable of forming a thought. This is all possible because God's decision about whom He elected had nothing to do with anything those individuals did or didn't do, could or couldn't do. God is not a respecter of persons:

Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34)

In other words, no one person is any more likely to have been chosen than another.

How Are We to Witness?

When we look at all of this we might ask, “Well, why should I even bother sharing the Gospel if the elect are already determined?” We are tools in God’s salvation plan, so we should know how it is that we are being used. If we believe that it is our job to convince someone of the truth, then our job is complicated and stressful. If that person doesn’t believe, then we blame ourselves: “Oh, if only I had said it this way or that way then maybe they would have understood better, and maybe I could have convinced them they need Jesus.” By that token, we are placing a lot of weight on ourselves and, consequently, a lot of credit. This is not how we are to view our role as witnesses.

When we understand the true nature of salvation we know that it is God who draws a person, brings that person to repentance, causes that person to approach God, and causes him or her to have a strong desire to be obedient.

Since all of this is God’s work, how does God use us as witnesses? Well, we provide instruction on how to respond to what the Holy Spirit is doing inside someone. When God draws someone, that person begins to feel uneasy about his or her sins. Questions will develop in that person’s mind. Our job is to inform this individual of the Gospel because it is through the hearing of the Gospel that God saves people. That is how God designed His salvation program, and we are the vehicle God uses to bring the Gospel to others.

When we share the Gospel we must be absolutely honest. Many today want to create a climate of pleasantries and happiness by only presenting the attractive things about the Gospel, but the Bible doesn’t come on that way. The Bible has ugly things to say.

So, as we’re being honest with someone we need to first tell that person where he or she stands with God. People should be told what they are being saved from. Many people witness by saying, “God loves you and has a plan for you,” but that isn’t salvation at all. Salvation is to be saved from eternal death. We must recognize the awful truth that we are spiritually dead and will not get to experience eternal life with Christ. We’re in rebellion against God and we’re going to be destroyed forever. But now we hear that God has something wonderful to say to us. God made provision for those He planned to save and maybe we are one of the elect. We need to start reading the Bible so we can be exposed to His Word because it is through the Gospel that God saves people.

10

CHAPTER

Divorce for Adultery

In order to more readily understand the nature of and rules regarding earthly marriage, it is important to understand what the Bible has to say about spiritual marriage. God clearly indicates that the marriage between two humans is a picture of a spiritual marriage:

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:28-32)

The Bible speaks of God being married to the nation of Israel in the Old Testament:

Turn, O backsliding children, saith the LORD; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion (Jeremiah 3:14)

For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called. (Isaiah 54:5)

Israel, as the wife, committed spiritual adultery by sinning against God:

Surely as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 3:20)

How shall I pardon thee for this? thy children have forsaken me, and sworn by them that are no gods: when I had fed them to the full, they then committed adultery, and assembled themselves by troops in the harlots' houses. (Jeremiah 5:7)

Thou hast also committed fornication with the Egyptians thy neighbours, great of flesh; and hast increased thy whoredoms, to provoke me to anger. (Ezekiel 16:26)

The law of God originally stated that if a husband were to find his wife committing adultery, then she was to be put to death:

And the man that committeth adultery with another man's wife, even he that committeth adultery with his neighbour's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death. (Leviticus 20:10)

But God couldn't destroy the nation of Israel because His salvation program required that Christ come from the bloodline of Israel. Therefore, God employed a new law allowing a husband to divorce his wife if she committed adultery:

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house. (Deuteronomy 24:1)

Note that this law did not allow the wife to divorce the husband. In fact, nowhere in the Bible do we find anything that says a wife was able to divorce her husband for any reason. Israel could not divorce God. This law was instituted so that God could divorce Israel. God did in fact divorce the nation of Israel:

And I saw, when for all the causes whereby backsliding Israel committed adultery I had put her away, and given her a bill of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. (Jeremiah 3:8)

A new spiritual marriage came into view in the New Testament. To understand this, we must first understand that, by nature, every human being is spiritually married to the law of God:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Romans 7:4)

The Bible indicates that the law has dominion over mankind:

Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? (Romans 7:1)

This is because, spiritually speaking, the law is the husband of mankind and the husband is the head of the wife:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. (Ephesians 5:22-23)

The Bible also speaks of this as mankind being "under the law":

But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. (Galatians 3:23)

We will see that God no longer permits divorce for any reason, not even for adultery. Death is the only thing that can end a marriage:

For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. (Romans 7:2)

In order for us to be spiritually married to another, death must enter our current marriage to the law:

So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. (Romans 7:3)

The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord. (1 Corinthians 7:39)

It is through Christ that we can be viewed as having died so that our previous spiritual marriage to the law comes to an end:

Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. (Romans 7:4)

The believers have died in the sense that through Christ they have endured eternal death for their sins. Even though Christ actually made the payment, the Bible speaks of it as if the believers were there with Him making the payment for sin:

Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him (Romans 6:8)

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead (2 Corinthians 5:14)

Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances (Colossians 2:20)

For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

When we become saved we become the bride of Christ:

For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. (Revelation 19:7)

The Bible also speaks of this as no longer being under the law, but now being under grace:

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Romans 6:14)

But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. (Galatians 5:18)

The Old Testament law which allowed divorce for adultery no longer stands and God obligates Himself to follow His own law. This is a wonderful truth because it means that Christ cannot divorce a saved individual because of sin (spiritual adultery). Death is the only thing that can end a marriage, but once we become saved we receive eternal life so we will never die. Of course, neither will Christ ever die. In other words, the marriage between Christ and the true believer will never come to an end. This ties back into the fact that we cannot lose our salvation.

I mentioned that divorce is no longer permitted for adultery. I realize this statement does not align with what most churches teach today, so let's back up a minute and examine this issue. Originally, divorce was not permitted for any reason:

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. (Matthew 19:8)

We saw that God then employed a law allowing a husband to divorce his wife under only one circumstance: if she committed adultery. He did this so that He could divorce the nation of Israel for committing spiritual adultery. God later rescinded this law so that it is now no longer permissible to divorce our spouses for any reason.

The churches have come up with their lists of what they believe are biblical reasons to get divorced, but these excuses don't come from the Bible. Let's examine some passages that speak to the issue of divorce and develop a biblical understanding of God's view on the matter.

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

We will first look at Deuteronomy 24:1-4, beginning with verse 1:

When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

The uncleanness in view here is adultery. However, the Israelites would use the phrase "some uncleanness" to justify divorce for almost any reason such as menstrual blood. With the intimacy of marriage, it was inevitable that the husband would eventually see this kind of uncleanness in his wife, therefore every husband had an excuse to divorce his wife whenever he felt like it. However, when we study the Hebrew words the phrase "some uncleanness" are translated from we learn that God is focusing directly on adultery. When understood properly, that was the only cause for biblical divorce.

Moving on to verse 2:

And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

The word “may” is not in the Hebrew text. When the translators added it, they caused this verse to appear to teach something that it does not. It appears to be condoning the act of remarrying while the former spouse is still living, but when we remove the word “may” we see that it isn’t teaching that at all.

Then we come to verses 3 and 4, which speak of this second marriage coming to an end and bring up the issue of remarrying:

And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife; Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Elsewhere in the Bible we learn that it is permissible for a wife to be reconciled to her former husband as long as neither spouse married another person after their divorce (1 Corinthians 7:11). This passage here in Deuteronomy is reminding us that if one of the spouses has remarried since their divorce, then it is no longer permissible for them to be remarried because that would be adultery.

Matthew 19:3-10

Next, we will look at Matthew 19:3-10 because a verse in this passage is the most commonly offered verse in support of divorce for adultery. Remember, the Israelites used Deuteronomy 24:1 to justify divorcing their wives for almost any reason at any time and this passage begins in verse 3 by bringing up this fact:

The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

Jesus responded in verses 4-6 by saying that, originally, there was not to be divorce for any reason whatsoever:

And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

The Pharisees then thought they had caught Jesus making an error. They responded in verse 7 by pointing out that God did in fact allow divorce:

They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?

Jesus responded in verse 8 by telling them that law was only instituted because of the hardness of their hearts:

He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so.

Jesus wasn't saying, "You refused to forgive your wives so God allowed you to divorce them." That wasn't what Jesus meant when He said the law was employed because of the hardness of their hearts. What He meant was that God employed it because of their continued spiritual adultery so that He could divorce them. As stated in the above verse, prior to this law's arrival, divorce was not permissible for any reason.

Then we arrive at verse 9, a verse commonly misused today:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.

This verse is not teaching that fornication is an acceptable cause for divorce. When properly read in context it should be understood as saying, "In the previous verses we've already established that fornication is not an acceptable cause for divorce. Furthermore, it is not permissible to divorce your wife for any other reason either." This is why it is so important to understand the nature of and the rules that govern the spiritual marriage between Christ and the believers. When we understand that, we recognize how impossible it would be for divorce to be permissible. Otherwise, we would lose our salvation because believers continue to be sinners even after they become saved.

This verse is misinterpreted today, but the Pharisees knew exactly what Jesus meant when He said this. This was shocking news to them, that divorce is not permissible for any reason whatsoever. They responded in verse 10 by saying that if this is the case, then it's better to just not marry at all:

His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.

First Corinthians 7:15

Another commonly misunderstood verse is First Corinthians 7:15. Many think it is suggesting that there are situations where God's law permits remarriage:

But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace. (1 Corinthians 7:15)

When someone uses the above verse to suggest that remarriage is permissible, they typically reference First Corinthians 7:27 to show that the "bondage" in view in the above verse is a reference to the bondage of marriage:

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. (1 Corinthians 7:27)

In other words, they say that if an unbelieving spouse insists on a divorce, then the believing spouse is no longer married to that person in God's eyes so they are free to remarry.

However, the Greek word translated “under bondage” in First Corinthians 7:15 is not the same Greek word translated “bound” in First Corinthians 7:27. In First Corinthians 7:15, it is the Greek word *douloo*, which identifies with being a servant. It is commonly used in the Bible in reference to the believer as a servant of Christ. The word is never used in reference to the marriage relationship. In First Corinthians 7:27, the word “bound” is translated from the Greek word *deo*, which is usually translated as “bind” or “tie” in the Bible. It’s a word that has to do with something being joined with another thing through binding or tying together.

When God says in First Corinthians 7:15 that the believing spouse is not under bondage (*duoloo*) in the situation when the unbelieving spouse insists on a divorce, He is not saying that they are no longer bound (*deo*) to each other. As the verse states, as believers we are called to peace. As servants of Christ we are to keep the law of God. His law states that we are not to get divorced. However, we are also called to peace, which is difficult to maintain when the unbelieving spouse wants to fight over getting a divorce. When faced with this situation where it seems like it is inevitable that one of God’s laws will be broken, we are still called to peace. We are to allow the unbelieving spouse to divorce us. In that sense, we are not under bondage; that is, we are not guilty of failing in our role as a servant of Christ. This, however, does not mean we are free to remarry.

Suppose we got a divorce before we had become saved, before we knew or cared about God’s laws concerning marriage. Or suppose our divorce took place after we became saved because our spouse insisted on a divorce and there was nothing more we could do to prevent it. Or suppose we willingly got a divorce even though we knew God’s law prohibited it. Whatever the situation, suppose we find ourselves currently divorced. Now what? God’s law demands that we are not to marry another individual:

And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery. (Mark 10:11-12)

Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery. (Luke 16:18)

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. (1 Corinthians 7:27)

The only exception to this rule is if our former spouse is no longer living. Only then can we marry another individual. However, if our former spouse is still alive there is nothing in the Bible that permits us to marry another person. Doing so would be rebellion against God’s law.

The question may be raised, “What if I want to remarry my previous spouse?” We already saw in Deuteronomy 24:4 that God’s law does not permit a divorced individual to remarry the previous spouse if either of the individuals married another person after the divorce. This is reiterated in Jeremiah 3:1:

They say, If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man’s, shall he return unto her again? shall not that land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 3:1)

But the Bible does permit the remarriage of the divorced couple if neither individual married another person after the divorce:

But and if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband: and let not the husband put away his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:11)

Suppose we got a divorce and then married someone else while our former spouse was still living, and now we learn that we were in rebellion against God by doing so. What now? Should we divorce our current spouse and go back to our previous spouse? No, if we find ourselves in this situation, then we are to remain married to our current spouse. We have all done horrible things before we were saved and we look back on those actions and realize how rebellious they were. However, if we are saved, then those sins have been covered by Christ. We can't do anything about the mistakes of the past. If we were then to divorce our current spouse we would knowingly be committing sin. There are believers around the world that have all kinds of sins in their past, but the difference is that now they walk in obedience to God.

Man's Logic Has Become our Guide

All of what we are learning in this chapter largely goes against what churches are teaching their congregations today. Sadly, mankind has almost completely destroyed the marriage institution.

As humans, we have decided that we are entitled to certain feelings or experiences in marriage and if we don't get them, then we should be allowed to get a divorce. If our spouse commits adultery or is abusive or irresponsible or unloving, we should be able to find a new mate. We think that we should not have to endure such conditions.

The problem is that we are creating our own rules based on our imperfect logic rather than listening to God's law. We are trying to reason with God when we modify His law to suit our desires.

Christ is the role model for the kind of love husbands are supposed to have for their wives:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:25)

Even after we become saved we continue to sin. Does Christ abandon us? No, He forgives us time and time again. He is patient with us beyond measure. He remains with us, encouraging us through His Word. He has laid down His life for us. No matter what we do or say, He will never leave us:

Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)

That is how a husband is to love his wife. When she behaves in a way that hurts him, he is not to resent her and wish he had married someone else. He is certainly not to divorce her. He is to forgive her, as many times as she wrongs him. He is to be patient with her. He is to remain there for her and encourage her and sincerely desire the best for her. No matter what she does or says, he is never to abandon her.

Granted, we are human and it is an impossible order for a husband to be perfect like Christ. However, Christ's behavior is our guide. In the heat of the moment, we are going to make mistakes from time to time, but we are not to leave our wives. We are not to resent them:

Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them. (Colossians 3:19)

The Bible gives guidelines for how wives are to behave as well. They are to submit to their husbands:

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. (Ephesians 5:22)

Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. (Ephesians 5:24)

Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord. (Colossians 3:18)

We say, "That's all fine and well as long as my husband is a loving man who treats me with respect, but what if he mistreats me?" God addresses this in First Peter chapters 2 and 3. God begins by indicating that servants who are mistreated by their masters are still expected to submit to their masters. God uses the example of Christ who was greatly mistreated, but did not retaliate:

Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously (1 Peter 2:18-23)

God then follows this up by relating it to marriage:

Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives (1 Peter 3:1)

In other words, even if the husband is an unloving, cruel man the wife is commanded to continue to submit to him. She should continue to love him and behave accordingly. The situation is similar to that which was described in the role of the husband. She should not resent him or wish she had married someone else, and she certainly should not seek to divorce him.

In our imperfect logic, we say, "If he is constantly on drugs and beating her, then come on. Certainly she should be able to divorce him under those extreme circumstances." However, that's not what the Bible teaches. We can't rewrite the law of God to better suit our logic. Again, this is why it is so important to understand the spiritual marriage between Christ and the believers. He will not leave or divorce his wife (the believers), no matter how many times she may sin against Him.

11

CHAPTER

Female Pastors

It has become commonplace in our day for churches to allow women to be pastors. According to a study done in the mid-1990s, 12% of churches in the United States have a female pastor.¹ In fact, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the number of female pastors in the United States increased by 896%.² Given that drastic increase, the percentage of female pastors today is likely higher than 12%. God's Word does not permit this and, in fact, His Word forbids it.

This is another very sensitive topic. Many people in the churches today become immediately offended if it is even suggested that the Bible does not permit women to be pastors of a congregation. From a human perspective, this reaction is understandable considering women have faced a long battle against sexism in society. However, we must be careful to not let political and social views mold our understanding of spiritual law.

When believers gather together women are not allowed to teach:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

This doesn't mean a woman could not be a Sunday School teacher. There is no indication in the Bible that women are not allowed to teach a group of children. There also is no indication in the Bible that women cannot teach a group of women in a Bible study, but if there are men present then that study must be led by a man.

Additionally, as stated in First Timothy 2:12, women are not to hold a position of spiritual authority over men. This means that they cannot be elders or deacons in a church. As First Timothy chapter 3 states, these positions are reserved for men. This, of course, is simply because if a woman were to hold such a position, then she would have authority over the men in the congregation and that would be a violation of First Timothy 2:12.

When we understand the chain of command God has instituted, then we can see why God has said women cannot hold positions of spiritual authority over men. We read in First Corinthians 11:3 that the spiritual chain of command goes like this: God -> Christ -> Men -> Women:

1 http://hrr.hartsem.edu/research/quick_question3.html

2 <http://www.religioustolerance.org/femclrg4.htm>

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

These are God's words, not mine. Now, we can say, "But that doesn't make sense. It seems like God is being unfair and playing favorites," but if we do that, then we are questioning God. We must remember that God is infinitely wise. Our own ideas and logic are tainted with sin. This is why we are warned against being wise in our own eyes (Proverbs 3:7; Isaiah 5:21). Remember, when we alter the law of God to better fit with what we think is reasonable then we are being wise in our own eyes.

In our finite minds, living in a time when women are viewed equally with men, we find this rule to be unacceptable. However, it is important to note that the rule relates to spiritual authority. This doesn't mean that women can't be college professors or law enforcers or the President of the United States. Those are not positions of spiritual authority. God's rule in this matter does not condemn the social and political accomplishments of our country. The problem is that we have allowed our country's social evolution to alter the law of God in spiritual matters.

Outside of the church, this does not mean women cannot witness. It is just as acceptable for a woman to be a witness as it is a man. We read about Anna who was a prophetess (Luke 2:36). She was a witness for the Lord, but she wasn't a priest. She didn't have any spiritual authority over men. Likewise, both Miriam (Exodus 15:20) and Deborah (Judges 4:4) were female prophets.

It's perfectly fine for women today to witness to their neighbors or be missionaries. However, when believers gather together the Bible says that a woman is not to have authority or teach.

The question we have to ask ourselves is, "If I read a commandment in the Bible, what is going to be my attitude toward it? Am I going to obey it or am I going to rationalize it and try to find a way around it?" People do this all the time. They want to follow a particular practice and so they struggle with the Word of God. They read something into it that isn't there because they want to continue in their course of action so they must find a way to justify it.

So in our day there are those who say, "Well, this particular commandment is not meant for us today. It's a culture thing. Back then women were not viewed as equals with men, so God laid down this law in order to keep order in the church. But it doesn't apply to us today because society doesn't view women the same way anymore."

Okay, if that's going to be our logic, then we can just throw it out, right? Revelation 22:18 won't let us remove it from the Bible so we'll just leave it there and let it be idle. When we're reading the Bible we can kind of just glance over it because it doesn't apply to us today. Really, we can just ignore it.

All right, let's assume that to be true for a moment. Following that logic, the conversation that Christ had with Nicodemus in John chapter 3 can be ignored because it wasn't being said to us. We can also glance over the entire book of Romans because it was written to the church at Rome, not us. We can do the same thing with the letters to the church in Corinth and the Thessalonian letters. Do you see where this is going? Pretty soon we're not going to have a Bible.

Everything in the Bible is applicable to us today:

All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16)

However, we have to read the whole Bible because sometimes God modifies His law. For example, the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament were completed in Christ so we are not to observe them any longer. Nothing in the Bible modifies the law concerning a woman's spiritual authority over a man and therefore it still stands. Mankind may have modified it, but that is irrelevant.

12

CHAPTER

The Book of Jeremiah

We learned in chapter 3 that the Old Testament is not just a compilation of stories aimed at providing us with historical facts. Those stories are in the Bible because they are filled with spiritual truth we need to prayerfully seek out.

On the surface, the book of Jeremiah is addressing Judah, but when we examine it carefully we learn that its primary focus is on us today. God is merely using the setting of the situation in Judah to make a point to us today. We will discuss a few of the more direct proofs below, but the more we study the book of Jeremiah and compare Scripture with Scripture, the more we discover that it is constantly pointing to the situation in which we are currently living.

Let's take a quick look at this because it will be helpful to understand this as we progress through our study in this book.

Proof 1: The Latter Rain

God refers to the Latter Rain in Jeremiah chapter 3:

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore's forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. (Jeremiah 3:3)

Everywhere else in the Bible where we find the phrase "latter rain" it refers to the period of spiritual rain that takes place during the Great Tribulation. Its presence here indicates that God is addressing us today. We will learn more about the Latter Rain in subsequent chapters.

Proof 2: Their Love

In Jeremiah chapter 2, God makes reference to the love the Israelites had for Him:

Go and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. (Jeremiah 2:2)

Is God really referring to ancient Jerusalem in this verse? Everywhere else in the Bible we find that God had only negative things to say about the Israelites while they were in the wilderness. However, we do find positive statements about the New Testament church in its infancy:

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. (Revelation 2:19)

This lines up with Jeremiah 2:2. The New Testament church is also spoken of as being in the wilderness in Revelation chapter 12. The phrase “in a land that was not sown” is a reference to a time when the Gospel had not yet gone out into the world, so it is a reference to a time early on when the New Testament church began. This is exactly the time when God was speaking to the seven churches in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 and had those beautiful kinds of things to say about the church.

Proof 3: Flee Babylon

We find a command for God’s people to flee Babylon in Jeremiah chapter 51:

Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD’s vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence. (Jeremiah 51:6)

This parallels Revelation 18:4 where God commands the believers to flee spiritual Babylon, which we will learn in a later chapter is a reference to the churches during the Great Tribulation.

Proof 4: All the Nations

In chapter 25, God speaks of bringing judgment upon all the nations by the use of Babylon:

Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations. (Jeremiah 25:9)

However, God did not bring all the nations under the authority of Babylon back then. God indicated that “all these nations” would serve Babylon for 70 years:

And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. (Jeremiah 25:10)

It is historically true that Judah served Babylon 70 years, but here God said “all these nations” would serve. To what large group of nations is God referring? Historically, this verse doesn’t seem to line up with what actually happened.

God said that all the nations would drink from the cup of His wrath:

For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them. Then took I the cup at the LORD’s hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me (Jeremiah 25:15-17)

Once again, not all the nations of the world came under destruction in that day. If there is any doubt that by “all the nations” God is referring to the entire world verse 26 clears that up for us:

And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them. (Jeremiah 25:26)

Jeremiah chapter 25 is not primarily referring to the destruction of Judah. It is using that historic event to primarily focus on the Great Tribulation when all churches worldwide are coming under spiritual destruction. I know this sounds impossible, especially since, superficially, the church organization as a whole appears to be thriving. We will carefully examine this in later chapters.

Proof 5: The Noble Vine

In Jeremiah chapter 2 God speaks of the fact that He planted a noble vine:

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me? (Jeremiah 2:21)

The vine is Christ:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)

Recall that when God speaks of the vineyard being in the hands of the New Testament church He says that within it He planted the choicest vine:

And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. (Isaiah 5:2)

Christ having already been planted in Jeremiah 2:21 indicates that the focus is on the New Testament era.

Proof 6: A Woman in Travail

We will learn that Christ’s coming will come as a surprise to most people. We read that sudden destruction will come as travail upon a woman with child:

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:2-3)

We find very similar language with similar context in Jeremiah chapter 13:

What wilt thou say when he shall punish thee? for thou hast taught them to be captains, and as chief over thee: shall not sorrows take thee, as a woman in travail? And if thou say in thine heart, Wherefore come these things upon me? For the greatness of thine iniquity are thy skirts discovered, and thy heels made bare. (Jeremiah 13:21-22)

We find another similar passage in Jeremiah chapter 6:

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side. (Jeremiah 6:22-25)

Israel = Judah = Jerusalem

God sometimes uses the words “Israel,” “Judah,” and “Jerusalem” when referring to the church. We have to examine the context of the passage to determine which church is in view: the earthly organization or the eternal church made up of only true believers. This is a key study point that we will refer back to throughout the rest of this book so let’s take a moment to develop this truth.

First, we must recognize that God often uses the terms “Israel,” “Jerusalem,” and “Judah” interchangeably. God refers to the vineyard as the house of Israel:

For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (Isaiah 5:7)

But He also refers to it as the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel, so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem. (Ezekiel 15:6)

God indicated that He would cause the rain to stop on the vineyard, which He refers to as the house of Israel in the following passage:

And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briars and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry. (Isaiah 5:6-7)

Elsewhere, we find this prophecy coming to pass in Judah:

Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came

to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. (Jeremiah 14:2-4)

Notice in the above passage we also find God using “Judah” and “Jerusalem” interchangeably.

God indicated that He would break down the wall of the vineyard and that the vineyard would be trodden down, which above we found to be the house of Israel:

And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down (Isaiah 5:5)

Elsewhere, we learn that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down:

And they burnt the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burnt all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof. (2 Chronicles 36:19)

We also read about Jerusalem being trodden down:

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. (Luke 21:24)

The point being illustrated with all of this is that when it comes to the spiritual meaning of a passage the terms “Israel,” “Jerusalem,” and “Judah” are synonyms. Now let’s establish that these synonyms spiritually represent the church.

The nation of Israel was a picture of the true believers. God rescued them from captivity in Egypt and brought them safely into the Promised Land. This foreshadowed the liberty that is brought to the true believers who God rescues from the bondage of sin as He brings them safely into His Kingdom:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

We read that Israel will be redeemed from all its sins:

And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities. (Psalm 130:8)

We know that most of those in national Israel were not saved and therefore not redeemed. The only group we could say is entirely redeemed from all its sins is the body of true believers. Likewise, we read that all of Israel will be saved:

And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob (Romans 11:26)

But again, we know that not every person in national Israel was saved. God distinguishes between two different Israels:

Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed. (Romans 9:6-8)

God refers to this spiritual Israel as the Israel of God:

And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:16)

As citizens of the Israel of God, believers are spiritually referred to as Jews:

For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. (Romans 2:28-29)

And of course the Israel of God has Christ as its King and Governor:

Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe. And they that were crucified with him reviled him. (Mark 15:32)

And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. (Matthew 2:6)

Christ came to seek the lost sheep of Israel:

But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (Matthew 15:24)

The sheep are those who belong to Christ; they are the believers:

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27)

Therefore, in the phrase “sheep of Israel” the Israel in view is spiritual Israel.

God also uses the label “Jerusalem” when referring to the spiritual kingdom that is made up of all of the true believers:

But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. (Galatians 4:26)

But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels (Hebrews 12:22)

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:12)

The true believers make up the eternal church of God. However, sometimes God uses the terms “Israel,” “Jerusalem,” and “Judah” to refer to the New Testament church:

Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah (Jeremiah 31:31)

The nation of Israel ceased to be the earthly representation of God’s people at the cross. This role was transferred to the New Testament church referred to here as the house of Israel. We will see other examples of this as we progress in our study.

The important thing to keep in mind is that the Old Testament is not virtually irrelevant to us today as most of us have been taught. Many chapters in the Old Testament are speaking about ancient Israel but contain a hidden message to us today.

13

CHAPTER

The Falling Away

The Bible predicted that the church would stray from teaching truth:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (2 Timothy 4:3-4)

Notice that the warning states that the church will raise up teachers who teach doctrines that are faithful to what man wants, not necessarily what is actually true. Every church claims that the Bible is at least part of its authority; most claim it is their ultimate authority, but churches everywhere are filled with doctrines that are not biblical. The Bible calls this the “falling away”:

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 (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

We are seeing this in our day. Churches everywhere have strayed from the truth. This does not mean that necessarily every member of the church has strayed from the truth. Some people attend a church and tolerate doctrines they know aren't biblically accurate. Consider the churches' teachings on the following topics:

Salvation:

Though this didn't used to be the case, almost every church now teaches the free-will doctrine, which we know from the Bible isn't accurate.

Tongues:

Many churches allow or even encourage the use of tongues. Not long ago this interest was limited to a small percentage of churches, but we have seen its popularity increase drastically in our day. Even most of those who don't engage in it refrain from speaking out against it. However, we know from the Bible that the tongues we see today are not from God.

According to a study done in 2000, 17% of all churches indicate that speaking in tongues is a normal part of their worship service.¹ This statistic is from more than seven years ago and, given tongues' increasing popularity, we can probably assume that the number is even higher today. Speaking in tongues is most commonly associated with the Pentecostal denomination, which began in 1901. According to the 2008 World Almanac, the Pentecostal denomination is now the largest denomination

1 http://hrr.hartsem.edu/org/faith_megachurches_FACTsummary.html

behind Catholic, Baptist, and Methodist. Over 11.4 million people in the United States are members of a Pentecostal church. That's one out of every 25 people. The Pentecostal denomination is growing faster than any other and grew 245% from 1989 to 2004.² The World Almanac has this to say about pentecostalism: "Once confined to lower class holy rollers, pentecostalism now appears in mainline churches and has established middle-class congregations." (Page 719)

There are also non-Pentecostal denominations that engage in tongues-speaking. When those are factored in, 26% of all professing Christians in the United States say they are a charismatic Christian, which typically means they are identifying themselves as someone who supports the use of tongues-speaking.³

Divorce:

Most churches tolerate divorce in our day. Beyond that, they even perform marriages for couples where one or both of the individuals have been divorced. According to a recent study, 27% of all professing Christians have been divorced.⁴ In fact, the divorce rate among professing Christians is actually higher than that among non-Christians.⁵ Another study indicates that 30% of all Presbyterian pastors have themselves been divorced.⁶ The study did not contain statistics of other denominations, but the Presbyterian denomination would certainly not be held as an abnormally liberal one. In fact, it is generally considered one of the more conservative denominations.

Sunday Sabbath:

Sunday has been the Sabbath day ever since Christ's resurrection, but an increasing number of people are observing Saturday as the Sabbath. The denomination most commonly associated with the Saturday Sabbath doctrine is The Seventh-Day Adventist, which began with 3,500 members in 1863. It took the denomination 117 years to grow in membership to 3.5 million in 1980. However, in the 24 years that followed, its membership quadrupled to 14 million in 2004.⁷ Clearly, in the past 30 years there has been a sudden and drastic increase in this false doctrine's following. Furthermore, many other denominations are offering Saturday services for those who choose to not attend on Sunday.

Homosexuality:

According to the recent Presbyterian study, 46% of Presbyterian pastors believe that sexually active gay persons should be allowed to be ministers.⁸ Again, the Presbyterian denomination would be classified by most Christians as one of the more conservative denominations, and so the study's findings are probably indicative of a growing problem throughout the Christian community. Additionally, surveys reveal that 27% of churchgoers believe homosexual church members should be allowed to be pastors.⁹

Female Pastors:

According to a study done in the mid-1990s, 12% of churches in the United States at that time had a female pastor.¹⁰ In fact, from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the number of female pastors in the

2 http://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_997.asp

3 <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=34>

4 <http://www.josh.org/notes/file/Internet8-Divorce.pdf>

5 <http://www.christianitytoday.com/mp/7m2/7m2046.html>

6 <http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/summaries/bkg-2006-2008-summary.pdf>

7 http://open-encyclopedia.com/Seventh-day_Adventist

8 <http://www.pcusa.org/research/panel/summaries/bkg-2006-2008-summary.pdf>

9 http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/current_events/general_current_events/churchgoers_disapprove_of_gay_and_lesbian_pastors

10 http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/quick_question3.html

United States increased by 896%.¹¹ Given that drastic increase, the percentage of female pastors today is likely higher than 12%. Currently, 20% of the pastors in some mainline denominations are female and in some Protestant seminaries over 50% of the people enrolled are female.¹²

Bible Literacy/Acceptance:

Below are some alarming statistics in addition to what we've examined above:

- 52% of professing Christians do not believe in the existence of Satan.¹³
- 12% of professing Christians believe the Bible is *not* entirely accurate.¹⁴
- 38% of professing Christians have not done any Bible reading in the last week.¹⁴
- 81% of professing Christians believe "God helps those who help themselves" is a Bible verse.¹⁵ (It's actually a Ben Franklin quote.)

We learned in the last chapter that the book of Jeremiah is primarily focused on the situation in the churches today. God is asking the church, "What sin have you found in Me?":

Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? (Jeremiah 2:5)

We read this, shake our heads, and say, "Oh, those wicked Israelites. If only they had listened to God." However, the Book of Jeremiah is written to the New Testament church today. God just hadn't revealed that fact to us until recently.

God has declared there is not to be divorce, but the church is saying, "God, You are not being reasonable. Here is this woman who is married to a selfish, unloving husband who treats her with nothing but disrespect, and she has to stay married to him? Your rules on divorce are too strict." Predestination is the salvation plan of the Bible, but the church has effectively said, "God, Your salvation plan is unfair so we have created our own." God has clearly indicated that there are not to be female pastors but the church has said, "God, You are discriminating against women."

When God says, "What iniquity have you found in Me?" that is not just an idle statement. God is telling the church, "You have accused Me of unrighteousness and deserted My law." And as we read through Jeremiah we find that there are very serious consequences for this.

The church has turned a deaf ear to God's law in the hope that God will look the other way because, "Lord, we have worshipped You in music every Sunday. We have preached Your Word. We have attended Sunday School." But what is God's response in verses 13 and 19 of Jeremiah chapter 2? "No, you have abandoned Me."

We say, "Oh, it can't be that bad," but remember, the Israelites felt the same way:

Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. (Hosea 8:2)

It's ominously similar to what we read in Matthew 7:22-23:

Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy

11 <http://www.religioustolerance.org/femclrg4.htm>

12 <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07002/750584-51.stm>

13 <http://homepage.mac.com/stucker/apologia/sec2p1.htm>

14 <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=Topic&TopicID=7>

15 http://www.albertmohler.com/commentary_read.php?cdate=2005-10-14

name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

This should scare all of us into thinking, “I wonder if I really have been obedient to God, or am I thinking all is well when in fact it is not?” The church is not asking itself this question. The church believes it is the pillar and ground of truth:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

The above verse is sometimes offered to suggest that the church will never fall away from teaching truth, that it will never teach false doctrines. Some denominations even take it to the extent of using this verse to support the teaching that the church is always right.

If the church is the pillar and ground of truth, then how can one church teach that Christ died for every human being while another teaches that He died only for the elect? How can one church teach that the Sabbath is Sunday while another teaches that it is Saturday? Take your pick of topics. There is almost no topic where all churches are in agreement as to what the Bible teaches. How can two churches teach conflicting doctrines and both be the pillar and ground of truth? The obvious answer is, they can't. The church is not the pillar and ground of truth.

When understood correctly, this verse is saying, “behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God Who is the pillar and ground of the truth.” It is not the church that is the pillar and ground of truth, it is God:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

We saw in a previous chapter that the church has really been falling away ever since its beginning. The departure from the truth is exceptionally bad in our day, but we even find this straying from truth way back in the first century:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. (Galatians 1:6-7)

The Bible hadn't even been completed yet and already we find evidence that the church was falling away. We will examine the consequences for this as we progress in this book.

14

CHAPTER

The Latter Rain

In this chapter we will discover that the Latter Rain is the third and final season of spiritual rain upon this earth. It is a period of time in which God saves a great multitude of people and it is the period of time in which we are currently living.

Spiritual Rain and Spiritual Famine

To understand the Latter Rain, we must first define spiritual rain. Spiritual rain has to do with the Word of God being brought to man:

Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. (Deuteronomy 32:1-4)

And it is the hearing of the Word of God that brings salvation:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

Therefore, a period of spiritual rain has to do with the Gospel going out to bring salvation. Those who become saved during a period of spiritual rain are called the fruit of that period's spiritual harvest:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. (James 5:7)

The Bible also speaks of periods of spiritual famine, which is the exact opposite of spiritual rain. It is a period in which the Word of God is not heard:

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 (Amos 8:11)

A famine of hearing His Word does not mean God's Word is nowhere to be physically heard, but rather that the Holy Spirit, to a high degree, is not working to apply the Word to the hearts of man. It is a famine of spiritual hearing, the hearing that brings salvation.

God Speaks of Three Periods of Spiritual Rain

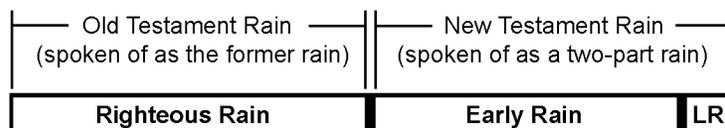
God speaks of three periods of spiritual rain (we will discuss the corrections to the translation):

Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for he hath given you the former rain moderately [righteously], and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in [as] the first month. (Joel 2:23)

The Hebrew word for “moderately” here is *tsedaqah*, which is found 157 times in the Bible and is almost always translated into a form of the word “righteous.” Here they decided to use the word “moderately” and we will see that it makes more sense if they had used “righteously” instead. We can understand why the translators did not use the word “righteously.” At the time of translating, the period of the Latter Rain had not been revealed to man. The word “righteously” seemingly made no sense with the concept of rain so they picked a different word.

The word “month” was added by the translators as they were trying to make sense of what they thought this verse might be saying. Since “month” is not present in the original Hebrew text we can omit it from the English translation. Likewise, the word “in” was used to make sense of the phrase “the first month,” but the phrase should have been “as the first.”

God is indicating here that, on the grand scale, there are two rains. We will learn that the first rain identifies with the Old Testament period and the second rain identifies with the New Testament period. The second rain itself is also broken into two parts: the Early Rain and the Latter Rain. (The Early Rain is referred to in our verse above as the “former rain,” but more frequently we find it referred to as the “early rain.”) To avoid confusion we will call the three periods of rain the Righteous Rain, the Early Rain, and the Latter Rain. This is the picture this verse is painting (LR = Latter Rain):



We find confirmation that the Early Rain and Latter Rain have to do with the New Testament period when we read about them again in the New Testament. There we find them referred to as periods that have not yet come to pass:

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. (James 5:7)

Also, note that this verse reassures us that the Latter Rain is somehow related to the end times when Christ will return.

Period 1: The Righteous Rain

The Righteous Rain was the period in which God was bringing His Word through the nation of Israel. National Israel really began with Abraham and therefore Abraham’s entrance into the Promised Land in 2092 BC marks the beginning of this period of rain. The Israelites were commanded to follow a lot of ceremonial laws, which were all a foreshadowing of things to come:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

Specifically, they were foreshadowing the coming of Christ:

And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord (Zechariah 6:12)

We find numerous statements like this throughout the Old Testament which anticipate the coming of Christ as the Savior. Therefore, the harvest of this first rain is actually Christ Himself and He is consequently referred to as the firstfruits:

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. (1 Corinthians 15:20)

But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (1 Corinthians 15:23)

We discover that those who are saved during the Early Rain, which is the second season of rain, are also called the firstfruits:

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. (James 1:18)

This seems contradictory until we understand that the coming of the Messiah (the fruit of the first harvest) had everything to do with the second harvest, the Early Rain. Incidentally, we do find the phrase "first of the firstfruits" in the Bible which identifies with Christ because He Himself is the beginning of the Early Rain. The Bible focuses on Christ's coming as having occurred when He began His ministry:

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. (John 1:29-30)

When we work through the timeline from the Bible we know that this occurred on September 26 in 29 AD. We are not going to spend time right now developing that fact, but an explanation can be found at The-Latter-Rain.com. Given that the fruit of this harvest is Christ Himself it makes sense that God connects this period of rain with righteousness. The Righteous Rain is the period from 2092 BC to September 26, 29 AD.

Period 2: The Early Rain

As mentioned earlier, the New Testament rain is broken into two parts: the Early Rain and the Latter Rain. The Bible reveals a spiritual famine prior to each period of New Testament rain. These spiritual

famines where there is no rain were typified by a famine that took place in Israel. We read about it in First Kings 17:1:

And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word.

Later in the Bible we learn that this famine lasted for three and a half years, after which the rain began and there was once again fruit:

Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. (James 5:17-18)

Jesus' ministry was exactly three and a half years in length. He was a perfect preacher, but during His ministry we know that very few people became saved. Instead of reading great stories of how many people were saved we read about how Jesus was rejected by elders, priests, and even His own disciples (Luke 9:22; John 6:66-67). Whole towns expressed their anger toward Jesus and kicked Him out (Luke 4:28-29). But then at Pentecost in 33 AD, Peter preached a sermon and about 3,000 people were saved in one afternoon (Acts 2:41). The first part of the New Testament rain, the Early Rain, had begun, and we can know from the rest of the Bible that this rain continued to the beginning of the Great Tribulation.

In Revelation chapters 7 and 14 we find a reference to 144,000 people who are in Heaven. We will discover that the 144,000 are those who were saved during the Early Rain and they are followed by a "great multitude" that is currently being saved during the Latter Rain. We read that the 144,000 are sealed and sing a new song:

And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. (Revelation 7:4)

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. (Revelation 14:3)

The believers are the ones who are sealed (Ephesians 1:13, 4:30) and sing a new song (Psalm 40:3). In other words, the 144,000 are believers. The 144,000 are referred to as the firstfruits:

And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. (Revelation 14:3-4)

As we saw earlier, the firstfruits are those who become saved during the Early Rain. Therefore, the 144,000 are specifically those who became saved during the second harvest, the Early Rain.

The 144,000 is most likely meant to be understood symbolically. The reason for this conclusion is that the number 144,000 is 12 x 12 x 1,000. Given that the numbers 12 and 1,000 hold spiritual significance it is likely that the 144,000 is a symbolic number. If the number 144,000 were literal, then that would mean that on average only about 73 people were saved worldwide per year throughout the Early Rain. Given that about 3,000 were saved at Pentecost in 33 AD, it is probably safe to assume that in actuality more than 144,000 were saved during the Early Rain.

Period 3: The Latter Rain

Just as the Early Rain was preceded by a spiritual famine, the Latter Rain was also. This famine is the period that is referred to as the half hour of silence in Heaven and is the first part of the Great Tribulation:

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

It is spoken of as a “half hour” because the entire Great Tribulation is figuratively spoken of as a period of “one hour”:

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. (Revelation 17:12)

We will learn in a later chapter that the beast spoken of here that ascends from the bottomless pit is Satan when he is loosed.

The “half hour” of silence was the spiritual famine that preceded the Latter Rain. It was a time when the Holy Spirit, to a high degree, was not working to apply the Word of God to the hearts of mankind. The result was that very few people were saved during this time. Remember, the Bible refers to a joyful activity that takes place in Heaven when someone becomes saved:

Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth. (Luke 15:10)

The silence during the “half hour” indicates that this activity was not taking place. After the period of silence, or spiritual famine, the Latter Rain began. Earlier we saw that the 144,000 were saved during the Early Rain. Then we see that another group is saved after the 144,000:

After this [that is, after the 144,000 are sealed] I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-10)

So after the 144,000 are saved we see that an additional multitude becomes saved. The Bible tells us that this great multitude is saved during the Great Tribulation:

15 CHAPTER

The 1000-Year Reign

A very popular take today on the end-times timeline is the premillennial view which teaches that Christ will come unexpectedly and take all the believers to Heaven. Then, following this rapture, a seven-year period of tribulation will take place on Earth. After this tribulation, Christ will come back and reign on Earth for 1,000 years.

This was the dominant teaching when I was growing up and still is today. However, now that God is granting additional understanding to Bible students around the world we can see the inaccuracy of this teaching.

Part of what has made the end-times prophecies so difficult to fully understand is the fact that God did not write about them chronologically. Part of the reason the timing of this “1,000-year” reign has been so misunderstood is because Bible teachers everywhere have incorrectly assumed that the events depicted in Revelation 20 chronologically follow the events of Revelation 19.

The only place in the Bible where we read of a 1,000-year reign is in Revelation chapter 20 so we are going to examine this passage verse by verse. When we do that we will discover that the “1,000-year” reign is a figurative time label that is applied to the same timeframe as the Early Rain. It began in 33 AD and ended at the beginning of the Great Tribulation when Satan was loosed.

Verse 1

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.

Christ holds the key to the bottomless pit:

Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Revelation 1:17-18)

Sometimes the Bible uses angels to typify Christ. In fact, the Greek word translated as “angel” here is *aggelos*, which is also sometimes translated as “messenger.”

Verse 2

And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,

Here we learn that Christ binds Satan for a thousand years. We will develop an understanding of this as we progress through the next few verses.

Verse 3

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.

According to verses 2 and 3, Satan was both bound and cast into the bottomless pit at the same time. To better understand this passage, let's take a look at Revelation 12:9:

And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

There is no doubt that this is speaking of the same event as Revelation 20:2-3. Notice that Satan was cast out into Earth, not a place called hell as many assume Revelation 20:3 is referencing. This is why comparing Scripture with Scripture is so important. It was at this time that Satan was cast out of Heaven forever. We say, "Wait, didn't that happen way back when he first rebelled?" Actually, no. Satan did have access to Heaven during the Old Testament era:

Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them. (Job 1:6)

Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD. (Job 2:1)

The "sons of God" in Job is a reference to angels, so these passages are speaking of a gathering of angels before God, among which Satan was present.

Sometimes we hear about, say, a 20-year-old man living with his parents and he has done something so horrible, or continuously behaved in such an awful way, that his parents kick him out of their home. That house is no longer his place of residence, but he still has access to it as he comes to visit his parents from time to time. Likewise, Satan lost his ability to eternally live with God when he first rebelled, but he still had access to Heaven until later when he was permanently cast out.

The opening verses of Revelation chapter 12 speak of Christ coming to set up His church. As it speaks about Satan being cast out to Earth we read that he lost access to Heaven:

And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. (Revelation 12:8)

So Revelation chapter 12 teaches that Satan was cast out around the time of Christ's first coming about 2,000 years ago. When the time came for Christ to face the wrath of God for the believers He declared it was time for Satan to be cast out:

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. (John 12:31)

It was at the cross when Satan was cast out. Therefore, it must be true that Satan was also bound at the cross since, according to Revelation 20:2-3, both events take place at the same time. Let's verify this.

We read that Satan and his angels are already bound in chains reserved for destruction:

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. (Jude 1:6)

This ties in with our passage in Revelation 20 which speaks of Christ coming with chains to bind Satan. This verse was written some time after Christ's crucifixion in 33 AD and before the completion of the Bible in about 95 AD. Therefore, Satan was already in chains before 95 AD.

God declares that Christ came to destroy the works of Satan:

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8)

Christ accomplished this through His work on the cross:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14)

It was at this point that Satan stood condemned (John 16:7-11). Satan was bound at the cross, but clearly he was still able to work in the world to a certain degree.

Some people may have difficulty with understanding how Satan can be partially bound. Look at it this way: a prisoner is bound but is still free to lift weights or watch TV. You can drive, but not through red lights, or at 100mph, or without your seatbelt. You are bound by laws; or rather, you are limited by them. Likewise, Satan's powers were limited when he was bound at the cross. Before the cross, relatively few people became saved, even when Jesus was preaching. However, just after the cross Peter preached to a crowd and about 3,000 were saved in one afternoon (Acts 2:41). Something had hurt Satan's ability to deceive, which ties in with the statement in Revelation 20:3 that Satan was bound so that he could deceive the nations no more.

The number 1,000 in the Bible is often used figuratively to signify "all" or "complete." For example, we read about the cattle on 1,000 hills in Psalm 50:10 and the "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands" of angels, beasts, and elders in Revelation 5:11. These numbers are to be understood figuratively, not literally. Likewise, the "1,000-year" reign spoken of in Revelation chapter 20 is not a literal 1,000 years. We know it began at the cross. We read that after the 1,000 years are expired Satan must be loosed for a little season. When we piece everything together we discover that the little season in view is the Great Tribulation.

Verse 4

And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

This verse is sometimes offered as proof that Christ will reign on Earth with believers, and this is typically taught to take place after the Great Tribulation. However, the Bible doesn't teach that Christ will come down and reign on Earth in a literal, political way. The events of this verse will be discussed when we examine the beast in a later chapter.

Verse 5

But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

As the next verse will indicate, the resurrection in view here is that which takes place at the point of salvation when a believer's soul is quickened. This verse is speaking of the spiritually dead, not the physically dead. Also, it is only speaking of the spiritually dead who will eventually become saved. We know this because the next verse tells us that only the believers take part in the first resurrection.

Verse 6

Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

The second death is the final destruction that comes on the last day:

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. (Revelation 20:14)

So those that take part in the first resurrection, those that do not experience the second death, are those who are saved.

Believers are referred to here as reigning priests, but it is not speaking of the kind of reigning we associate with a political ruler. It's not speaking of some future time when believers will be sitting on thrones on Earth. Rather, it is a reminder that all believers are a royal priesthood:

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Peter 2:9)

It is a spiritual reign that has nothing to do with the politics of this world.

Verse 7

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison,

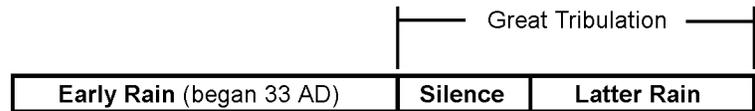
We know that Satan was not actually contained somewhere during the "1,000-year" reign. The binding of Satan at the cross was the event of being cast out to Earth and the Holy Spirit limiting Satan's deceitful work in the world. Being loosed from his prison indicates that he is once again allowed to be deceptive to a much higher degree than during the "1,000-year" reign. When we examine the rest of

the end-times prophecies (which we will do as we progress through this book), we see that this event occurred at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We also know that this event has already taken place and that we are currently living in the Great Tribulation.

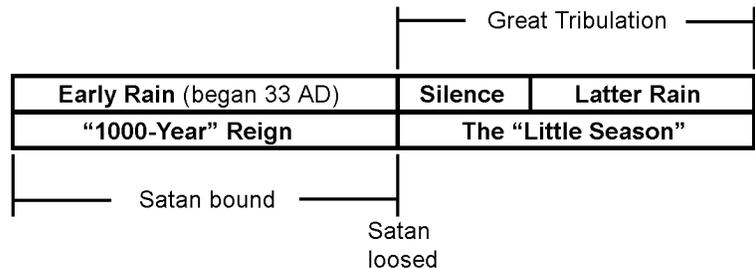
This further proves that the bottomless pit is not a literal place called hell since Satan was loosed from it after being bound. Nothing in the Bible teaches that God puts people in a literal place of eternal torment and then removes them later.

I realize this does not agree with what many of us have been taught, but as we examine more of these end-times passages it will become clearer that this is how we are to understand this passage. In fact, the traditional teaching no longer makes any kind of sense once we have a better overall understanding of things.

Let's take our diagram from the previous chapter and focus in on just the New Testament era:



When we add the information we've gathered in this chapter we arrive at the following diagram:



16

CHAPTER

The Antichrist

Those of us who have attended church most of our lives will now be wondering, “How does the antichrist fit into all of this?” We read about the antichrist in First John 2:18:

Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. (1 John 2:18)

It is commonly taught (and I, too, believed this for many years) that the antichrist will be a human being who is indwelt by Satan. This is usually believed to be a political figure who will rise to power during the Great Tribulation. We must keep in mind that the Bible is not a political book. The fact that we uncover in the Bible is that the antichrist is Satan himself as he rules within the churches.

The conflict that exists is between Satan and Christ. Christ has His followers who are called Christians or prophets. Satan has his followers and the Bible calls them false prophets or antichrists:

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. (2 John 1:7)

We know that the antichrist can't be a human because he was already in the world nearly 2,000 years ago:

And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. (1 John 4:3)

This can only be referring to Satan, and now that God is revealing to us a lot more detail about the end we can see why it is impossible for the antichrist to be a human indwelt by Satan. The primary reason the antichrist is thought to be a human is because of Second Thessalonians 2:3-11, so we are going to examine that passage verse by verse.

Verse 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;

We have seen that the falling away has already taken place. For centuries theologians and Bible teachers have read this verse and concluded that the antichrist would be a human being because he is referred to here as the “man of sin.” That’s a perfectly logical conclusion and we can’t fault them for that. However, God has now unlocked a lot of new information in the Bible and when we piece it all together we see that the antichrist is Satan himself. Actually, this is not the only verse where Satan is spoken of as a “man.” We also see this in Isaiah chapter 14:

How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! 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 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. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell, to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee, saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms (Isaiah 14:12-16)

When we start with the assumption that the end-times prophecies are speaking of political events that we could identify by reading the newspaper, it is logical that we might also assume the antichrist is a political figure. From there we might interpret the mark of the beast as a literal mark related to politics or economics in some way. This line of thinking does seem reasonable, but it’s built on a foundation that no longer squares with what we are learning from the Bible. Many of us grew up being taught that the man of sin would be a human being, but now God is finally revealing the truths contained in the end-times prophecies and we need to allow God to correct our teachings:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16)

I believe the main reason God has used the language of “man of sin” here is simply to assist in hiding the end-times truth. We have had the completed Bible in our possession for over 1,900 years. The only way God was going to keep certain truths hidden was if He wrote about them in difficult language.

As we examine more and more passages that relate to the end times it will become increasingly clear that the antichrist is Satan himself.

Verse 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.

This verse is not referring to a literal temple. Christ’s work on the cross brought an end to the temple as the holy place:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent (Matthew 27:51)

After the cross the body of believers became the temple:

Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)

The church is the earthly representation of this body of individuals. We've seen that the Bible often uses the Old Testament church labels, such as "Israel," to refer to the New Testament church. Here God is using an Old Testament label, "temple," to refer to the church organization as a whole.

The fact that Satan sits in the temple signifies that he is ruling in the churches. God uses the action of sitting to indicate rulership:

Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God. (Luke 22:69)

Sadly, just as we saw in the seven churches of Revelation chapters 2 and 3, people in the churches do not realize that this is going on because, as this verse indicates, Satan shows himself as if he is God. In other words, he comes looking like Christ:

And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:14)

"Angel of light" is another way of saying "messenger of God." The Greek word for "angel" is *aggelos*, which is also sometimes translated as "messenger." The Light of the World is Christ (John 8:12, 9:5). The reigning messenger of God is Christ, so Second Corinthians 11:14 is saying that Satan comes looking like Christ. What exactly does this mean? It means that Satan brings in doctrines that are not actually biblical, but can very readily be supported by Scripture when certain verses are misinterpreted or read out of context.

The apostasy we saw develop in the churches way back in the first century is made worse as Satan brings false doctrines:

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... (Daniel 7:25)

We read in Daniel about Satan casting down truth to the ground:

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. (Daniel 8:12)

We must remember that Satan is very familiar with Scripture and will use it to accomplish his goals, twisting it so that it appears to back up his ideas:

Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (Matthew 4:5-6)

When we understand this passage properly we can see how impossible it would be for the antichrist to be a human being. No professing Christian would worship a human being in the church. However, it is possible for Satan to rule in the church if God allows him unbeknownst to the church members. Why would God allow such a horrible thing? We will see the answer a few verses later.

We might read this and think, “I would know if Satan was ruling in the church,” but Satan is the master deceiver. He is the father of lies:

When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44)

When he deceives someone they do not realize they are being deceived. As we will see in verse 11, God is not sending out supernatural messages or “feelings” to warn people.

So the question is, are we going to trust the Bible or our own feelings? Our feelings may say, “I will know if Satan is ruling in the church,” but the Bible doesn’t say that. The only reason anyone will know Satan is ruling in the church is because the Bible says so. If we don’t listen to the Bible, then we aren’t going to know any other way.

Verses 5-6

Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time.

This is a reference to the Early Rain, during which Satan was bound so that his ability to deceive the world was greatly reduced. At the end of the Early Rain Satan was loosed, which identifies with the “man of sin,” who is also Satan, being revealed. At the time this was written Satan was bound or “withheld,” but he would be “revealed” later as the man of sin.

Verse 7

For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.

The Greek word for “way” here is *mesos*, which is found 50 times in the Bible and is almost always translated as “midst.” The teaching of this verse is that He [Holy Spirit] that restrains sin will be removed from the church. The statement “the mystery of iniquity doth already work” is acknowledging that sin has always existed in the church. However, the binding of Satan during the “1,000-year” reign restrained it to a high degree. This chapter in Second Thessalonians is speaking about the Great Tribulation and it is during this time that the Holy Spirit has been removed from the churches, referred to in this chapter as the temple where Satan has taken his seat.

Some teach that this verse is saying that God will remove the Holy Spirit from the world during the Great Tribulation, but that contradicts the fact that, as we have learned, a great number of people will become saved during the Great Tribulation, specifically during the Latter Rain period. Salvation can only occur when the Holy Spirit is working. Since a great multitude is saved during the Great Tribulation the removal of the Holy Spirit must be more localized, and the verses that both precede and follow this one speak of Satan ruling within the churches.

This surely is an almost impossible thing to imagine, that God would remove the Holy Spirit from the churches and allow Satan to rule within them. We find out in the Bible that this is because God has brought judgment upon the church for its nearly 2,000 years of apostasy. This fact will be seen in the coming verses and is developed in more detail in the next chapter.

I know that when you visit a church it seems like everything is going well: people are singing, the pastor is reading from the Bible, families are fellowshiping, children are learning about God. It certainly does not seem like any of the activity has anything to do with Satan. This is the great deception that Satan brings during this period of Great Tribulation, and God is allowing it because He is bringing judgment on the churches for continuing to do things their own way. Like the Israelites, every church believes it is following God, but they have committed spiritual adultery by chasing after doctrines that do not align with God's Word.

Our minds tell us that wrong doctrines, though undesirable, are not the kind of the thing that God would bring destruction over. We are tempted to think, "Sure, God probably isn't happy about it, but give Satan rule within the churches? Come on, that's absurd!" I understand that reaction because we look at the churches and, though not perfect, they appear to be full of the kinds of things we associate with God. However, we have to ignore what we think we are seeing and examine what the Bible has to say. When we do that we see that things are actually far worse than they appear to our eyes.

Verse 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:

Throughout the Great Tribulation it will appear as though Satan is winning as he rules within the churches, but in the end he will be destroyed and Christ will be the victor. This verse is a reminder of that wonderful fact.

Verse 9

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,

This verse is not indicating that the antichrist and Satan are two different beings. It's very similar to what we read in Second Corinthians:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

We can read this and think, "My pastor is not a minister of Satan, come on!" But every church thinks it is faithful to the Word of God. This verse is not speaking of a situation where a pastor gets up and says to his congregation, "Worship Satan!" Satan is the master deceiver. As this verse indicates, these ministers who are unknowingly forwarding the work of Satan, are seen as ministers of righteousness in their congregations. Someone who intentionally and openly identifies himself with Satan would never be referred to as a minister of righteousness. The ministers in view here are those who truly believe they

are serving God and appear to be preaching the true Gospel, but in actuality they are forwarding the work of Satan through wrong doctrines. Churches act as if a few wrong doctrines are really no big deal, but the Bible is extremely clear on the seriousness of this issue. In First Timothy chapter 3 God lists the qualifications to be an elder in the church and in verse 6 He warns that these individuals can fall into the work of Satan:

Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil.

The deception is absolute; nearly everyone is fooled. We will also find in a later verse that God is actually blinding those in the church. This is such a horribly sad situation, but we have to face these ugly truths in our day.

The “signs and lying wonders” are a direct reference to the supernatural spectacles that are so popular in our day: tongues, dreams, visions, “slain in the spirit”, etc. We learned in a previous chapter that Satan uses these tools to appeal to the emotions of those in the church who will let their “holy experiences” override what is found in the Bible.

The majority of Daniel chapter 11 addresses the Great Tribulation and in verse 21 we read that Satan will come in peaceably and take the kingdom by flatteries:

And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.

Notice it says that they did not intentionally give him the kingdom (the church), but he came in peaceably and took it over. The root word for the Hebrew word translated as “flatteries” above is found in Proverbs 7:1-5 and there we get an idea of what it means:

My son, keep my words, and lay up my commandments with thee. Keep my commandments, and live; and my law as the apple of thine eye. Bind them upon thy fingers, write them upon the table of thine heart. Say unto wisdom, Thou art my sister; and call understanding thy kinswoman: That they may keep thee from the strange woman, from the stranger which flattereth with her words. (Proverbs 7:1-5)

So when we read that Satan obtains the kingdom by flatteries, the picture God is painting is that Satan is successful in his attempts because he subtly entices the churches with attractive false doctrines. In this way, he has peacefully set up his rulership within the churches. In Daniel chapter 8 we read about the very same thing, and there we read that Satan will destroy many with peace:

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many (Daniel 8:23-25)

He makes it look like everything is great in the churches when in actuality there is no peace. This is why we are informed that many of those who claim to be God’s people will be saying, “Peace, peace,” when there is no peace:

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14)

Verse 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.

We found a lack of love for the truth when we examined the seven churches and the falling away. Those chapters are indicative of the Early Rain in general. No church intentionally teaches false doctrines, but the reason so many false doctrines exist is because of a lack of love for the truth. Theologians and pastors will always say they want to teach truth. However, the problem arises when we allow our human-based idea of justice, our imperfect logic, or our previously-taught beliefs to keep us from approaching the Bible without any preconceived notions.

It is because the churches are reading the Bible in light of what they already believe to be true that we have so many different doctrines. This is a lack of love for the truth. This is approaching the Bible with the attitude, "God, you are not going to teach me anything because I already know what Your Word says." No professing Christian would consciously utter that statement, but that is what we are doing when we go to the Bible with assumed doctrines already in our minds.

Verse 11

And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:

This is a very ominous statement. Those in the churches are not guaranteed God's protection from being deceived. He has watched the churches rebel against Him as they have tolerated sin and false doctrines for nearly 2,000 years. Remember, the Israelites thought all along that they were in fact living for God:

Set the trumpet to thy mouth. He shall come as an eagle against the house of the LORD, because they have transgressed my covenant, and trespassed against my law. Israel shall cry unto me, My God, we know thee. (Hosea 8:1-2)

They thought they were right with God, but in fact they had been rebelling for centuries and after tolerating centuries of rebellion God finally brought destruction on them. And remember, God used Israel's enemies to destroy it.

Likewise, God's toleration of the New Testament church's rebellion has come to an end and He is bringing His judgment on it through its enemy, Satan. This is precisely why Satan was loosed from being bound. This is why God has allowed Satan to take his seat in the church. This is what the Great Tribulation is all about. Now that God has unlocked the hidden truths we can see that the Bible has a lot to say about this horrible event.

For many of us it is hard to swallow that God would blind His people, but this is not the only place we read about God blinding those that claim to be His followers:

And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their

eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed. (Isaiah 6:9-10)

We've learned that the book of Jeremiah, though it is written in the setting of Judah, is actually addressing the churches of our day. In that book we find a reiteration that God is sending spiritual blindness among those who claim to be His people:

Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; which have eyes, and see not; which have ears, and hear not (Jeremiah 5:21)

Those who refuse to heed these warnings, those who assume all is well, will be accommodated by God as He further blinds them. God hardens hearts for His purpose. What is His purpose in doing this? We read that God intentionally hardened Pharaoh's heart for the express purpose of ensuring His judgment was carried out:

And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt, and bring forth mine armies, and my people the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments (Exodus 7:3-4)

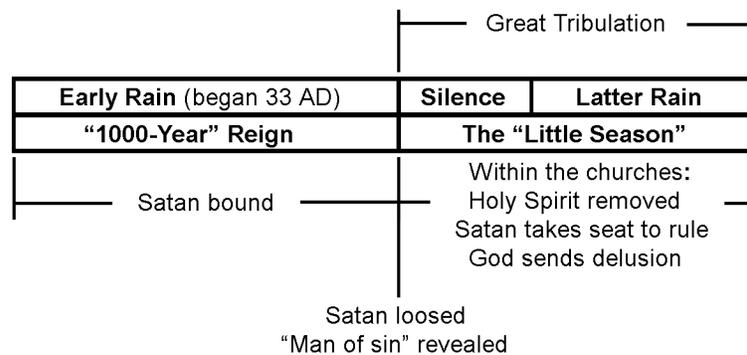
He hardens hearts to bring destruction:

For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly, and that they might have no favour, but that he might destroy them, as the LORD commanded Moses. (Joshua 11:20)

God hardening hearts is akin to blinding people.

The Bible is filled with warnings of impending judgment that mankind has ignored. We just seem to think, "No, that won't really happen." Some think, "I just don't believe God would do something like that." It's amazing that even with all the examples and direct warnings we read in the Bible that mankind still prefers to base his beliefs on how he thinks a just God should act.

If we take our diagram from the previous chapter and add the details from this chapter we arrive at the following diagram:



17

CHAPTER

Judgment on the Church

It is important to remember that just because something is written in the Old Testament, that does not mean it doesn't have any application to us today. Many churches teach that the Old Testament is primarily just a history book for us. I grew up in such a church. Just as passages in Daniel, for example, provide us with information about the end times, so too do numerous other passages in the Old Testament. God crafted the Bible in such a way that much of that was hidden until greater understanding was granted regarding end-times prophecies. Now that God is revealing new truths in His Word, we can more readily see that the Old Testament is loaded with information about the end times.

One thing we must do is stop thinking that we, in our day, are so much smarter than the Israelites were. It's easy to read about their constant rebellion and wonder, "What was wrong with those people?" Then we are almost in disbelief when we read statements about how they truly believed they were following God.

What happened with the Old Testament church (Israel) gives us insight as to what will happen with the New Testament church (the entire church organization beginning at the cross). We have seen in our study of tongues that God equates the life cycle of the New Testament church with that of the Old Testament church.

God Warns of Judgment on the Church

God placed a very serious warning way back in Deuteronomy to the church of our day:

For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 31:29)

Though this is in the Old Testament, it is directed at us today. True, the warning was applicable to the people of that day, but God has placed it in the Bible to serve as a warning to us today. This is made evident by the phrase "latter days" which, in the Bible, always refers to the New Testament era and usually the end times.

Warnings such as this also exist in the New Testament. God indicated that His judgment would be upon the house of God for its apostasy:

For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us,

what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? (1 Peter 4:17-18)

The house of God is the church:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Timothy 3:15)

God will of course bring judgment upon all of the unsaved, but the final judgment that comes upon the world begins within the church. We are now learning from the Bible that judgment is a process rather than a single-day event.

This is a very ugly truth that we must face in our day. It's understandable that God would keep this hidden throughout the Early Rain. This knowledge certainly would have caused some distraction and concern that might've gotten in the way of the churches focusing on their assigned task of spreading the Gospel:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. (Mark 16:15)

We read a lot about "God's people" and normally we equate that phrase with those who are truly saved. However, throughout the Bible we find evidence that the phrase should be more accurately understood as referring to those who claim to be His followers. Time and time again we read of God referring to the Israelites as His people, but we know the vast majority of them never became saved:

But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. (Hebrews 3:17-19)

God indicates that many of those who claim to be His people will die:

All the sinners of my people shall die by the sword, which say, The evil shall not overtake nor prevent us. (Amos 9:7)

The death by sword is a reference to spiritual destruction. The sword is the Word of God:

And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Hebrews 6:17)

The warning in Amos 9:7 parallels what we read in Revelation:

And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. (Revelation 6:8)

During the Great Tribulation Satan comes into the churches disguised as God and uses the Word of God to bring about spiritual destruction by twisting it into false gospels. Notice that Amos 9:7 says that those in the church (those who claim to be His people) will be spiritually killed, but they will be of the mindset that evil will not overtake them. This parallels First Thessalonians 5:3, which warns that sudden destruction will come upon them when they think all is well:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

This same warning exists in Jeremiah 6:13-14. The churches are saying there is peace within them when that is in fact not true:

For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness; and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely. They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

In Isaiah we find a beautiful passage about a time when God will give rain. It will be a time when bread is plentiful. There will be rivers and streams upon every high mountain and hill. The sun and moon will be brighter than they ever have been:

Then shall he give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the ground withal; and bread of the increase of the earth, and it shall be fat and plenteous: in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures. The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan. And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall. Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound. (Isaiah 30:23-26)

The bread points to the Bread of Life, which is Christ (John 6:48) and Christ is the Word of God (Revelation 19:13). The rivers and streams point to the Gospel of salvation. The sun points to the Light of the World, which again is Christ (John 8:12). The moon signifies the law of God. The fact that they are shining so bright points to a time when the Gospel is bringing salvation to people at a rate like never before. This is language that identifies with the Latter Rain. The Bible speaks of it as a time when God saves a great multitude. It is the second part of the Great Tribulation.

However, notice that within this beautiful passage is an ominous phrase: “And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter”.

There is only one time in all of history that could be identified as a wonderful time when the Gospel shines brighter than ever before but also is a time of great slaughter: the Great Tribulation. During this period God is saving a great multitude all over the world, but at the same time judgment has begun within the churches.

The language of “great slaughter” identifies with the spiritual destruction that takes place within the churches and the impact it has on the members who remain there. We will discuss this in greater detail as we progress in this book.

Flee the Church

So we know God's judgment is upon the church. Now what? What do we do when we realize that Satan has begun to rule within the churches? We are commanded to leave our churches:

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 (Matthew 24:15-16)

But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains (Mark 13:14)

The Greek word translated as "see" in these passages is also commonly translated as "know" or "perceive" elsewhere in the Bible. These verses are pointing to a time when we become aware that the abomination of desolation is standing in the holy place. Once we realize this is happening we are commanded to flee. We are not commanded to stick it out and hope things get better.

Both of these verses contain the statement, "whoso readeth, let him understand," which is a reminder that these verses have to be examined carefully and not all of mankind will be able to properly understand what God is saying here. Judaea is a region that identifies with Israel. Israel was the earthly representation of God's Kingdom through much of the Old Testament era. Then the churches became the earthly representation of God's Kingdom in the New Testament era. When Jesus references Judaea He is speaking of the earthly representation of God's Kingdom, which would be the churches in our day.

The above statement is also found in Luke chapter 21, and there we also read about the holy place of God's people being surrounded by armies:

And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. (Luke 21:20-21)

Here God says that Jerusalem, or the earthly church, is surrounded by armies. We find similar language in Revelation chapter 20 where we learn that once Satan has been loosed he will surround the gathering place of God's people:

And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog, and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. (Revelation 20:7-9)

The church is the gathering place of those who claim to be God's followers. We already know that Satan has been loosed. God is using Satan to bring judgment on the churches. There are many other passages in the Bible that instruct the believers to flee the churches in the Great Tribulation of our day. For example, Revelation chapters 17 and 18 are speaking of the great whore, spiritual Babylon, which is

shown to be the churches during the Great Tribulation. In those chapters God commands His people to come out of the churches:

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. (Revelation 18:4)

Likewise, we find similar warnings in the book of Jeremiah. We are warned not to stay because God is destroying His people's homeland (the churches):

Set up the standard toward Zion: retire, stay not: for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction. (Jeremiah 4:6)

God had indicated that a time would come when He would break down that which He has built:

Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land. (Jeremiah 45:4)

Those who remain in the churches will be spiritually destroyed by the sword (law of God) and famine (lack of Holy Spirit working there):

Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. (Jeremiah 38:2)

These examples illustrate why it is so important we understand that the Bible is written in parables. If we refuse to look beyond the surface meaning of a passage, we are walking away from a great deal of intensely serious truth.

God No Longer Hears Their Prayers

The Bible indicates that a time will come when those who call upon the Lord will not be heard by God:

Then shall they cry unto the LORD, but he will not hear them: he will even hide his face from them at that time, as they have behaved themselves ill in their doings. (Micah 3:4)

When we compare this with the rest of Scripture we know this is talking about the churches during the Great Tribulation. The people out in the secular world do not cry unto the Lord; only professing Christians do that. This is specifically speaking of those people in the churches. We also read about this in Isaiah chapter 1:

And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. (Isaiah 1:15)

We find the above statement reiterated in Isaiah chapter 59:

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. (Isaiah 59:1-3)

The lies and perverseness mentioned in the above passage are a reference to the wrong doctrines that litter the churches in our day.

We may think, "No, God does not turn a deaf ear to anyone's prayers," but that logic doesn't square with the Bible:

I cried unto him with my mouth, and he was extolled with my tongue. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me (Psalm 66:17-20)

Of course, this is not teaching that God literally cannot hear their prayers. He hears and knows all. The implication here is that He chooses to ignore the prayers. In a previous chapter we learned that the book of Jeremiah is primarily focused on the situation today. In chapter 7 of Jeremiah God indicates that we are not to pray for the churches; His house has ignored His warnings and so He has cast them out of His sight:

But go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; Therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim. Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee (Jeremiah 7:12-16)

I don't believe that this is teaching that we are not to pray for our loved ones in the church that their spiritual eyes may be opened. I believe this is saying we are not to pray that the churches might somehow be faithful again. God will not alter His course of action. Judgment has begun on the churches and will be carried out. We find the above passage reiterated in Jeremiah 11:14 and Jeremiah 14:12:

Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up a cry or prayer for them: for I will not hear them in the time that they cry unto me for their trouble. (Jeremiah 11:14)

When they fast, I will not hear their cry; and when they offer burnt offering and an oblation, I will not accept them: but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. (Jeremiah 14:12)

These verses harmonize with what we learned in the previous chapter: God has abandoned the churches.

God has shown tremendous patience for over 1,900 years as the church continued to fall away from the truth. As we find in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, God has been warning the churches since the first century AD to hold to sound doctrine, but the churches have not listened. Zechariah 7:13 states that because they have chosen to not listen to Him for so long a time will come when He will chose to no longer listen to them:

Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts (Zechariah 7:13)

Sadly, we have reached that time.

Flee in Tribulation

There are three main periods of tribulation that are spoken of in the Bible. The first is the seven years of famine in Jacob's day that ran from 1879 BC to 1872 BC. The second is the 70-year tribulation Judah went through from 609 BC to 539 BC. The third is the Great Tribulation of the end times. All three of these periods are spoken of in the Bible as period of tribulation:

Canaan Tribulation

Now there came a dearth over all the land of Egypt and Chanaan, and great affliction [Greek word *thlipsis*, same word translated as "tribulation" in passages speaking of the Great Tribulation]: and our fathers found no sustenance. (Acts 7:11)

Judah Tribulation

Judah is gone into captivity because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits. (Lamentations 1:3)

End-Times Tribulation

For then shall be great tribulation [*thlipsis*], such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. (Matthew 24:21)

All three tribulations are also spoken of as times of great famine:

Canaan Tribulation

And the famine was sore in the land. (Genesis 43:1)

Judah Tribulation

The word of the Lord that came to Jeremiah concerning the dearth. Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish; they are black unto the ground; and the cry of Jerusalem is gone up. And their nobles have sent their little ones to the waters: they came to the pits, and found no water; they returned with their vessels empty; they were ashamed and confounded, and covered their heads. Because the ground is chapt, for there was no rain in the earth, the plowmen were ashamed, they covered their heads. (Jeremiah 14:1-4)

End-Times Tribulation

We have learned that the first part of the Great Tribulation is a spiritual famine that continues within the churches during the second part of the Great Tribulation.

The tribulations in Canaan and Judah foreshadow the Great Tribulation. In the midst of the Canaan tribulation Joseph told his brethren and Jacob to leave Canaan where there was no food and come into Egypt:

And God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God: and he hath made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. Haste ye, and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt: come down unto me, tarry not (Genesis 45:7-9)

Egypt was a picture of the world. During the Great Tribulation the true believers are commanded to leave the divine institution God has established. Since the Holy Spirit has left the church there is no longer any spiritual nourishment that can be received there.

This would have been a difficult thing for Jacob to swallow, especially since God had previously told his grandfather (Abraham) not to go into Egypt. Canaan was his homeland. It was the land that God had established for his family and they had dwelt there for 215 years. It was thought to be an everlasting homeland for them. However, Jacob was being told to flee this homeland and go down to Egypt. God had to reassure him:

And he said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation (Genesis 46:3)

Likewise, the believers are now commanded to come out of the churches. This is difficult for us to swallow because when God established them we thought they would be a homeland for us until the end of time. Now God is telling us to go into the world, a place we have previously been told to avoid.

The 70-year tribulation in Judah was the other historical foreshadowing of the Great Tribulation, and during it God instructed the Israelites to leave their homeland as well because He had turned it over to the enemy:

Thus saith the Lord, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live. Thus saith the Lord, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it. (Jeremiah 38:2)

Nehemiah Stays out of the Temple

The book of Nehemiah details the events surrounding the construction of Jerusalem's wall. The construction of the wall identifies with the Early Rain and the completion of the wall identifies with the end of the Early Rain. When the wall had been completed Shemaiah told Nehemiah to go into the temple. He told Nehemiah that he would be safe there:

Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who was shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee. (Nehemiah 6:10)

However, Nehemiah refused to enter the temple:

And I said, Should such a man as I flee? and who is there, that, being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in. (Nehemiah 6:11)

Shemaiah is spoken of elsewhere in the Bible as a man of God:

But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, (1 Kings 12:22)

But in this case Nehemiah realized that the message Shemaiah was bringing was not from God. Shemaiah had been hired by Sanballat to tell Nehemiah to go into the temple:

And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him. (Nehemiah 6:12)

Sanballat was the enemy who did not want the wall to be constructed:

But it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews. (Nehemiah 4:1)

We learn that Sanballat hired Shemaiah (who should have been a man of God) to try to get Nehemiah into the temple, but Nehemiah recognized that at this time that would have been contrary to the will of God:

Therefore was he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and that they might have matter for an evil report, that they might reproach me. (Nehemiah 6:13)

Here Sanballat represents Satan who did not want to see the work of the Early Rain get completed successfully. Once that job had been completed the Great Tribulation began and the believers are now commanded to come out of the churches. However, many people who appear to be men of God (pastors, friends, etc) are continuing to say that there is safety in the church:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

This false information about the safety of the church in our day is originating with Satan. Those in the churches do not realize they are forwarding the work of Satan, but in that sense it is like they have been hired by him to bring this message that is contrary to the commandment of God.

Doesn't the Bible Encourage Assembly?

One verse that may be offered by churchgoers in support of their belief to stay in the churches is Hebrews 10:25:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

First of all, we must always read verses in light of the whole Bible. Isolated verses can often be used to support wrong ideas when the rest of the Bible isn't factored into their interpretation.

This verse does not say it is speaking about attending church. We assume that because it says "assembling together," but what makes a church? Is it a building with a cross on the roof? No, a church is a congregation that functions as an organized body with spiritual authority over it. In other words, a church is a group of believers with pastors and deacons. It has membership and pre-established doctrines.

If I were to have a get-together with other believers at my house and we were to discuss the Bible, then that would not be a church. No one in that group has any spiritual authority over the attendees. That gathering would not be a God-ordained divine institution.

This verse is encouraging the fellowship of believers, but it is not requiring that we attend a church. True, throughout the Early Rain, it was in the churches that believers fellowshiped with each other. However, now we are commanded to come out of the churches so we have to fellowship another way.

Won't the Gates of Hell not Prevail?

The Bible does say that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

First of all, who is the rock? The rock is Christ:

And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:4)

What church is in view here? We can't know by simply reading this verse. We need to factor in the rest of the Bible. We read that Christ gave Himself so that He could build a church without blemish:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Are the earthly churches without blemish? No, of course not. All we have to do is read about the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3, or the church in Corinth, or watch the news and we know the earthly churches are not without blemish.

The church Christ has in mind is the eternal church that is made up of all the true believers. That is the church against which the gates of hell will not prevail.

It is extremely difficult to face the idea of leaving our churches. That's where many of our friends and families are. That's where we've felt comfortable. For pastors and other church staff members the church may be their source of income and that makes it even more challenging to face this sad time. We look around in our churches and think, "Yes, there are a lot of wrong teachings out there and I can see how perhaps Satan has been able to work in those churches, but not my church. My church is faithful to the Bible and we love the Lord. Satan is not ruling in my congregation." Every church is saying that. Again I emphasize this question: are we going to trust the Bible or are we going to trust our feelings and logic?

18

CHAPTER

The Rapture

Most churches today teach that the Rapture will occur before the Great Tribulation. However, when we examine the information given to us in the Bible we can know that the Rapture will occur at the end of the Great Tribulation and will be followed by a short, but terrible, period of judgment before God destroys the world.

Please note that when I use the word “believers” I am referring to those who truly have become saved. There are many people in the world who believe that Christ is the Savior and that the Bible is the Word of God, but we’ve learned in previous chapters that kind of belief does not mean someone is saved. A believer who is actually saved is one that has been saved from spiritual death. This is an action that only God can perform.

The Bible teaches that some day prior to the end of the world God will take all of the believers from Earth, while leaving behind the unsaved. Theologians have called this event the “Rapture,” which is a theological word that is not actually found in the Bible. We find language describing this event in First Thessalonians 4:16-17:

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.

We know that the world does continue on after the Rapture:

Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left. (Matthew 24:40-41)

There is much debate in the Christian community as to whether the Rapture will occur before or after the Great Tribulation. The answers to a lot of these questions have been withheld from us by God, no matter how faithfully we studied the Bible.

We also know that there will be believers on Earth during the Great Tribulation:

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: 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. 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. (Matthew 24:29-31)

This passage teaches us that the Rapture takes place after the Great Tribulation. This should not surprise us because the Bible teaches that for believers a life of persecution is par for the course:

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12)

Immediately we may be confused by this. If the believers are present during the Great Tribulation, then the Rapture must occur after the Great Tribulation, right? But doesn't the end of the Great Tribulation mark the end of the world, or the beginning of the 1,000-year reign? Isn't that what we've always been taught? We can see why theologians have been so confused by this and why they could not agree on exactly how this was all going to pan out. No wonder so many different views on the end-times timeline exists.

However, we are now able to understand that the world does in fact continue on after the Great Tribulation:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light (Mark 13:24)

This verse doesn't tell us exactly how long the world continues after the Great Tribulation but we know by the phrase "in those days after that tribulation" that it does. Some have said that since the world must continue after the Rapture, the Rapture must occur at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. They have then searched the Scriptures to look for a verse that teaches this and they landed on Revelation 3:10:

Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

One problem with this conclusion is that it contradicts Matthew chapter 24, which teaches that the believers are present on Earth for the Great Tribulation. Another problem is that this verse isn't talking about the Great Tribulation at all. The Greek word translated as "temptation" is *peirasmos*, which has to do with trial and judgment. It is the same Greek word we find in Second Peter 2:9:

The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations [*peirasmos*], and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.

Both Second Peter 2:9 and Revelation 3:10 are promising that the believers will escape God's judgment, not the Great Tribulation.

So how can we reconcile all of this? It was not until recently that God revealed that there is actually a horrible span of time that exists between the end of the Great Tribulation and the last day at the end of the world. This span of time is the period after the Rapture that is a time of unprecedented fear, wrath, and destruction. This is the final judgment period and it is that period that the believers will not be around to experience. We will examine this period in a later chapter.

19

CHAPTER

The Beast and His Mark

We read about a beast that ascends out of the bottomless pit:

The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Revelation 17:8)

The beast is Satan himself. He is the one who ascended from the bottomless pit at the beginning of the Great Tribulation when he was loosed. He is the one that “was, and is not, and yet is.” He “was” in that he was once able to deceive the nations to a very high degree. He “is not” in that he was dealt a devastating blow at the cross when Christ bound him and greatly reduced his abilities to deceive. However, during the Early Rain he was still present, working his deceit, and in that sense he “yet is.”

Revelation chapter 13 speaks of two beasts. Both of them are Satan as he is manifested in two different ways. The first beast is Satan as he has spiritual rule over the whole world (both in the churches and in the world) during the first part of the Great Tribulation, which is the period of silence when very few people were being saved in the world. The second beast is Satan ruling specifically within the churches during the second part of the Great Tribulation, which is the Latter Rain, when a great multitude is being saved outside of the churches.

A lot of information can be acquired through a careful study of Revelation chapter 13, so let’s examine this chapter verse by verse.

Verse 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.

The sea often signifies God’s judgment or wrath. The beast rising out of the sea identifies with Satan being loosed from the bottomless pit at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. The fact that the horns are crowned signifies that the beast is ruling. It identifies with the antichrist (Satan) taking his seat to rule in the temple (churches). We find in Revelation 17:12 that the ten horns represent ten kings who rule for one hour with the beast. The “one hour” is a figurative timeframe that identifies with the entire Great Tribulation period. This is why the period of silence is spoken of as “half an hour” (Revelation 8:1); it is the first part of the Great Tribulation.

Verse 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.

The fact that the beast has a seat and authority indicates rulership. This first beast has spiritual authority worldwide. This first part of the Great Tribulation is when God allowed Satan to keep the whole world in a spiritual famine. It is like the parable of the sower where some of the seed fell by the wayside and the fowls devoured it:

And it came to pass, as he sowed, some fell by the way side, and the fowls of the air came and devoured it up. (Mark 4:4)

Jesus then explains that this represents Satan coming to prevent the seed, which is the Word of God, from bringing salvation:

The sower soweth the word. And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts. (Mark 4:14-15)

This was the situation worldwide during the first part of the Great Tribulation, which is why the Bible calls it a period of silence, as well as a period of spiritual famine:

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 (Amos 8:11)

The lack of hearing the Word of God means that salvation is not occurring:

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

The common teaching is that the Great Tribulation will be a time when those who identify themselves with Christianity will be physically persecuted and, in many cases, literally killed. The picture that many paint of the Great Tribulation is a time when Christianity is nearly stomped completely off the visible map. Most of those who believe this also agree that the end is near. Exactly how near varies from teaching to teaching, but it is widely accepted in the Christian community that the end of the world is not far off.

Look around; do we see the Christian community being hated all over the world? Does it appear that we are building toward a time when the world will begin literally killing off those who claim to be followers of God? No, instead we find quite the contrary. Churches are popping up everywhere. Bibles are widely available in over 2,370 languages. In fact, studies show that about one-third of the world's population calls itself Christian. Page 711 of the 2008 World Almanac indicates that 2,173,183,400 people worldwide attend a Christian church on a regular basis. Given that the world's population was estimated at 6,677,563,921 as of July 2007, that means 32.5% of the world's population attends a Christian church on a regular basis.

It is important to keep in mind that the Bible is not a political or economic book and is therefore not concerned with the politics of our day. It is a spiritual book and we need to understand the end-times prophecies in light of that fact. This is why we read that during the Great Tribulation it will appear to be business as usual in the world:

For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:38-39)

Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. (Luke 17:28-30)

Some churches teach that these verses are speaking of the situation at the beginning of the Great Tribulation because they teach that the Rapture will occur just before the Great Tribulation begins. I grew up under that teaching so I am quite familiar with it. However, now we know that isn't true. God actually allowed for many churches to figure out that the Rapture occurs after the Great Tribulation, but their understanding of how the end would pan out was still very incorrect. God had hidden a very important piece of information from us until our day; namely, the five months of judgment that will occur immediately after the Great Tribulation and Rapture. We will examine that timeframe in a later chapter.

The implication in the verses above is that the vast majority of the world's population will be completely unaware when the Great Tribulation is already in progress. If the events of the Great Tribulation were political in nature, then at least the third of the world that is attending church would know full well that the Great Tribulation had begun and people would be behaving differently.

But the Great Tribulation is a spiritual tribulation when Satan disguises himself as God in the churches. This is why the beast looks like a leopard with bear's feet and the mouth of a lion. These are all figures that identify with God:

Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them. (Hosea 13:7-8)

Satan comes into the churches counterfeiting God.

Verse 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.

Satan was dealt a devastating blow at the cross when he was bound. It was at that time that his ability to deceive the nations had been greatly reduced. When Satan was loosed at the beginning of the Great Tribulation it was as though his wound had healed. This event coincided with the beast rising from the bottomless pit (Revelation 17:8).

Verse 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?

No professing Christian would worship Satan by name, but the Bible teaches us that Satan rules in the churches looking like Christ. The Bible uses the language of him coming as “an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). Those in the church do not realize he is ruling in the church. Instead, they think it is Christ as it always had been.

Verse 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.

These 42 months refer to the first part of the Great Tribulation, the period of silence, when Satan’s spiritual rule encompasses the whole world. We know these 42 months, or 3.5 years, are figurative because God identifies the number 3.5 with the first part of the Great Tribulation. He refers to it as a time when the Two Witnesses are dead for 3.5 days. He calls it the time when the power of the holy people will be scattered for a time, times, and half a time, which is language to illustrate 3.5.

It is also referred to in Daniel 7:25 as the time when Satan will wear out the saints for a time, times, and dividing of time, again illustrating 3.5. We know this passage isn’t referring to the entire Great Tribulation as a whole because the next verse (Daniel 7:26) says that the saints will take away his dominion. When we examine that in light of the rest of the Bible we know that is speaking of the Latter Rain when Satan’s spiritual authority outside of the church has been once again greatly limited.

The number 3.5 is being used symbolically and does not mean that the first part of the Great Tribulation is a literal 3.5 years in length. Before God recently began granting additional understanding we saw enough language in the Bible to know that the Great Tribulation would be either 7, 23, or 70 years in length. Most theologians latched on to the seven-year idea because they decided to take the 3.5 years literally. They correctly recognized that the number 3.5 was pointing to the first part of a two-part tribulation, but God had not opened up their understanding enough to piece everything together correctly. However, now we can know that the Great Tribulation will be exactly 23 years in length, to the very day. This fact will become obvious near the end of this book as we study the timing of the end of the world.

Verse 6

And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven.

This identifies with what we read in Daniel chapter 8 about Satan casting truth to the ground:

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. (Daniel 8:12)

It also parallels Revelation chapter 8 where God talks about the waters becoming bitter:

And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter. (Revelation 8:11)

The waters refer to the living water, the Gospel. The bitter water identifies with the Gospel being polluted with false doctrines. Satan pollutes the Gospel enough so that it still looks like the true Gospel, but in actuality is a false gospel. The majority of those under the hearing of these false gospels are deceived into thinking all of this is of God when it is actually of Satan. Daniel warns us about this time when Satan will be changing times and laws:

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. (Daniel 7:25)

In other words, the beast will alter the law of God.

I think perhaps the statement in Daniel 7:25 that Satan will change times (not just laws) points to the fact that he will do everything in his power to keep the churches believing that the antichrist will be a political figure, the Rapture will be before the Great Tribulation, the “1,000-year” reign will be after the Great Tribulation, and so on. By keeping these false understandings alive in the churches Satan is able to hide his presence within them because the churches will continue to think they are safe and secure. They will continue to look for a time when the political antichrist will rise, oblivious to what is happening right in their midst. To a high degree, the churches won’t focus much attention on the end-times prophecies because they will continue to believe they will be raptured before the Great Tribulation begins anyway. We are warned of this in First Thessalonians 5:3:

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

The churches think all is fine within them, but unfortunately that is not the case.

Verse 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.

The beast making war with and overcoming the saints identifies with the true believers being removed from the churches. We will develop this fact when we get down to verse 15.

Verse 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.

This is a reminder that anyone who is not saved ultimately belongs to Satan. The Bible speaks of the unsaved as children of Satan (John 8:44), slaves of sin (John 8:34), and people who are under the authority of Satan (Acts 26:16-18). The Bible says that when we become saved we are translated from the dominion of darkness into the kingdom of God (Colossians 1:13). In other words, there are only two kingdoms: God's and Satan's. There is no in-between or neutral ground. We don't typically think of it this way, but ultimately if we are not a part of the kingdom of God, then we belong to Satan. We typically identify Satan worship with the occult and such, but every human belongs to one of the two kingdoms and therefore serves its corresponding ruler.

Verse 9

If any man have an ear, let him hear.

This is a very interesting statement that we find placed in the middle of this chapter. Whenever we see it in the Bible it reminds us that God is teaching something that not all will understand. All of mankind has physical ears, but the ears in view here are spiritual ears to hear as God grants understanding. God explains this phrase to us in Mark 4:9-12:

And he said unto them, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And when he was alone, they that were about him with the twelve asked of him the parable. And he said unto them, Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but unto them that are without, all these things are done in parables: That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand; lest at any time they should be converted, and their sins should be forgiven them.

In other words, God speaks to us in parables or riddles. He does this in order to intentionally hide the true meaning of passages. God could have clearly said what He had to say, but He chose to write the Bible in a way that it must be studied very carefully to properly understand it.

Verse 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.

We saw earlier that the sword is the Word of God. False gospels do not bring salvation and the alternative to salvation is spiritual death, so as Satan brings false doctrines into the church it as though he is killing with his own kind of a sword. Remember, false gospels are not just the work of man, but ultimately the work of Satan:

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. (2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

But in the end it is the true Word of God that condemns the wicked:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Romans 2:12)

“Here is the patience and the faith of the saints” reminds us that the believers will be present on Earth during this time of Great Tribulation. It also points to the idea that, before the Great Tribulation ends, the truly saved will all understand what is really going on inside the churches. The saints are patient in that they realize the horrible situation the churches are in and they are concerned about their loved ones within them. It is not an easy time for them:

And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled. (Revelation 6:10-11)

When we get down to verse 15 we will learn that the killing in view here is not a literal killing, rather it is a figure of speech to indicate that they have been removed from the churches.

Verse 11

And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon.

The fact that this second beast has horns like a lamb again reminds us that Satan comes looking like Christ, who is the Lamb of God (John 1:36). He speaks as a dragon in that he does not bring the true Gospel.

Remember that the first beast rose out of the sea, which was language that identified with Satan being loosed from the bottomless pit at the beginning of the Great Tribulation. This second beast rising out of the earth points to the fact that when the second part of the Great Tribulation began Satan was already in the world. The second part of the Great Tribulation, the Latter Rain, is just a continuation of the first part insofar as the churches are concerned. However, out in the world the situation has changed as God begins saving a great multitude.

Verse 12

And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.

This is a reminder that the work of the second beast is very much just a continuation of what the first beast started, and remember that both beasts are actually Satan himself.

Verse 13

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in

the sight of men,

This ominous verse holds a huge piece of information, along with a very serious warning. The Greek word for “wonders” here is *semeion*, which is a word that actually means “miracles.” We examined this in great detail in a previous chapter and saw that all of this supernatural activity (tongues, dreams, visions, etc) in the end times is coming from Satan. These supernatural activities we are seeing or hearing about are not serving to support the true Gospel, but rather are serving to support a lie:

Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs [*semeion*] and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9)

We also read here in verse 13 that the beast will make fire come down from heaven. We know that Satan is not capable of literally making fire come down from heaven (1 Kings 18:21-38), so for us to understand this statement we must study the act of fire coming down from heaven. Let’s look at three occurrences:

Occurrence 1

In Numbers chapter 16 we read of the rebellion against Moses led by three men: Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. God brought judgment on these men by causing the earth to open up and swallow them and their families, and the 250 men who rebelled with them were consumed by fire from heaven.

Occurrence 2

Second Kings chapter 1 tells us of the wicked king of Israel who ordered the capture of one of God’s messengers, Elijah. The king sent a captain with 50 men to bring Elijah down from a hill, but they were unsuccessful as God sent down fire from heaven to consume them as judgment. The king sent a second captain with another 50 men and the same thing happened to them.

Occurrence 3

We also read in Revelation 20:9 of Satan assaulting the camp of saints by means of the world’s nations and judgment is brought upon them through fire from heaven.

Remember when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane and the soldiers came to take Jesus? Following the examples of when God’s enemies tried to bind His people, Jesus should have called down fire from heaven to destroy the enemies of those who tried to bind Him. However, He could not do that because it that would’ve prevented Him from being taken to the cross. So instead of calling down fire from heaven He caused them to fall backward:

As soon then as he had said unto them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground. (John 18:6)

The act of falling backwards in this situation became the supernatural equivalent of fire being called down from heaven.

Since Satan is not capable of literally calling down fire from heaven he does the supernatural equivalent, once again following Jesus’ lead, to deceive them that are interested in it. Today it is called being “slain in the spirit.” The experience of being supernaturally pushed backward is seen as a good thing by those who experience it. However, in the Bible this action signifies God’s judgment upon

someone. This clearer understanding of fire from heaven, or supernaturally being pushed backward, should prevent any believer from wanting any part in this activity.

Verse 14

And 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.

Here again we find the Greek word *semeion* translated as “miracles” in this verse. Notice the reiteration of the entire purpose of these miracles is to make people follow Satan, just as Jesus performed miracles to make people believe in His Gospel. This is just one more way Satan is attempting to counterfeit God. People, by nature, are attracted to spectacular things, supernatural things. They trust their feelings and Satan is capitalizing on that by appealing to their emotions and overcoming their objectivity.

Verse 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.

As believers become uncomfortable within the church during the Great Tribulation, they may express their concerns to their pastors or share with other members their findings in the Bible about Satan’s position within the church. This activity will ultimately result in the believers either leaving the church on their own or being asked to leave. The Bible does speak of being removed from the church as being killed, spiritually speaking:

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. (John 16:2)

We may wonder why God uses this language. Why does He equate being removed from the church with being killed? Recall that the Israelites, the earthly representation of God’s Kingdom in the Old Testament, were commanded to remove evil-doers from amongst them by literally killing them:

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. (Deuteronomy 13:5)

Likewise, the churches (the earthly representation of God’s Kingdom after the cross) were commanded to remove evil-doers from amongst them:

But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person. (1 Corinthians 5:13)

And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:2)

Though the believers during the Great Tribulation are not actually the evil-doers, they are perceived as bringers of heresy and are removed from the churches. Read John 16:2 again and notice that those who are removing the believers from the church honestly believe they are doing the right thing:

They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

Verse 16

And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads:

This verse is commonly interpreted literally. Many read a political or economic interpretation into this and are looking for a day when the antichrist forces all people to receive some kind of literal mark on their foreheads or right hands. When social security numbers were introduced in the 1930s some believed that was linked to this verse. Then UPC barcodes were introduced in grocery stores in the 1970s and some thought there'd come a day when we'd have them printed on our hands. This has even been depicted in movies. Now we are living in a day when people suspect we may someday be forced to have computer chips embedded in our skin.

This is all very interesting and, at first glance, might seem like reasonable conclusions, but we must remember to use Scripture to interpret Scripture. Though it's an extremely ugly truth, we know that unsaved individuals are slaves of Satan:

And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will. (2 Timothy 2:26)

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John 8:34)

Anyone who is not saved belongs to the dominion of darkness:

Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son (Colossians 1:13)

The unsaved are under the authority of Satan:

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me. (Acts 26:18)

The Greek word translated as "power" can also be translated as "authority."

God often uses the word “forehead” in reference to an individual’s mind:

Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain; and thou hadst a whore’s forehead, thou refusedst to be ashamed. (Jeremiah 3:3)

And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord. (Exodus 28:38)

Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. (Revelation 7:3)

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. (Revelation 14:1)

And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. (Revelation 22:4)

Likewise, often when the Bible references our hands or our feet it’s speaking of our will:

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell (Matthew 5:30)

The unsaved are slaves of Satan; he is their master. Slaves are marked to indicate to whom they belong. Likewise, we are marked spiritually. If we are saved, then we have the seal of God in our foreheads, as spoken of in Revelation 9:4. If we are not saved, then we have the mark of the beast. Either way, both are spiritual marks that have nothing to do with this world’s politics or economics.

Verse 17

And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

The mark’s assumed link to economics is typically based on this verse’s phrase “buy or sell.” We have to remember that the Bible is not an economic book; it is a spiritual book, so we must look for the spiritual meaning. There are a couple pieces of information in the Bible that help us understand this phrase.

In Matthew 21:12-13 Jesus referenced those who were buying and selling in the temple as those who had turned the temple into a den of thieves:

And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.

When we read Jeremiah 7:9-11 we discover that God defines a den of thieves as a church where those who come into it are claiming to be followers of God and yet they follow wrong doctrines:

Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD.

God uses the words “thieves” and “robbers” because when someone claims that God’s Word says one thing when in fact it does not, God calls that “stealing” His words:

Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 23:30-32)

In other words, a den of robbers or thieves is a reference to the church using the Bible to teach false doctrines. In today’s world, this is the situation we are faced with in the churches. Satan comes into the church disguised as God and creates false gospels that are very close to the true Gospel, but they are twisted just enough that they are no longer the true Gospel. Those who attend these churches unknowingly follow a false gospel and turn the church into a den of thieves.

The phrase “buy and sell” also has to do with spiritual merchandising. We read about ships going out to gather gold and silver:

For the king’s ships went to Tarshish with the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. (2 Chronicles 9:21)

The ships represent the church as it goes out into the world with the Gospel. The gold and silver represent the believers:

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. (Haggai 2:8)

The apes and peacocks represent the unbelievers within the church. During the Early Rain as the church shared the Gospel, it came back with both believers and unbelievers within it.

It is the role of believers to go into the world with the Gospel. We find this activity identified with the merchandise of God’s law:

For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. (Proverbs 3:14)

This is why we sometimes find that those who are teaching from the Bible are called merchants:

And the merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her; for no man buyeth their merchandise any more: (Revelation 18:11)

So when God says that no man can buy or sell unless he has the mark of the beast, He is speaking of a time when only gospels of the beast (Satan) will be tolerated in the churches. We know that professing Christians will not follow blatantly false gospels, but Satan comes looking like Christ and his gospels appear to be faithful to the Word of God.

Verse 18

Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is six hundred threescore and six.

We read that God symbolically divides the human race into three parts:

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. 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. (Zechariah 13:8-9)

Two of the parts represent the unsaved and the third part represents the true believers.

Likewise, in Second Samuel chapter 8 we read about when David caused the Moabites to lie down in three lines. Two of the lines were put to death, but he spared the third line and they served him. This is an illustration of the believers who are saved by God's grace and serve Him as a result.

We also read in Second Kings chapter 1 about the wicked king of Israel sending a group of 50 men to capture Elijah, but Elijah called down fire from heaven and destroyed the group. The king sent a second group and the same thing happened to them. The king sent a third group and those men fell on their knees begging to be spared. Elijah spared them and this again is a representation of the believers who are saved and serve Christ.

In Luke 14:31 we read of a king with 10,000 warring against a king with 20,000. The King with an army of 10,000 is Christ (Deuteronomy 33:2, Jude 1:14-15) and the one He wars against is Satan. Therefore, here again we find the believers represented by the fraction one-third (10,000 is one third of the total 30,000 in battle).

In these illustrations the fraction two-thirds is being used to represent those who are under the wrath of God and the fraction one-third is being used to represent God's people. As we examine other passages in the Bible we discover that the fraction one-third can sometimes refer to the unsaved who claim to be God's people rather than those who are actually saved. For example, we read about one third of the stars being cast from heaven to earth:

And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. (Revelation 12:4)

The stars normally identify with those who share the Gospel (Daniel 12:3) so the fraction one-third is being specifically assigned to those who look like believers but in actuality are not saved.

Likewise we read about the third part of the trees being burnt up:

The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were

cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up. (Revelation 8:7)

The trees identify with God's people (Isaiah 55:12, Psalm 104:16). The fact that they are being burnt up indicates that they are under God's judgment. Since the unsaved out in the secular world do not identify with trees, those in view are specifically those that look like they are believers but in actuality are not saved.

Sometimes the phrase, "His people," in the Bible can be a reference to just the true believers and other times it can be a reference to all of those who identify with God externally. For example, the Israelites were God's people, but not every one of them was actually saved. Likewise, we learned earlier that sometimes God uses the label, "Israel," when speaking about just the true believers and other times it's a reference to the corporate church. We have to examine the context of the passage to know which is in view.

This same principle applies to the one-third. It is a label that identifies with God's people. Sometimes it's a reference to just the true believers and other times it's a reference to the church organization. We have to examine the context to know which is in view.

The fraction two-thirds is .666 when written as a number in decimal form. Notice that Revelation 13:18 indicates that 666 is also the number of man. By nature we are born into sin (Psalm 51:5, 58:3). We are born slaves of Satan (John 8:44; Romans 3:9-12, 6:20; Galatians 4:3). As long as we are unsaved, we are part of Satan's kingdom.

We learned in a previous chapter that numbers can be broken down to reveal additional spiritual truth. The number 666 breaks down into $37 \times 6 \times 3$. The number 37 signifies judgment. The number 6 signifies work. The number 3 signifies God's purpose. Together these numbers indicate that it is God's plan that those who are relying on works for their salvation will fall under the judgment of God. The works in view here are that of obeying God, which we know will not get anyone saved.

Every religion (except Christianity) is based on the notion, "What can I do to get on good terms with God?" However, the Bible teaches that we are not saved by works and so all of those who are trying to become saved on their own merit will continue to remain under God's wrath.

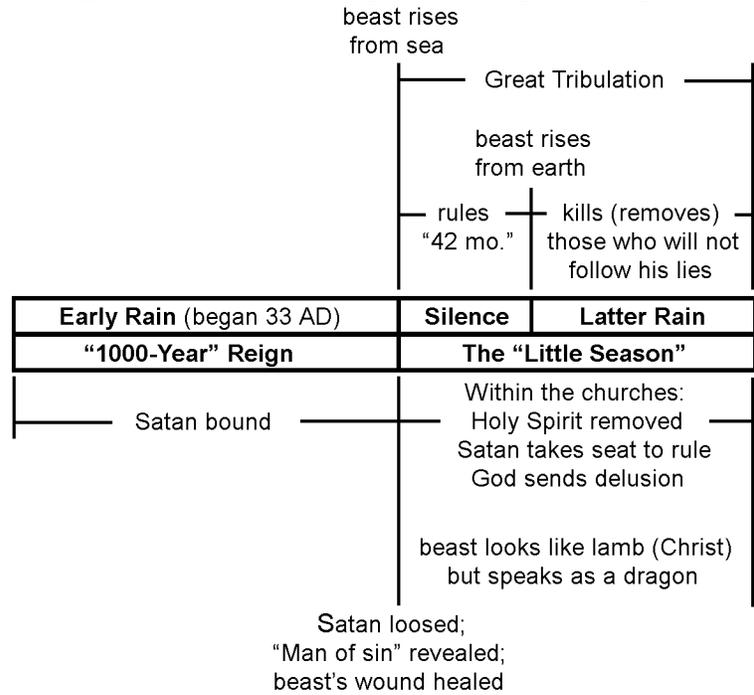
Many people in the Christian community are also asking, "What can I do to get right with God?" and so they look for a prayer they can say or some other action such as baptism to get themselves saved. When we have a correct understanding of the Bible we learn that nothing we do can get us saved. Any action we take is a work. We saw earlier that even faith is a work that is the result of our salvation, not the cause of it.

In summary, the beast that rises from the sea is Satan as he is loosed from the bottomless pit at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, also spoken of as the man of sin being revealed in Second Thessalonians chapter 2. This first beast has spiritual authority over the whole world and identifies with the period of silence that is the first part of the Great Tribulation when very few people were saved in the world.

The second beast that rises from the earth is also Satan as he continues his rule within the churches. However, his deceptive hold on the world outside the churches is once again limited as it had been during the Early Rain so that God can save a great multitude during this second part of the Great Tribulation known as the Latter Rain.

Both beasts are spoken of as looking like God and both are spoken of as directing their attacks on the Kingdom of God. When we compare this with the rest of Scripture we know that it is Satan's rule within the churches as he brings signs and wonders (tongues, healings, "slain in the spirit", etc) to make people believe God is the one ruling there. The killing of the believers is a reference to them being

silenced as they are removed from the churches, either of their own will or by being asked to leave.
 Adding to the diagram we've built in the previous chapters brings us to the following:



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CHAPTER

The First Five Seals

We are now going to examine the first five seals, which are discussed in Revelation 6:1-11. It is important to note that we can now know that the order of the opening of the seals does not coincide with the actual fulfillment of them. The opening of the seals identifies with the opening of the Book (the Bible) in the end times so that we are now able to understand these events. We have to study the verses in order to know the timing of the actual occurrence of the events depicted. On that note, it's also important to keep in mind that the events in Revelation are not discussed in the order in which they will occur. For example, the events depicted in the third seal do not necessarily follow the events of the second seal. This makes the book of Revelation very difficult to understand, and it is part of how God has kept the truths within it hidden for so long. Let's take a look at Revelation 6:1-11.

Verses 1-2: The First Seal

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

The color white is always used in connection with that which is pure. Revelation chapter 19 speaks of Christ coming on a white horse with heavenly armies following behind Him on white horses dressed in white linen.

The bow reminds us of Psalm 45:3-5 where Christ is spoken of as riding prosperously with arrows:

Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

This first seal represents the Gospel as it goes into the world conquering the work of Satan. Specifically, we would identify this horse with the Early Rain period in which the churches were commanded to go into all the world with the Gospel.

Verses 3-4: The Second Seal

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

This is speaking of the Great Tribulation when Satan is allowed to rule within the churches, looking like God, and bring spiritual destruction as judgment on the church for its apostasy. We saw earlier that the great sword is the Word of God. Satan wields the great sword in that he uses it to forward his own agenda through wrong doctrines. We saw in Daniel 8:12 that Satan casts down the truth to the ground.

During the Great Tribulation, Satan sets up his rule within the church and his false gospels appear to be coming from the Bible. Everyone, even the pastors, are deceived into thinking they are following truth. The church will continue in spiritual decay, though externally it will seem to be doing quite well, and this is the death that is being referred to when it says, "they shall kill one another."

Verses 5-6: The Third Seal

And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

The balances in his hand point to famine, and we know from the rest of the Bible that the kind of famine in view during the Great Tribulation is spiritual famine.

God warned of famine in Jerusalem as a result of their iniquity and spoke of it as a time when they would eat bread by weight:

Moreover he said unto me, Son of man, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Jerusalem: and they shall eat bread by weight, and with care; and they shall drink water by measure, and with astonishment: That they may want bread and water, and be astonied one with another, and consume away for their iniquity. (Ezekiel 4:16-17)

The Word of God is the Bread of Life (John 6:48-58). The breaking of the staff of physical bread signifies physical famine and the breaking of the staff of the Bread of Life signifies spiritual famine. This identifies with the spiritual famine in the churches during the Great Tribulation. The spiritual famine of the first part of the Great Tribulation was a worldwide famine, indicated by the silence in Heaven during it. The silence was broken in the second part of the Great Tribulation because the Latter Rain began. However, the spiritual famine continues within the church.

Why does God bring spiritual famine? In Leviticus chapter 26 we read about God bringing judgment upon those in the sanctuary who walk contrary to Him:

Ye shall be delivered into the hand of the enemy. And when I have broken the staff of your bread, ten women shall bake your bread in one oven, and they shall deliver you your bread again by weight: and ye shall eat, and not be satisfied. (Leviticus 26:25-26)

Notice once again we see a reference to bread being delivered by weight, which identifies with the balances in the hand of the horseman.

Revelation chapters 2 and 3 paint a picture of what kinds of iniquities God is specifically focused on in the churches, and a lot of it has to do with countenancing wrong doctrines.

We read that the horseman cannot hurt the oil and wine, which identify with those who have become saved:

Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. (Hebrews 1:9)

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:27-28)

The fact that the horseman cannot hurt the oil and wine is a wonderful promise that those who are truly saved will not be destroyed by the spiritual famine that God allows to take place. This promise also confirms for us that this seal is not just focused on the first part of the Great Tribulation when the spiritual famine is all over the world, but it must identify with the entire Great Tribulation because the second part is when there is the silver lining that we are seeing here; namely the Latter Rain.

Verses 7-8: The Fourth Seal

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

This passage very closely parallels what we read in Ezekiel, when God is indicating that He will bring judgment upon His people for not remaining faithful to His Word:

For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast? (Ezekiel 14:21)

The judgment by sword points to false gospels, as we discussed with the second seal. The judgment by hunger points to spiritual hunger or spiritual famine. The judgment by death points to spiritual death.

We find the number four featured very prominently in this seal: announced by the fourth beast, the fourth horseman carries four judgments and is given power over a fourth part of the earth. The number four signifies that a worldwide aspect is in view, indicating that no church will be exempt from this. As we saw in a previous chapter, God has removed the Holy Spirit from every church worldwide.

Verses 9-11: The Fifth Seal

And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them

that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

Immediately when we see the phrase “little season” we know that it is referring to the Great Tribulation. That is the little season in which Satan is loosed (Revelation 20:3). As we learned in a previous chapter, the killing of the believers during the Great Tribulation is really a silencing of them as they are removed from the churches.

This seal addresses the condition of the mind of the true believers. For them, this is a time of great sadness. All of us who have left the churches have loved ones still within them.

There is a very encouraging statement in this passage: “that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” The great promise here is that believers will be coming out of the church throughout the entire Great Tribulation. Right up until the Rapture there will be hope that maybe some of our loved ones will also come out.

Unfortunately, based on everything else we read in the Bible, this hope will probably gradually decrease. God is sending strong delusion to those in the churches, and the deceptive work of Satan is digging in deeper. As the Great Tribulation progresses, the likelihood will increase that our warnings to church members will be met with anger and mockery.

Many of us are concerned about those in the churches because that is our background. That is where many of the people we know and love are located. However, let us not forget we are living in the Latter Rain and God is saving a great multitude outside of the churches all around the world. That is indeed an encouraging piece of information.

21

CHAPTER

The 200 Million

In Revelation chapter 9 we read about an army of 200 million horsemen. We will discover that it identifies with all of those who have and will become saved throughout time. We will examine Revelation 9:14-18 verse by verse.

Verse 14

Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet, Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates.

In the Bible, the Euphrates River is used in connection with the Promised Land:

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 (Genesis 15:18)

Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. (Deuteronomy 11:24)

From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. (Joshua 1:24)

The Promised Land was a representation of the Kingdom of God, so the Euphrates River spiritually identifies with God's Kingdom.

The four angels being bound and then loosed is language to indicate that this event is not to take place until a predetermined point in time according to God's plan. Recall that Revelation 20:7 indicates that Satan would be loosed when the "1000-year" reign came to an end. Satan was bound during the Early Rain and it was God's plan that he would be loosed again to forward His judgment process when that predetermined time had arrived. Likewise, the four angels mentioned in Revelation 9:14 will not be loosed until the predetermined point in time arrives in God's judgment process.

Verse 15

And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

We learned in a previous chapter that the human race is spiritually broken into three parts. We also learned that the fraction one-third is a label that identifies with God's people. Sometimes it is a reference to just the true believers and sometimes it's a reference to the church organization. We have to examine the context to know which is in view.

We learned that this is a spiritual number and therefore does not imply that literally one-third of the human race is saved. We know that the end-times judgment is largely focused on the churches, and based on the context of Revelation chapter 9 we can be certain that the third part being referenced is the churches. Condemnation by the Word of God is identified with spiritual death:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. (John 5:24)

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

It is in this sense that the third part is killed by the proclamation of God's Word through the believers.

Verse 16

And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them.

"Two hundred thousand thousand" is another way of saying 200 million. A study on the number 2 will show that it identifies with the bringers of the Gospel, so here we have a clue that the 200 million horsemen represent the believers.

Verses 17-18

And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. By these three was the third part of men killed, by the fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths.

We read that these horsemen are wearing breastplates of jacinth. We only find the word "jacinth" in one other verse in the Bible, and it's in a passage that is describing the beauty of the eternal Jerusalem:

And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. (Revelation 21:19-20)

We know that precious stones identify with the Kingdom of God and true believers:

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. (Daniel 11:38)

Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble (1 Corinthians 3:12)

The breastplates of jacinth are another clue that these horsemen represent the true believers.

We also read here that the horsemen are wearing breastplates of fire and brimstone, which is language to indicate that judgment is in view. In addition to the breastplates, we read that fire and brimstone went out of their mouths to kill the third part of men. This is similar to what Revelation chapter 11 says about the two witnesses, who also represent the true believers:

And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. (Revelation 11:5)

The believers proclaim the Word of God and it is God's Word that judges mankind:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Romans 2:12)

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

We read in Revelation chapter 19 that Christ comes with a sword going out of His mouth to smite the nations:

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. (Revelation 19:15)

The sword is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17) so, once again, it is a reference to the Word of God judging mankind.

The fire and brimstone coming out of the mouths of the horsemen is language indicating that the believers are judging the world. We don't fully understand what God means when He says that the believers will assist in the judging process, but God does indeed tell us that this is so:

Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (1 Corinthians 6:2)

Numbering the Believers

The idea of God giving us the number of believers is not foreign to the Bible. For example, we know there were exactly eight believers in the world at the time of the flood:

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. (1 Peter 3:20)

We know that 120,000 people were spared from God's wrath in Ninevah:

And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle? (Jonah 4:11)

We know that there were 7,000 believers at one point in Israel:

Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. (1 Kings 19:18)

But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved to myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. (Romans 11:4)

Percentage of the Population Saved

As mentioned above, we know that there were only eight true believers in the world when the flood came in Noah's day. We can also know that the world population at the time of the flood in 4990 BC was likely between 900,000 and 2 million (population calculations are available on The-Latter-Rain.com). This means that 6,000 years into the world's existence nearly its entire population was not saved.

We know that there were only 7,000 true believers in all of Israel at a certain point in time (1 Kings 19:18). We can know that about 1.5 million Israelites left Egypt in the exodus (again, population calculations are available on The-Latter-Rain.com), so the population of Israel was probably around 2 million at the time when only 7,000 were true believers. This means that only about one-third of 1% of those who were identified as God's people were actually saved. Secular estimates indicate that the world population at that time was about 40 million, and there is no biblical evidence of there being any significant number of believers outside of Israel in those days. Therefore, we can safely estimate that in the days of national Israel (1407 BC - 587 BC), only about 1/50th of 1% of the world's population was actually saved. Throughout the first 11,000 years of this world's existence far less than 1% of the world's population was truly saved.

We have learned that about 2 billion people in the world today identify themselves as Christians. This does not mean they are all actually saved, but like the Israelites in the days of national Israel they are the earthly representation of God's people. If Revelation chapter 9 is teaching us that 200 million people will be saved throughout time, then the biblical evidence suggests that a very small percentage of that 200 million were saved during the first 11,000 years of this world's existence before the cross. The Bible speaks of those that were saved during the Early Rain from 33 AD to the beginning of the Great Tribulation as being figuratively 144,000 and those saved during the Great Tribulation as being "a great multitude which no man can number." This language suggests that a greater number of individuals will become saved during the Great Tribulation than during the entire Early Rain period. In other words, a relatively large percentage of the 200 million believers will actually be alive and present on Earth when the Rapture occurs.

The bottom line is that, if the above conclusions are accurate, 2% to 3% of the world's population will be true believers at the time of the Rapture. That is a drastically higher percentage than at any other time in the world's history. However, the sad fact is that this still means 91% to 93% of those who call themselves Christians will be left behind because they are not actually saved. Even though the percentage of the world's population that is truly saved will be higher than ever before in history, 97% to 98% of the population will be left behind after the Rapture.

Genesis 24:60 Indicates Thousands of Millions of Believers?

In Genesis 24:60 of our King James translation we find language that seems to indicate that the number of believers will be much higher than 200 million:

And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. (Genesis 24:60)

Even one thousand million believers is a number five times higher than 200 million, and this verse indicates that the number of believers will be multiple thousands of millions. Doesn't that contradict the idea that the number of believers will be 200 million?

The Hebrew word translated as "millions" is *rebabab* and should have been translated as "ten thousand." The Hebrew word *rebabab* is found 15 times in the Old Testament and Genesis 24:60 is the only place in which it is translated as "millions." Once it is translated as "many," and the other 13 times it is translated as "ten thousand."

One thousand ten thousands is 10 million. Genesis 24:60 indicates that the number of believers will be thousands of ten thousand. In other words, it will be a multiple of 10 million. The number 200 million is twenty thousand ten thousands; it is 20 x 10 million. I know this is confusing to follow. The point is, Genesis 24:60 doesn't contradict Revelation chapter 9. It, of course, doesn't specify 200 million as the number of believers, but the language of the verse does harmonize with the number 200 million.

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CHAPTER

The Sixth Seal: Five Months of Torment

We saw that the first seal deals with the Early Rain from 33 AD to the beginning of the Great Tribulation, and that the next four seals deal with the Great Tribulation. Now let's examine the sixth seal, which deals with the events after the Great Tribulation. Keep in mind that we now know the Rapture occurs at the end of the Great Tribulation, so the events depicted in the sixth seal are those that take place after the Rapture.

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? (Revelation 6:12-17)

Five Months

The events described in the sixth seal tie in with the events that are taking place when the fifth trumpet sounds in Revelation chapter 9. We read above that the sun is darkened in the sixth seal. Likewise, the sun is darkened during the events of the fifth trumpet sounding in Revelation chapter 9:

And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. (Revelation 9:2)

The language of smoke going up as the smoke of a great furnace indicates that judgment is in view:

And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace. (Genesis 19:28)

Revelation chapter 9 speaks of this period of judgment and wrath as a five-month timeframe:

And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man. (Revelation 9:5)

And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. (Revelation 9:10)

How do we know whether to understand these five months as a literal five months or figurative? This is a fair question and we can't be certain of the answer simply by reading Revelation chapter 9. We know that it was exactly five months from when Noah's family entered the safety of the ark to when the ark rested on a mountain:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat. (Genesis 8:4)

We know that the Flood was a foreshadowing of the end of the world:

But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:37-39)

Therefore, we know we can find links between the Flood and end of the world. The ark represents the safety God brings to the believers as they are spared from God's judgment. This could very readily tie in with the Rapture and therefore suggest that perhaps we can understand these final five months as a literal five months.

Also, the sea often signifies God's wrath. The Flood was God's judgment on the world in that day. When the ark rested on the mountains at the end of the five months, that was when the flood waters were no longer bringing judgment because they receded (Genesis 8:3). Likewise, on the last day God will destroy hell. This is spoken of as a time when there will be no more sea:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. (Revelation 21:1)

In other words, the Rapture will occur on the last day of the Great Tribulation. This event was foreshadowed by Noah's family entering the ark which kept them safe from the judgment of God. Five months later, God's wrath will come to an end when He completely destroys this world and the remains of mankind.

When we study the details God provides regarding the timing of the end, we find more evidence that the five months' period is in fact a literal five months in length. We will get to that near the end of this book.

A Great Earthquake

These five months are associated with a great earthquake:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood (Revelation 6:12)

The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining (Joel 2:10)

The Bible speaks of it as the most mighty earthquake the world has ever seen:

And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. (Revelation 16:18)

Remember that there are two judgment days in the Bible. One of these events is the final judgment on mankind, namely these last five months we are presently examining. God has revealed that the final judgment is a process rather than a single-day event. God speaks of it as “judgment day,” just as He speaks of the event or process of Creation as a single-day event:

These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created, in the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens (Genesis 2:4)

The other judgment day was when Christ suffered for the sake of the believers. Just as in the judgment day of the Lord near the end of time, there was also a great earthquake tied to Christ suffering at the cross:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent (Matthew 27:51)

We know the earthquake spoken of here was a literal earthquake. As we examine more information about the end-times judgment we will see that the earthquake mentioned in the sixth seal will be literal as well.

Think of the potential problems that would arise from an earthquake of such magnitude. Buildings would collapse on people. Power grids would be knocked out. Roads and freeways would be destroyed. Nuclear power plants might leak toxic material into the environment. The list goes on. Imagine the condition of the world after such an earthquake. Our modern way of life would be greatly crippled.

The Graves are Opened

We know that everyone that has died, both saved and unsaved, will be resurrected:

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and

they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (John 5:28-29)

The resurrection of the believers occurs at the time of the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), so we know the resurrection of the unbelievers must occur at that time as well or shortly thereafter. This verse doesn't say that the unsaved will be resurrected to any kind of life or conscious existence. The punishment for mankind's rebellion is spiritual death. There is no indication in the Bible that the dead unbelievers will once again be brought back into conscious existence.

Keeping in mind that the Book of Jeremiah is applicable to our understanding of end-times events, we find a passage in Jeremiah that helps us understand the nature of this resurrection of the unsaved. It has to do with their remains being spewed out of the graves:

At that time, saith the Lord, they shall bring out the bones of the kings of Judah, and the bones of his princes, and the bones of the priests, and the bones of the prophets, and the bones of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, out of their graves: And they shall spread them before the sun, and the moon, and all the host of heaven, whom they have loved, and whom they have served, and after whom they have walked, and whom they have sought, and whom they have worshipped: they shall not be gathered, nor be buried; they shall be for dung upon the face of the earth. And death shall be chosen rather than life by all the residue of them that remain of this evil family, which remain in all the places whither I have driven them, saith the Lord of hosts. (Jeremiah 8:1-3)

Again, just as in the judgment day near the end of time, the graves were also opened and the dead were raised when Christ hung on the cross. It was the earthquake we looked at earlier that caused the graves to break open:

And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent. And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Matthew 27:51-53)

Also, when Christ's grave was opened at His resurrection there was a great earthquake:

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. (Matthew 28:2)

This pattern teaches us that we can expect there to be an earthquake at the time of the Rapture that will have to be massive enough to open all the graves worldwide. The purpose of this would be so that the dead unbelievers can be shamed and prepared for the final destruction that takes place on the last day.

I don't want to get into a morbid discussion here because that is not the point of this book, but in order to wrap our head around the language of some passages in the Bible we need to briefly consider the numbers involved.

We will learn by the end of this book that the Rapture will occur in 2011. Based on data from the US Census Bureau, there will be almost exactly 7 billion people alive on this planet in 2011. We have learned that all the true believers throughout time number 200 million in total. A percentage of those are, of course, already in Heaven, while another percentage will be part of the 7 billion alive when the Rapture occurs. This means that roughly 6.8-6.9 billion unsaved individuals will be left behind.

Some of those will die in the worldwide earthquake, while the rest will die throughout the five months from various causes. Many will still be alive to face the final destruction at the end of the five months.

If we estimate that a billion people will die in the earthquake, that will still leave about 6 billion people to endure the horrible five-month period. (The Bible doesn't tell us how many will die in the earthquake, nor does that detail matter insofar as the point being made here is concerned). This world wouldn't know what to do with a billion dead bodies littered all over the face of it. On top of that, even if 75% of the world's population is still alive at the end of the five months that would mean that the death rate during the five months would have to average 10 million people per day in order for 25% of the world's population to die during that timeframe. Then add to that all the corpses that were removed from the graves at the beginning of the five months and we can understand why God paints a picture of a world littered with corpses that don't get buried:

They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcasses shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. (Jeremiah 16:4)

God speaks of corpses being like manure covering the earth from one end to the other:

And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground. (Jeremiah 25:33)

Nahum chapter 3 is another chapter that can be shown to be discussing this horrible five-month period, and there we read about a world that is so littered with corpses that people are stumbling over them:

The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear: and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcasses; and there is none end of their corpses; they stumble upon their corpses (Nahum 3:3)

The point is not to be morbid here but to get a reality check. This is going to happen very soon. We can shrug our shoulders and disregard this information, and the Bible teaches that will be the reaction of most people, but that will not stop this from happening.

The Sun is Darkened

The Bible informs us that during the final five months following the Great Tribulation the sun will be darkened:

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 (Matthew 24:29)

It has been commonly taught that the sun is darkened on the last day, which was defined as a single day of judgment. However, we are learning now that the sun being darkened actually identifies with a period of time that includes more than just one day. The sun will be darkened in the days (plural)

after the Great Tribulation:

But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light; And the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken. (Mark 13:24-25)

Christ is the light of the world (John 8:12). The sun being darkened signifies that the time for salvation has ended. After the Rapture there is no longer any hope for salvation for those who are left behind. When reading about the sixth seal we find the language of a scroll being rolled together:

And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. (Revelation 6:14)

The scroll is the Bible (Jeremiah 36:4), and this is language to indicate that the Gospel message that brings salvation has completed its work.

It does seem logical to consider the idea that the sun will literally be darkened given that the literal earthquake and literal grave openings at the cross foreshadow literal events on the day of the Rapture. The sun was literally darkened for three hours at the cross (Matthew 27:45), so we must initially consider this possibility during the five months. The problem is that there is language in the Bible to indicate that there will still be day and night during those five months. Plus, the celestial clock is the true keeper of time and if the sun were to “burn out,” then that would suggest that time is no longer being kept and clearly that won’t be the case. Furthermore, life could not exist on this planet if the sun were to burn out. The average surface temperature on Pluto is -380 degrees Fahrenheit. The reason Pluto is so cold is because of its distance from the sun. If the sun were to burn out, then it would no longer be putting off the heat that keeps Pluto from being even colder and our planet would drop below Pluto’s current temperature. The coldest temperature ever recorded on Earth is -128 degrees Fahrenheit in Antarctica. Clearly, life would not survive on Earth at -380 degrees Fahrenheit, and the language of the Bible does not permit this kind of freeze-out ending to life on this planet. The only plausible literal darkening of the sun would be something that would simply block out the sun’s light such as dust, smoke, and ash being thrown into the air by volcanoes or nuclear weapons. I don’t think we can rule these possibilities out, but they are not certainties by any means, and they would not be nearly as horrible as the fact that there will no longer be a possibility for salvation. That is the real horror.

The Moon Becomes Blood

We read that the sun being darkened correlates with the moon turning to blood:

And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood (Revelation 6:12)

The moon represents the law of God. Blood points to God’s judgment and it is the law that judges man:

For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law (Romans 2:12)

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty. (James 2:12)

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48)

The law of God serves two roles. On the one hand, it is through the hearing of God's Word that people become saved (Romans 10:17). On the other hand, God's Word also judges the unsaved. The sun being darkened points to the fact that the hope for salvation will be gone. The moon becoming blood also points to the same situation: God's Word will no longer be serving the purpose of salvation. All that will be left is judgment.

Incidentally, because judgment begins within the church during the Great Tribulation, the Bible speaks of that time also as a time when the sun is darkened and the moon turned to blood:

The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come (Acts 2:20)

Acts 2:20 is placed within a passage that is speaking of a time when salvation is still possible. This is because during the Great Tribulation a great multitude is being saved outside of the churches, but within the churches judgment has begun.

A Time of Self-Destruction

In Second Chronicles chapter 20 we find a historic account that serves as an illustration of these final five months. In this chapter the enemies of God (Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir) came to battle God's people, Judah. God told Judah that the battle did not involve them and so He spared Judah from having to take part in the battle. The spared people of Judah sang praises to the Lord as God allowed the people of the enemy nations to destroy each other in the valley below to the point of total annihilation. We are told that not one single person survived.

This is what will happen after God takes His people from Earth in the Rapture. We read that once Satan was loosed from his prison at the beginning of the Great Tribulation he began building up to go to battle against the believers. This battle is often known as the Battle of Armageddon, and when we examine Revelation chapter 16 we find that this battle takes place during the final five months. At that point God will have removed the believers from the scene and the world will turn into a pit of self-destruction.

The Door is Shut

In Matthew chapter 25 we read about ten virgins who went to meet the bridegroom. The bridegroom represents Christ in this parable. The five wise virgins represent the true believers and the foolish represent the unsaved. We discover that the five wise virgins were ready to meet the bridegroom and when He came they went in and the door was shut:

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. (Matthew 25:10)

Then the foolish virgins came along pounding on the door begging to be let in, but the bridegroom said, "I know you not."

Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. (Matthew 25:11-12)

This parallels what we read in Matthew chapter 7 about those who are begging to be let in after the Rapture:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (Matthew 7:21-23)

This passage is not speaking about those out in the secular world who want nothing to do with God. It is speaking about those who claim to be His people, those in the churches. Remember, there are about 2 billion professing Christians on this planet, but less than 200 million of them are actually saved. That means the vast majority (about 92%) of them are going to be left behind after the Rapture. They're going to be confused and wondering, "Why wasn't I taken?" That's what this verse is talking about. "Lord, haven't I gone to church? Haven't I sung praises in Your Name and shared Your Word with others? Haven't I lived my life for You?" But like we saw in the parable with the five foolish virgins, they will be told, "I never knew you."

We almost can't even imagine this. In fact, it's so horrible that we are tempted to say, "No way. That is not how it's going to happen." But unfortunately, this is exactly what will happen. We know this because it is what the Bible teaches. Never mind all the physical death that will accompany this event; this is a much sadder aspect of the story.

We have seen that the Bible uses the Flood as a foreshadowing of the end of the world. We have seen that Noah's family going into the ark represents the Rapture, which occurs just before the destruction begins. The Bible tells us that as soon as Noah's family went into the ark God shut the door:

And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the LORD shut him in. (Genesis 7:16)

Remember, Christ is the door:

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (John 10:9)

Once the Rapture occurs that will be the end of any hope for salvation. The door will be shut.

Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

We read in Luke 13:28 about weeping and gnashing of teeth. Until recently we have always understood this phrase to be related to the eternal torment of those in hell. However, now that we know such a

place will never exist we wonder, “What about the weeping and gnashing of teeth?” If we back up a few verses to get the context we can now readily see to what it refers. Let’s examine Luke 13:25-28, beginning with verse 25:

When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are:

We know the door being shut identifies with the Rapture. That is when the time for being able to enter God’s Kingdom will come to an end. Here in Luke 13:25 we are reading about a time when the door has been shut and people are begging to be let in. Those on the outside continue their plea in verse 26:

Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets.

This is talking about the unsaved in the churches. The non-Christian community out in the world will not be making statements such as this. It will be the unsaved within the churches that will be surprised and wondering why they were left behind, because they will have been so certain they were truly saved. The statement, “We have eaten and drunk in thy presence,” is another way of saying, “We have been faithfully worshipping You in church.” However, the fact will be that they weren’t in His presence because the Holy Spirit had been removed from the churches when the Great Tribulation began.

The statement, “Thou hast taught in our streets,” is another way of saying, “Thou hast been our guide in the church.” The “streets” is a reference to the gathering place (Nehemiah 8:1), which is the church. They will have thought it was God who was guiding them when in actuality it was Satan throughout the Great Tribulation.

God responds to them in verse 27:

But he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.

The unsaved in the churches will be crying out to God after the Rapture in disbelief. They will come to the realization that God has abandoned them. By then, the newly revealed truths presented in this book will probably have become known to many people in the Christian community because there are many people outside of the churches today discussing these matters and warning others, but most of those in the churches will have not believed them. They will have believed these teachings to be inaccurate and perhaps will even attribute them to false prophets. However, when these warnings prove to be faithful to the Bible, the unsaved in the Christian community will see where truth was all along, but by then it will be too late.

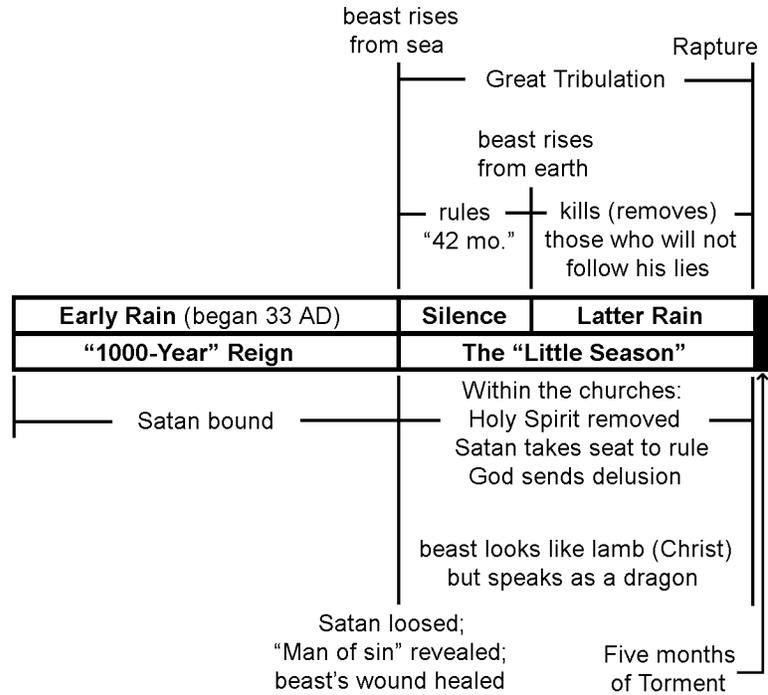
Then we come to verse 28, which includes the phrase, “weeping and gnashing of teeth”:

There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.

This is when there will be great anger towards God. Certainly those out in the secular world will be scared and angry, but the ones who will really be gnashing their teeth are the unsaved within the churches. They will feel as though God has wronged them and been unjust toward them. We are

reminded here once again of the Rapture as the unsaved see the prophets being caught up, and those who are crying, "But Lord, we have eaten and drunk in thy presence," will see that they have been cast out.

When we add the Rapture and the final five months to our diagram that we've been building we have the following:



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CHAPTER

Two End-Times Parables

Before we move on to looking at how we can know the Rapture will occur in 2011 I would like to briefly look at a two parables in the Bible that are dealing with the end times.

The Wheat and Tares (Matthew 13:24-30)

We will first look at the parable of the wheat and tares, which is found in Matthew chapter 13. The story goes as follows:

A householder sowed good seeds of wheat, but while men slept the enemy came in and sowed tares (weeds) among the wheat. The servants asked the householder if they should go and separate the tares from the wheat. The householder told them to let the two grow together because if they tried to separate the tares from the wheat, then they might accidentally remove some of the wheat as well. Instead, the householder said he would send the reapers at harvest time to first gather up and bind the tares in bundles to be burned, and then gather the wheat into the barn.

God helps us a great deal by clearly telling us that the householder represents Christ, the wheat is the true believers, the tares are the unsaved, and the enemy is Satan:

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. (Matthew 13:37-39)

The setting of this event is the churches. That is where the wheat (true believers) received its spiritual nourishment as the believers grew in grace. The fact that the tares were sown “among the wheat” is language to indicate that the tares are in the churches. The tares were sown “while men slept” and sleeping is a reference to being spiritually blind:

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. (Romans 11:7-8)

Sleeping is the opposite of watching:

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (2 Thessalonians 2:6)

We will learn in the next chapter that watching has to do with studying the Bible. We know that throughout the Early Rain Satan's primary focus was to bring false doctrines into the church, and he has been successful to a high degree because the church members are "sleeping." They aren't constantly re-examining the doctrines of the church to see if they truly are faithful to God's Word. Most of them are simply reading the Bible in light of what they already believe to be true. The unsaved individuals in the churches (the tares) truly believe they are saved. They hold onto and continue to teach false doctrines, but do not realize they are being used by Satan to forward his work. The parable states that the tares look just like the wheat. In other words, the teachers of false doctrines look just like ministers of righteousness:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

The problem with trying to remove the unsaved is that they look just like the true believers in the church. I believe this is part of why God hid many of the truths about the end times. If God had revealed in advance that His judgment would come upon the church and that Satan would eventually rule within it, then believers would have been preoccupied throughout the Early Rain. The churches would have been distracted from their primary assignment of sending forth the Gospel into the world. They would have been focusing on trying to figure out who might be unknowingly forwarding the work of Satan. God did not want this to be the main focus of the church and so it was His plan that the wheat and tares coexist in the churches throughout the Early Rain.

Bear in mind that God doesn't take it lightly when wicked people are found among the congregation of His true people. Remember the Israelites were commanded to literally kill any wicked people in their midst so that the evil could be removed from among them (Deuteronomy 21:21). And yet notice the command in the parable of the wheat and tares: "Let them grow together until the harvest." We've learned that the tares look so much like the wheat that they are almost indistinguishable from each other. We are kidding ourselves if we think we can look at a church and know which people are the tares. They themselves do not even know.

God has created His own method to separate the wheat from the tares and it has been His plan all along to wait until the harvest to do so, which we saw relates to the end of the world. We are in the final harvest, which is also spoken of in the Bible as the Latter Rain. Throughout the course of the Latter Rain the true believers are being removed from the churches. Some of them are aware that they are to come out and so they leave the church on their own. Others are leaving because they are uncomfortable with the direction their church is heading and they are finding it increasingly difficult to find a truly faithful church. And then there are those who have been asked to leave because they are questioning the direction of their church.

By allowing Satan to rule within the churches God is accomplishing two things. One, He is bringing judgment upon the church in the form of spiritual destruction through the employment of the enemy. Two, He has created a situation by which He can separate the wheat from the tares by having the true believers gradually sifted out of the churches. Matthew chapter 13 says that the tares will be bound together in bundles to be burned. That is a deeply sad statement.

The Vineyard (Matthew 21:33-41 & Isaiah 5:1-6)

The full parable of the vineyard is split into two pieces. The first half of the parable is in Matthew chapter 21 and the second half is actually found in the Old Testament in Isaiah chapter 5. The story goes as follows:

A householder planted a vineyard, placed a hedge around it, and built a tower within it. He placed the vineyard in the care of husbandmen and sent the husbandmen servants to help harvest the fruit of the vineyard. However, the husbandmen beat the servants and killed them. Then the householder sent the husbandmen his son and they killed him as well. As a result, the householder destroyed the husbandmen and placed the vineyard in the care of different husbandmen.

This new set of husbandmen also did not properly take care of the vineyard. The householder came and found that the vineyard had yielded wild grapes. He then decided to destroy the vineyard by removing its hedge and allowing it to be trodden down. He stopped pruning it, cut off its water supply, and allowed thorns to grow within it.

The householder is God. The first group of husbandmen is ancient Israel. The vineyard represents God's use of an organized group of people as the earthly representation of His kingdom. God first used national Israel as the caretakers of His Word. The hedge represents God's protection:

Why hast thou then broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? (Psalm 80:12)

Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. (Job 1:10)

Thou hast broken down all his hedges; thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. (Psalm 89:40)

The tower represents the strength of God's protection and the fact that His name is there:

The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe. (Proverbs 18:10)

For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. (Psalm 61:3)

Even though the people of Israel continuously rebelled against God, He often protected them from their enemies.

The servants the householder sent represent the prophets God sent to warn Israel and Judah of the destruction that would come because of their rebellion, but these prophets were always scoffed at. The Israelites did not heed the warnings the prophets brought.

The son of the householder represents Christ. Jesus was in the blood line of Israel, but His own people rejected Him (John 1:11). He was crucified by His own people. When Christ hung on the cross the veil of the temple was rent (Mark 15:37-38) and that pointed to the fact that the temple was no longer the holy place. The role of being the earthly representation of God's people had been taken from the Israelites and given to the church. In other words, the vineyard had been given to another group of husbandmen.

It's important to note the consequence of the Israelites' rebellion. God indicated that He would destroy them, but not the vineyard. We saw this take place as God brought destruction on Israel, but that did not bring an end to God's use of an organized group of people representing His kingdom on Earth. God continued to employ that program by switching His focus to the church.

We read that the vineyard was planted with the choicest vine, and that of course is Christ:

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)

When the vineyard is in the hands of the church we find the statement, "Judge between Me and the vineyard." The instruction here is to compare the vineyard to the law of God. In other words, how does the vineyard stack up against the rules that are laid out for the church? When God has declared that women are not to be pastors, how well has the church followed that rule? When God has mandated that there is not to be divorce for any reason, how has the church handled that rule? We could go through a number of doctrines. The vineyard does not stack up well against the commandments of God. The church has modified God's law to satisfy its logic and desires.

God has given the church His completed Word. The nation of Israel didn't have that luxury. God has carefully laid out all the rules the church is commanded to follow, yet, the churches have rebelled as they have created their own doctrines that are not biblical. We've seen that God has given them warnings. In fact, God gave the church over 1,900 years to correct itself. As this parable of the vineyard states, what more could God have done? God continued to look for it to repent but, by and large, all He found were wild grapes.

We read that because of the second group of husbandmen's improper care of the vineyard, the householder removed the hedge. The hedge being taken away indicates that God has removed His protection from the church. Though Satan's work was still permitted to enter into the churches to a degree, the Holy Spirit was present in the churches throughout the Early Rain, restraining Satan's work. Once the Great Tribulation began, God removed the Holy Spirit from the churches and Satan was allowed to set up shop and completely rule within them.

We also read that the householder let the vineyard be trodden down, and that reminds us of the destruction pastors have brought on the church:

Many pastors have destroyed my vineyard, they have trodden my portion under foot, they have made my pleasant portion a desolate wilderness. (Jeremiah 12:10)

The pastors are not intentionally bringing about spiritual destruction. They believe they are teaching the true Gospel but in actuality Satan is using them to further his work. The phrase "trodden my portion under foot" identifies with the Great Tribulation when the sanctuary is trodden under foot:

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? (Daniel 8:13)

This is all language to indicate that God's days of using an organized group of people to represent His kingdom has come to an end. He has removed His name from it by removing the Holy Spirit. It has been destroyed. True, the churches still physically exist, but they are no longer being used by God. He has abandoned them in this time of Great Tribulation.

Looking back on the Early Rain, we read that the householder allowed briars and thorns to grow in the vineyard and they represent that which has been rejected by God:

For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned. (Hebrews 6:7-8)

The Bible speaks of the briars and thorns as being among the true believers:

And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house. (Ezekiel 2:6)

This parallels the parable of the wheat and tares where God speaks of the church membership as being a mixture of wheat and tares (saved and unsaved). The Bible tells us that eventually all the land will be briars and thorns:

And it shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand silverlings, it shall even be for briars and thorns. With arrows and with bows shall men come thither; because all the land shall become briars and thorns. (Isaiah 7:23-24)

The land in view is the earthly representation of God's Kingdom, which is the churches. This is speaking of the same thing as the time when all of the true believers have been removed from the churches, when all that are left are the tares.

Isaiah chapter 10 is directly addressing the situation in the churches of our day, and there God indicates that He will send famine among His people and will ultimately destroy "his thorns and his briars":

Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day (Isaiah 10:16-17)

God uses the language "his thorns and his briars" as a reminder that the people in view here are not those out in the secular world who want nothing to do with God. Rather, those in view are the ones who identify themselves as God's people, but in actuality are not saved. Sadly, the vast majority of those in the churches fall into this category.

God commanding the clouds to not rain upon the vineyard is indicative of the Gospel being shut off within the churches. Remember, spiritual rain has everything to do with the Gospel.

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CHAPTER

Can We Know When?

For as long as most of us can remember, we have always been taught that no one can ever know for certain when the world will end. The Bible was carefully crafted by God so that we would think that for the last 2,000 years. The church had a mandate: Go into all the world with the Gospel. It was not God's intent for the church to concern itself with the timing of the end. It had a mission to accomplish and spending time deciphering the end of time did not fit into that mission, so God sealed that information up. However, now we have found that we can know the timing of the end, not because we are smarter than theologians of the past, but simply because it was God's purpose to hide it from mankind until now.

Coming as a Thief in the Night (1 Thessalonians 5:2-6)

Almost anyone who grew up in the church, myself included, remembers being told over and over that Christ's coming will be like a thief in the night. In other words, no one can know when His coming will occur. One place we read about this is in First Thessalonians 5:2-6, so let's examine this passage verse by verse, beginning with verses 2 and 3:

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

Teachers in the past have always used these verses as proof that people will be caught off-guard by Christ's coming. It is true that these verses are teaching that, but verses 4 and 5 instruct us that there's more to the story:

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

Here we discover that there are some people who will not be caught off-guard by Christ's second coming. We have all been taught time and time again that Christ's coming will be like a thief in the night, but here we have a clear statement (at least, it's clear to us now) that it will not come as a thief for the children of light. The light of the world is Christ (John 8:12). Therefore, the children of light are the believers. They are the ones God is addressing here. Verse 6 then reminds us to watch:

Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.

So we learn that those who will not be caught off-guard are those who are not “sleeping,” those who are watching. This does not mean those who are watching will simply know that Christ’s coming must be getting close. According to the 2008 World Almanac, about one-third of the world’s population calls itself Christian. Recent studies indicate that about 85% of professing Christians believe the end of the world is near, so there are about 2 billion people who think we are living in the end times. This large percentage of the world’s population is not the group of people God is referring to when He says the end will not come as a thief in the night for the children of light. In fact, in Revelation chapters 2 and 3 God is specifically addressing just the churches, just those who claim to be His people, and there He says that if they don’t watch then He will come as a thief in the night to them:

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:3)

We find another statement in Mark reminding us to watch and not sleep:

Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch. (Mark 13:35-37)

We will see that those who are “sleeping” are not those out in the world who want nothing to do with God, but they are those in the Christian community who continue to hold the belief that we can’t know when the end will occur. Remember, we saw in the last chapter that God defines “sleeping” as not having spiritual eyes opened to understand the truth (Romans 11:7-8).

When we examined Second Thessalonians chapter 2 we saw that as a result of the churches’ desire to cling to their doctrines without continually re-examining them, God is sending them strong delusion to keep them in their lies:

And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11)

We find another passage in Isaiah that reminds us that sometimes spiritual blindness (“sleeping”) is a result of God’s judgment:

For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed (Isaiah 29:10-11)

We are being taught here that we can know enough about the timing of the end that it will not come unexpectedly if we are watching. How do we watch? Do we go stand on a hilltop and look at the sky? No, of course not. We aren’t going to find any information in the sky about when to expect Christ’s return so that it does not come as a thief in the night. We watch by studying God’s Word very carefully. That is the only way we can obtain any information about what to expect and when.

As mentioned earlier, the Bible teaches that if we don't watch, then yes it is true that the Rapture will come as a thief in the night (Revelation 3:3). This is how we know that watching means to study the Bible and learn the timing of the end. The Bible does actually teach that we are to be studying time:

Whoso keepeth the commandment shall feel no evil thing; and a wise man's heart discerneth both time and judgment. (Ecclesiastes 8:5)

We read in Luke chapter 12 about the servant who was not paying attention to when his lord might return:

But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. (Luke 12:45-46)

This parable is speaking of someone who professes to be a Christian. It isn't speaking of someone out in the world that wants nothing to do with the Bible. This is evident by the phrase, "My lord delayeth his coming." This is someone who identifies himself with Christ.

The churches are filled with Christians who say, "We can't know when Christ is coming so there's no point in talking about it or looking for clues." This kind of statement is the opposite of watching. It is like the servant who says, "My lord delayeth his coming." And it is true that for those who have this attitude Christ will come at an hour when they are not expecting.

What about Not Knowing the Day or Hour? (Mark 13:31-33)

We also read about not knowing the day or hour of Christ's return in Mark 13:31-33. The first verse of that passage is clearly speaking about the end of the world:

Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away. (Mark 13:31)

Then in the next verse we read that no man knows the day or hour:

But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. (Mark 13:32)

For centuries theologians have interpreted this verse as teaching that no man can have knowledge of the timing of the end. However, the Bible also uses the word "know" to imply experience. For example:

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the LORD. (Genesis 4:1)

So the question is, what definition of "know" does God have in mind here? This verse says that Christ doesn't know the day or hour. Does Christ have knowledge of when the end will come? Of course He does; He's Almighty God and timing is not hidden from Him:

Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days? (Job 24:1)

So we must understand Mark 13:32 as stating that no man has experienced the end. Well, that's kind of an obvious statement, isn't it? Why would God put such an odd statement in the Bible that initially appears to so clearly say something different? As we've learned, God has intentionally hidden the end-times information. In order to do this, He had to use confusing language.

More understanding of this can be gained in Matthew chapter 24, so let's look at a passage in that chapter.

The Days of Noah (Matthew 24:36-39)

We also find the statement that no man knows the day or hour in Matthew 24:36-69:

But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.

Here we are reminded that we can learn something about the end of the world by looking at the Flood. The implication here is that everyone is going about their business as usual, as if destruction is not about to come.

Remember that the population of the earth was much smaller back in Noah's day, probably about one million people. Also, the continents had not yet been divided so the world was not as segregated as it is today. Noah spent 120 years building the ark (Genesis 6:3). Given that God describes Noah as a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), we can be sure that he didn't quietly work for 120 years on the ark and never warn anyone of the judgment that was going to come.

All through Scripture we read of God warning people of the destruction that was about to befall them. Think of Moses warning Pharaoh, Isaiah warning Israel, Jeremiah warning Judah, and Jonah warning Nineveh. We know that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8), which means we can know something about how He will behave in the future by looking at how He has behaved in the past. Based on the patterns we see in the Bible, we know that Noah was warning the world of impending destruction. How does the world react to these warnings? With the exception of Nineveh, those who are warned have always ignored the warnings.

Returning to our passage in Matthew chapter 24, God tells us that the world will not know the day of His coming, just as it was in the days of Noah. This can't be teaching that no one will have the information about when His coming will occur because that's not how it was in Noah's day. At the very least, Noah and his family knew the exact day when the Flood would occur. This brings up another point...

God Reveals the Timing of Judgment

God revealed in advance the exact day when judgment would come upon the world in Noah's day:

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. (Genesis 7:4)

God revealed in advance the exact day when Nineveh would be destroyed through judgment:

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. (Jonah 3:4)

God gave advance notice of exactly when Sodom and Gomorrah would be destroyed so that Lot's family was able to escape just before destruction came:

And when the morning arose, then the angels hastened Lot, saying, Arise, take thy wife, and thy two daughters, which are here; lest thou be consumed in the iniquity of the city. (Genesis 19:15)

God gave advance notice of exactly what day He would bring each plague upon Egypt:

And the Lord appointed a set time, saying, To morrow the Lord shall do this thing in the land. (Exodus 9:5)

Behold, to morrow about this time I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof even until now. (Exodus 9:18)

Else, if thou refuse to let my people go, behold, to morrow will I bring the locusts into thy coast (Exodus 10:4)

Again, we can know something about how God will act in the future by looking at how He has acted in the past (Hebrews 13:8). Since He has given advance notice of the precise timing for judgment in the past, we should not be surprised that He is revealing the timing of the end today.

Throughout the Early Rain, God had kept the details of the end times locked within confusing prophecies that had to be worded with difficult language in order to keep them hidden for over 1,900 years. It was the task of the church to go into the world with the Gospel throughout the Early Rain. It was not God's intention for the church to worry itself with the timing of the end.

To that end, God also placed statements in the Bible that seem to be indicating that we can't know anything about when the end will occur. However, now that we are seeing all of these time clues we wonder, "How can it be that there are time clues when supposedly we aren't to know the timing?" Then as we re-examine these statements we've known for so long (i.e. Christ is coming as a thief in the night) we find that new light is being shed on them.

Christ is not coming as a thief in the night to those who are watching. The end is almost here and the time for this to be revealed to man has come. Unfortunately, the vast majority of those in the churches will continue to latch onto the idea that we can't know the day or the hour. They will lock

themselves in with tunnel vision and hide behind that verse rather than face all the time clues we will examine in the next chapter.

Some people feel that we shouldn't bother ourselves with long discussions of the end of the world. However, as God reveals more information to us about the end times He commands believers to warn the world, not sit quietly on the information and keep it to ourselves:

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand. (Joel 2:1)

When we look at Ezekiel 33:2-6 below, we notice that it teaches us two very bold truths:

1. It is the responsibility of the believers to warn the world that destruction is coming.
2. When the believers sound the alarm, it is the responsibility of mankind to heed that warning.

Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, When I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman: If when he seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet, and warn the people; Then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning; if the sword come, and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and took not warning; his blood shall be upon him. But he that taketh warning shall deliver his soul. But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand. (Ezekiel 33:2-6)

In other words, we cannot let this topic rest silently in our minds and not be concerned about it.

We might be afraid of daring to say when the world will end because historically such predictions have always been wrong. We might fear we'll look stupid if we are wrong or that anything else we teach will be discredited. That's a very valid fear because we really do want to teach truth, and if we aren't doing so, then we aren't being faithful to God's Word.

Many of us were raised to believe that we shouldn't be concerning ourselves with the timing of the end and that we need to just focus on salvation. This is what I was taught growing up in the church. However, we don't read that concept in the Bible. Instead, we read numerous verses that tell us to watch so that we are not surprised at His coming. The Bible teaches that we should be paying attention to this, learning what we can, and warning the world.

We are now seeing numerous time clues in the Bible that were once hidden. We are going to examine a number of these clues and see that they all support the same conclusion. Keep in mind that all of this information is coming straight out of the Bible. We aren't going to be basing our conclusion on what we read in the newspaper or what we see in the stars. It's not based on something God told us in a dream or a prayer. All of it is coming from the Bible alone.

25 CHAPTER

Time Clues

Now we are going to use the Bible to develop a timeline of the end. We will be referencing dates in history as we go along. To see how we can know these dates are accurate please visit The-Latter-Rain.com.

Time Clue 1: The Nation of Israel

When speaking about the end of the world, Jesus says that when the fig tree puts forth leaves we know that summer is near:

Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh (Matthew 24:32)

The fig tree represents the nation of Israel:

I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your fathers as the firstripe in the fig tree at her first time: but they went to Baalpeor, and separated themselves unto that shame; and their abominations were according as they loved. (Hosea 9:10)

The summer identifies with the harvest:

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. (Jeremiah 8:20)

Therefore I will bewail with the weeping of Jazer the vine of Sibmah: I will water thee with my tears, O Heshbon, and Elealeh: for the shouting for thy summer fruits and for thy harvest is fallen. (Isaiah 16:9)

The final harvest in view is the Latter Rain near the end of the world:

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. (Matthew 13:39)

Notice that the prophecy doesn't say that the fig tree will bear fruit. Bearing fruit requires an identification with the true Gospel and salvation:

But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (Matthew 13:23)

Christ is required in order to bear fruit:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (John 15:1-4)

As a whole, the nation of Israel has no interest in Jesus Christ as their Savior. This has always been the case and continues to this very day. Though Christ prophesied that Israel would again become a nation, He predicted that they would never turn to Him as a nation.

So, when Israel becomes a nation again we know that the Latter Rain is near. Israel became a nation again on May 14, 1948. This doesn't give us an exact clue as to when the Latter Rain (the final harvest or summer) will begin, but it does help us narrow down our focus. For example, since Israel became a nation in 1948 we know that the Latter Rain isn't 1,000 years away.

Time Clue 2: The 2,000 Cubits

In order to enter the Promised Land the Israelites had to cross the Jordan River. To do this, God instructed the priests to carry the Ark while maintaining a 2,000-cubit space between them and the rest of the Israelites. When the priests reached the water the river parted so that they could all safely pass through the Jordan River and enter the Promised Land.

It can be shown that the Jordan River represents the wrath of God. The people of Israel represent all the true believers. This doesn't mean that all the Israelites were actually saved, just that they typified the true believers. The Ark represents Christ. It contained the law of God, of which Christ is the very essence (John 1:14). The Promised Land represents the Kingdom of God.

It was Christ who stood in the wrath of God for the believers. It is because of this that salvation is possible, that believers can safely pass through His wrath and enter the Kingdom of God.

As the Ark entered the Jordan River the Israelites were told to follow behind it about 2,000 cubits:

Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. (Joshua 3:4)

Christ demonstrated His payment for sin in 33 AD so that the believers could safely enter the Kingdom of God. It will be right near the end of time when the believers' salvation is finalized and they completely enter the Kingdom of God at the time of the Rapture. It is possible that the 2,000 cubits signify 2,000 years. Notice that the verse says "about 2,000 cubits." Normally, God is very exact in the numbers He gives. When we read the instructions He gave to Noah regarding the ark's construction we find that He gave very precise measurements. He did not say, "Build an ark that is about 300 cubits, give or take." He also gave very specific instructions for the construction of the Ark of the Covenant.

So when we read the word “about” in Joshua 3:4 that should immediately catch our attention. If this is a time clue we should recognize that, whatever the actual number of years are from 33 AD to the Rapture, it won't be exactly 2,000 or God would not have used the word “about.”

This possible time clue agrees with our first clue that pointed to the period we are living in now. We know that we are near the end because Israel is once again a nation. Likewise, we are also about 2,000 years from 33 AD when Christ went to the cross.

Incidentally, this also helps us understand the significance of numbers in the Bible. Most translations take the phrase “2,000 cubits” and reword it as, say, “3,000 feet” since that's about the equivalent of 2,000 cubits. However, by wording it that way the significance of the number 2,000 in this passage is ignored and this possible time clue is completely lost. The actual distance is not as important spiritually as the number God brought into view.

Time Clue 3: Noah & 7 Days

Let's take a look at Second Peter 3:6-8, beginning with verse 6 where God is clearly referring to the flood of Noah's day:

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished

Then God follows this statement up with a reference to the end of the world in verse 7:

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

As God does elsewhere in the Bible, He is once again making a connection between the flood of Noah's day and the end times. Then He makes a curious statement in verse 8:

But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

After making a connection between the Flood and the end of the world, why does God say that a day is as a thousand years? And God says it twice, which is something He does to indicate that it is established and will come to pass:

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. (Genesis 41:32)

Keeping the above details in mind, recall that Noah was given seven days' notice regarding exactly when God's judgment would come upon the world:

For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. (Genesis 7:4)

The ark represents the eternal church and we saw earlier that the door to the ark represents Christ. In order to become saved we must go through Christ, and when we are in the eternal church we are safe

from the judgment of God.

God makes a connection for us between the Flood and the end of the world. In Noah's day, God gave the world seven days to get into the safety of the ark. As we saw, God has related the statement "a day is as a thousand years" to this topic. The Flood occurred in 4990 BC, and if we count 7,000 years from 4990 BC we arrive at the year 2011 (remember there is no year 0).

God gives mankind exactly 7,000 years to get into the safety of the Kingdom of God through Christ, after which judgment will come upon everyone who is not safe and secure in Christ. On its own, this time clue may only be a mere curiosity, but as we continue we are going to see these curiosities continue to agree on the same conclusion.

This clue points to 2011 as the year of the Rapture, the day after which salvation will no longer be possible, as symbolized by Noah's family entering the safety of the ark and the door being shut just before destruction. We also find that this agrees with the first two clues which indicated that the end must be very near.

Time Clue 4: Judgment & 23

Recall that God frequently uses the number 23 in relation to judgment. The Flood was God bringing judgment upon the world for its wickedness. The Flood occurred in 4990 BC, which was 6,000 + 23 years after Creation in 11,013 BC. The number 6 represents work. This is often used in connection with man's rebellion against God. Rather than placing faith in God's salvation plan, man has placed his faith in his own works to get himself saved.

The cross was God demonstrating judgment on Christ in place of those whom He came to save. Christ's crucifixion occurred in 33 AD, which was 5,000 + 23 years inclusive after the Flood in 4990 BC. The number 5 represents salvation and judgment, which is the overall focus of the atonement that took place in 33 AD.

The end of the world is when God will bring His final judgment on the world. Let's follow this pattern of using a significant number's multiple of 1,000 and adding 23. The number 13 identifies with the end of the world. The 13,000th year of this world's existence was 1988. If we add 23 years to that year, then we arrive at the year 2011.

A summary of the above information is as follows:

Creation to Flood:	6,000 + 23 years
Flood to Cross:	5,000 + 23 years
Creation to End:	13,000 + 23 years

Our previous time clue pointed to 2011 completely independent of this time clue. This time clue serves to confirm our findings in the previous clues.

We are now going to work with the following timeline with the year 2011 in bold as the year of the world's end. Our data so far could be argued to be merely coincidental, but our conclusion that 2011 is the year of the end will be further substantiated as we progress through this study and examine additional clues.

88|89|90|91|92|93|94|95|96|97|98|99|00|01|02|03|04|05|06|07|08|09|10|**11**

Time Clue 5: The Jubilee Year

Israel was commanded to observe a Jubilee year every 50 years:

And thou shalt number seven sabbaths of years unto thee, seven times seven years; and the space of the seven sabbaths of years shall be unto thee forty and nine years. Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. (Leviticus 25:8-10)

Israel arrived in Canaan in 1407 BC, so the first Jubilee year would have been 50 years after that in 1357 BC. Every 50 years after 1357 BC would also have been a Jubilee year. As we read in the above passage, the Jubilee year was focused on proclaiming liberty. This foreshadowed the liberty that is brought to believers through the sending forth of the Gospel:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18-19)

Of course, this liberty has everything to do with salvation:

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

The destruction of Jericho was a literal event in history. However, it was placed in the Bible because it provides a spiritual lesson. The destruction of Jericho can be shown to foreshadow the time when God shifted His focus from Israel as His people to focusing on the elect around the world as His people. In Joshua we find the phrase “seven trumpets of ram’s horns” in connection with the wall coming down. The Hebrew word translated as “ram’s horns” in these verses is *yobel* and it is translated everywhere else in the Bible as “jubilee.” However, in this phrase the Hebrew word is plural, so we can understand why the translators were confused and decided to use a different English word. Still, it should have been translated “jubilees.”

This teaches us to look for more than one Jubilee in connection with the sending forth of the Gospel. We know that one of the Jubilee periods identifies with Christ’s birth, which likely took place on the Jubilee Day of Atonement in the Jubilee year 7 BC. This identifies with the first season of rain in the New Testament era (the Early Rain) in which the Gospel was sent into all the world so that spiritual liberty could be brought to God’s elect. The Early Rain actually began in 33 AD, not in 7 BC, but Christ’s coming made the Early Rain possible.

We can expect the second Jubilee period to therefore identify with the second period of rain in the New Testament era: the Latter Rain. Since the first Jubilee period is identified with a Jubilee year we should expect the second Jubilee period to also be identified with a Jubilee year. The years 1944, 1994, and 2044 are all Jubilee years. Based on our findings in Time Clue 1, we know the Latter Rain has to begin after Israel becomes a nation again. Since Israel became a nation in 1948, the year 1944 was too

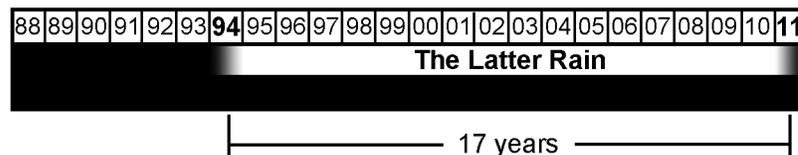
soon for the Latter Rain to have begun. If we are correct that 2011 will be the end of the world, then of course 2044 could not be when the Latter Rain begins. This leaves us with the year 1994 as the most probable Jubilee year for the beginning of the Latter Rain.

Interestingly, the year 1994 is exactly 2,000 years after Christ's birth. Another interesting fact is that, with the year 2011 as the end, this would mean that the Latter Rain is 17 years in length. We know that the number 17 signifies God's Kingdom. The Latter Rain is a period in which God saves a great multitude (Revelation 7:9) so 17 is a fitting spiritual number to have identified with the Latter Rain.

Remember, we did not settle on 1994 so that we could make the Latter Rain 17 years in length; that just happens to be the case. We settled on 1994 because it is the most appropriate Jubilee year. The fact that it makes the Latter Rain 17 years in length is interesting and, at first glance, may appear to be just a coincidence. However, we are going to see a lot of "coincidences" as we progress through these time clues; at some point we have to recognize that these aren't all coincidences but rather that God has crafted the timeline with great precision.

For example, 1994 was the 68th Jubilee year since the first Jubilee year in 1357 BC. The number 68 breaks down into $17 \times 2 \times 2$. Once again, we see the number 17 featured in relation to 1994 completely independent of the other information we have already looked at.

On our diagram we are going to recognize 1994 as the year in which the Latter Rain began and we are acknowledging the significant length of 17 years for the Latter Rain. At this point we do not know the exact dates for the beginning and ending of the Latter Rain (only the years) so we will make them vague on the timeline.

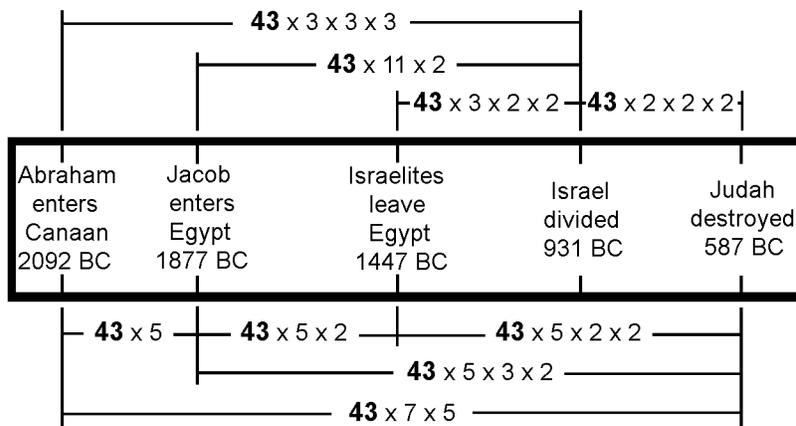


Time Clue 6: Timeline & 43

In a previous chapter we considered the following five significant dates in the history of national Israel:

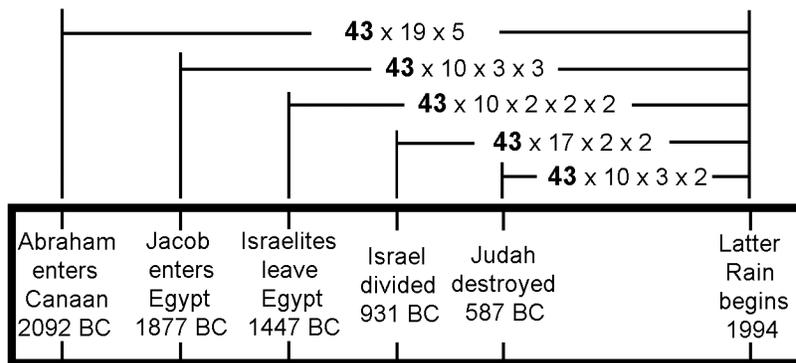
- 2092 BC Abraham, the beginning of God's focus on Israel, enters the Promised Land
- 1877 BC Jacob, the father of all Israelites, leaves the Promised Land and enters Egypt
- 1447 BC The Israelites leave Egypt
- 931 BC The kingdom of Israel is divided into two separate kingdoms
- 587 BC Judah is destroyed by Babylon

We saw the number 43 heavily featured when breaking down the number of years between these dates. We reviewed the following diagram:



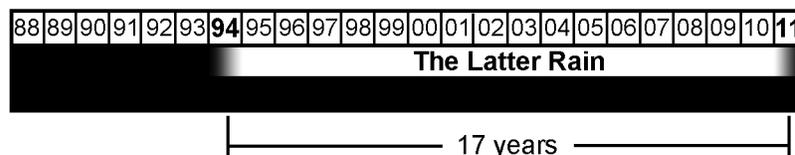
Surely that is not all coincidence. Every single number listed in the factors above is a spiritually significant number. That, in and of itself, is interesting enough. Take any two dates, calculate the timeframe between them, and try to break it down into spiritually significant numbers with no decimals. Normally it can't be done. For all nine of the timeframes listed above to break down into spiritually significant numbers is curious indeed. Even more curious is that the number 43 is featured in every single one of them.

Likewise, when we examine the timeframes between the above dates and the year 1994, we again see that they all break down evenly into spiritually significant numbers, and once again the number 43 is heavily featured:



This clue alone is not sufficient for us to feel certain that the Latter Rain began in 1994, but it does provide one more piece to the puzzle and serves to further confirm the significance of the year 1994.

The timeline we are constructing remains unchanged from our previous time clue, but this additional time clue serves to further confirm that we are on the right track:



Time Clue 7: Thirds & 1290 Days

We have seen that God places significance on the fractions one-third and two-thirds in relation to each other. We can find this relationship in time intervals as well, which is what we will examine in this clue. We will be referencing some dates on the timeline of history. We will chart information as we progress in this segment to help clarify the points illustrated.

First, we will examine the relationship between the Israelites leaving Egypt and Christ's birth. God bringing the Israelites out of the bondage of Egypt was a physical representation of being freed from the bondage of sin, which takes place when we become saved:

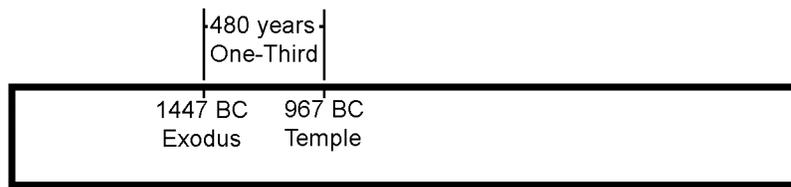
I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. (Exodus 20:2)

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)

This exodus occurred in 1447 BC. Solomon began building the temple 480 years after the Israelites left Egypt:

And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. (1 Kings 6:1)

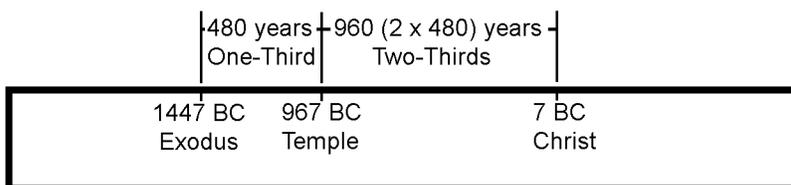
Therefore, Solomon began building the temple in 967 BC.



The temple foreshadowed Christ, Who is referred to as the temple:

Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. (John 2:19)

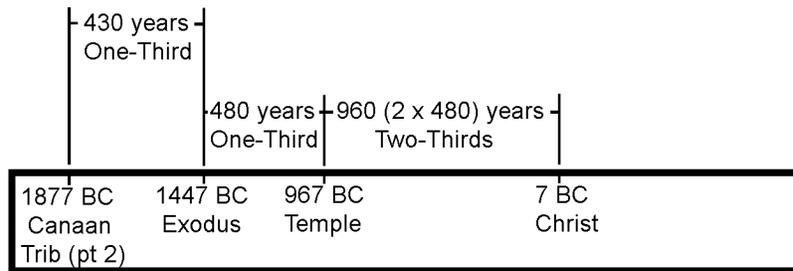
Jesus was born in 7 BC. The span of time from 967 BC to 7 BC is 960 years, exactly double the 480 years from 1447 BC to 967 BC.



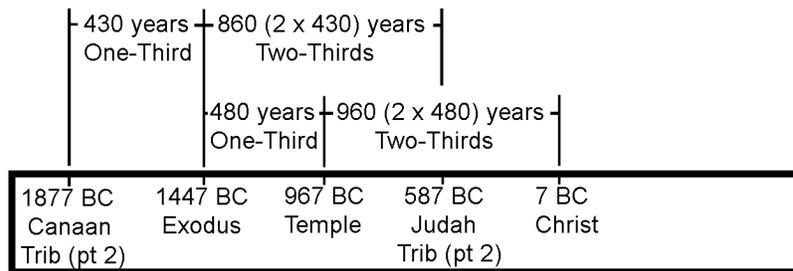
Note the relationship between the events. The exodus typified salvation. The temple foreshadowed Christ, who made salvation possible. Also, note that God plainly provided us with the time span of 480 years and we had to calculate the doubled 960-year time span to see the connection.

Next, let's examine the relationship between the second parts of tribulation. We have already discussed the many parallels between the three main periods of tribulation mentioned in the Bible. The second part of the tribulation in Canaan began in 1877 BC. This is the year when Jacob and his family left Canaan and entered Egypt. This period did not end until Israel left Egypt 430 years later in 1447 BC:

And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years, even the selfsame day it came to pass, that all the hosts of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt. (Exodus 12:41)



Israel entered tribulation again hundreds of years later. The destruction of Jerusalem marked the beginning of the second part of this 70-year tribulation. This occurred in 587 BC when Babylon conquered Judah. The span of time from 1447 BC to 587 BC is 860 years, exactly double the 430 years from 1877 BC to 1447 BC.



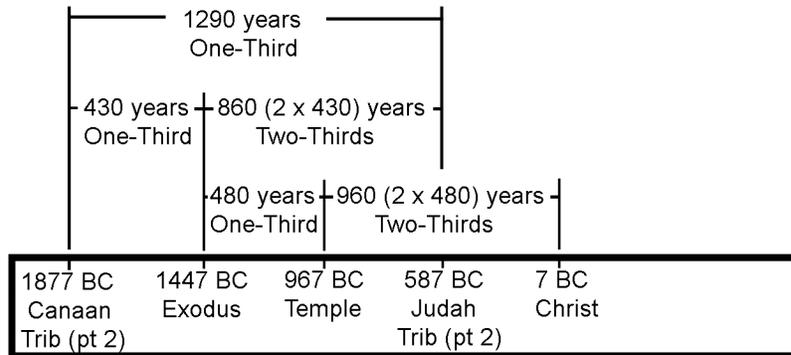
Once again, note that God plainly gave us the time span of 430 years and we had to calculate the doubled span of time (860 years). Note the relationship between the events of this one-third/two-thirds occurrence.

Recall that we have seen that the three main tribulations mentioned in the Bible are the tribulations in Canaan, Judah, and the Great Tribulation at the end of time. It can be shown that God divides all three of these tribulations into two parts. The second part of the tribulation in Canaan began in 1877 BC. The second part of the tribulation in Judah began in 587 BC. There are exactly 1,290 years between these dates. Once again, this first time span was directly given to us by God, spoken of in terms of days rather than years:

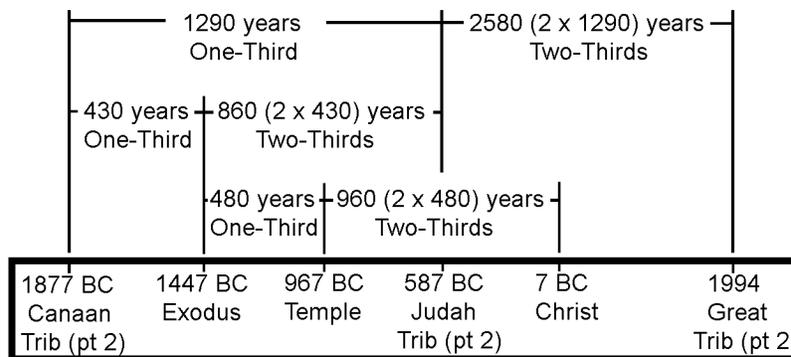
And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. (Daniel 12:11)

God gives us Biblical rationale for understanding 1,290 days as 1,290 years by indicating that the 40 years in the wilderness were representative of 40 days:

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise. (Numbers 14:34)

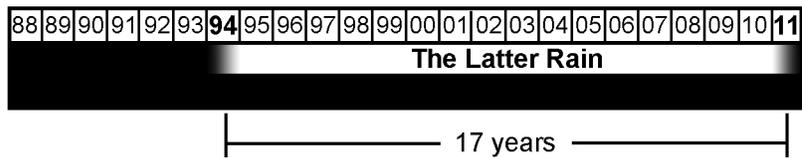


Following the principles we have learned in the previous two examples we know we will have to calculate the doubled span of time, which is 2,580 years in this case. Based on the previous examples, we would then expect the year that comes 2,580 years after 587 BC to be a significant year. That year is 1994. This one-third/two-thirds relationship is focused on the years that mark the beginning of the second parts of the three tribulations. We have already suspected the year 1994 as the beginning of the Latter Rain based on other time clues that were examined completely independent of each other. Now we see this conclusion supported by a third time clue, once again examined independent of the others.



Can it really be just coincidence that all three related and significant years are linked together by the significant fractions one-third and two-thirds, as well as the 1,290-day reference? Can it be coincidental that this conclusion so closely ties in with two other clear examples where the fractions one-third and two-thirds can be used to yield the same kind of relationship?

Our timeline below still remains unchanged, but by now we are feeling very confident that what we have so far is accurate.

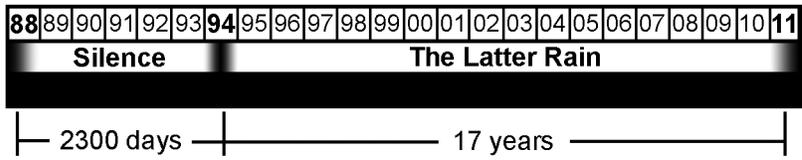


Time Clue 8: 2300 Days & 23 Years

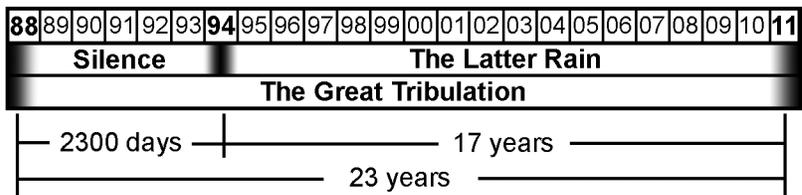
We have discovered that the Great Tribulation is broken into two parts. The first part is a period of silence that is 2,300 days in length. This is the period of spiritual famine in which very few people were becoming saved around the world. The second part, which began the day the period of silence ended, is the Latter Rain, which our previous clues have all agreed on being 17 years in length. If the period of silence is 2,300 days in length and ended in 1994, then we can expect it to have begun some time in 1988. Interestingly, 1988 was the 13,000th year from Creation:

$$11,013 \text{ BC} + 1988 \text{ AD} - 1 \text{ (no year 0)} = 13,000$$

Our timeline now looks like this, with the beginning and ending of periods still vague because at this point we only know the years in which they occurred:



We learned earlier that the period of silence marks the beginning of the Great Tribulation. We also learned that the Rapture marks the end of the Great Tribulation and takes place on the last day of the Latter Rain. When we put these pieces together we discover that the Great Tribulation is 23 years in length:



We know that the number 23 signifies judgment. We have already seen, in Time Clue 4, the number 23 used in connection with judgment and the end of time. Here again we find the number 23 used twice in connection with the Great Tribulation. Remember, the Great Tribulation itself is a period of judgment on the churches.

Time Clue 9: Alexander the Great

Daniel chapter 8 outlines Satan’s rule in this world throughout time. Within that chapter God places some details that predict the conquest of Alexander the Great. The context of the chapter reveals that God is using Alexander the Great as a portrait of Satan. God must have done this in order to point to

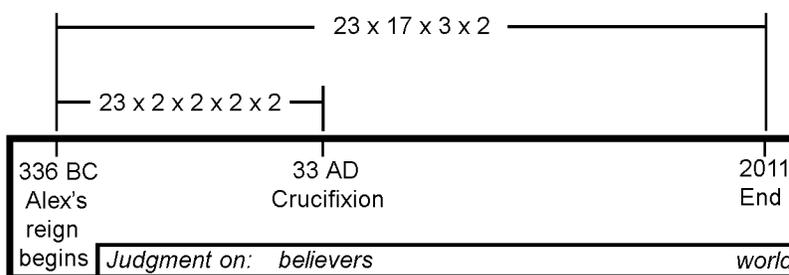
additional spiritual truth that would not otherwise be revealed in the chapter.

I believe it is possible that God is giving us at least two more time clues by using Alexander's reign as a portrait of Satan's reign in this world.

We know that Satan rules over this world, but his ability to deceive the nations had been limited when Christ went to the cross. That day typified judgment day for the believers when Christ endured the wrath of God for their sake. Alexander's reign began in 336 BC. The timeframe from 336 BC to 33 AD when Christ went to the cross was 368 years. The number 368 breaks down into $23 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$. Once again we see the number 23 used in connection with judgment.



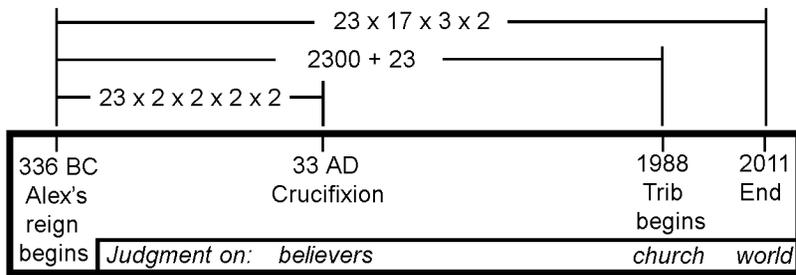
Additionally, we have seen that 2011 is the likely year in which the world will end. That, too, is of course a time of judgment. The timeframe from 336 BC to 2011 is 2,346 years which breaks down into $23 \times 17 \times 3 \times 2$. So once again we see the number 23 in connection with judgment.



Satan's work within the churches had been limited by God throughout the Early Rain. We also know that God's judgment on this world begins at the house of God for its apostasy, and that Satan is utilized in order to bring this judgment. The time when Satan was allowed to begin reigning within the church marked the only notable change in his rulership after 33 AD. In a sense, it's like a new era had begun at the beginning of the Great Tribulation when his reign began.

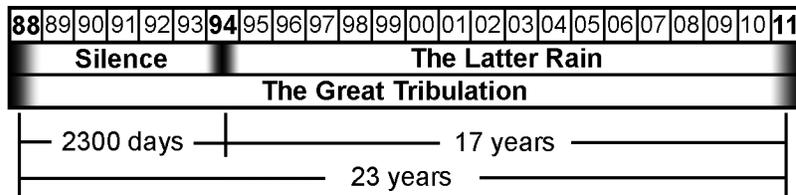
Alexander the Great ruled for 13 years as he rapidly conquered the known world. Likewise, Satan has conquered the world spiritually. We have learned that 1988 was the year in which the Great Tribulation began. That was the year that a new era of Satan's reign began, but it also marked the beginning of the end as God began His judgment on this world, starting with the churches. Satan's reign over this world began in the Garden of Eden. The year 1988 was exactly the 13,000th anniversary of the world's creation, which may relate to the fact that Alexander the Great ruled for 13 years.

The timeframe from the beginning of Alexander's reign in 336 BC to 1988 is 2,323 years, or $2,300 + 23$ years. Here again we find the number 23 used in double fashion in relation to judgment. The year 1988 marks the beginning of God's judgment on the church.



By itself, the information examined in this clue may seem like coincidence, but once again we find yet another clue that is in perfect harmony with the others. We arrived at the years 1988 and 2011 in previous clues completely independent of this clue. These clues are all meshing together to support the same conclusion.

Our timeline below remains unchanged from the previous clue, but this clue has helped to solidify what we have been discovering.



Time Clue 10: Jeremiah 25

We have already learned that the book of Jeremiah is primarily focused on the Great Tribulation period in which God is bringing judgment on the churches for their apostasy. We find a time clue in the opening verses to chapter 25:

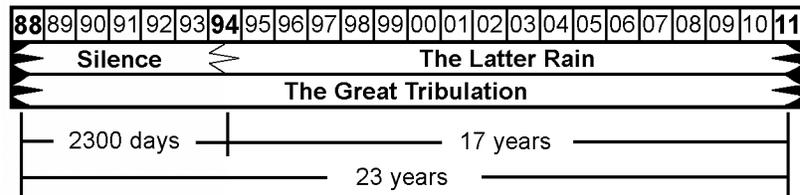
From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear. (Jeremiah 25:3-4)

Two time clues stand out in this passage: God references the 13th year as the beginning of a significant period of warning, and references the 23rd year as the end of that period. Later we read that total destruction follows this period. When we think about this relating to the end times we immediately think of the Great Tribulation. That is the period in which we are warned to get out of the church. That is the period in which most of those who call themselves God's people are not hearkening.

We have determined from other clues that 1988 was the year the Great Tribulation began. That year was exactly the 13,000th year of the world's existence. We have also determined from other clues that 2011 is the year the Great Tribulation will end, a timeframe of 23 years.

Notice the language: "From the thirteenth year, even unto the three and twentieth year..." Is it just coincidence that this fits so perfectly with our other clues? The phrase itself is curious enough, but to find it in a chapter we already know is speaking directly about the Great Tribulation makes us think that certainly this cannot be coincidence.

This time clue references the beginning of the Great Tribulation as being the 13th year, or as we can understand it, the 13,000th year, which was 1988. It also refers to the end of the Great Tribulation as being in the 23rd year. The year 2011 is 23 years after 1988. We had already arrived at 1988 as the beginning of the Great Tribulation and 2011 as the end of it completely independent of this time clue.



Time Clue 11: Josiah Dies at 39

God tells us that Josiah was 8 years old when he began to reign and that he reigned for 31 years, indicating that he died at the age of 39:

Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one and thirty years. (2 Chronicles 34:1)

Nothing in the Bible is there without reason, so why did God give us this information? I'm not aware of anything in the Bible that illustrates the significance of the number 31, so perhaps God is directing our attention to the fact that Josiah was 39 years old when he died. If that's true, then why is that significant?

When we read about Josiah we discover that he was a very good king who loved the Lord:

And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers. (2 Chronicles 34:33)

In fact, Josiah was the last king of Judah to do that which was right in the eyes of God. The kings that followed him rebelled against God until Judah was destroyed.

Josiah's death marked the beginning of the 70-year tribulation that came upon Judah, which we've already seen was a foreshadowing of the Great Tribulation at the end of time.

At the beginning of the Great Tribulation God removed His hand of protection from the churches and allowed Satan to rule within them. Revelation chapter 11 speaks of this event as the time when the two witnesses were killed. All of this was foreshadowed by the death of the last good king, Josiah. After his death the wicked kings ruled Judah, and the enemy nation, Babylon, came in and conquered Judah.

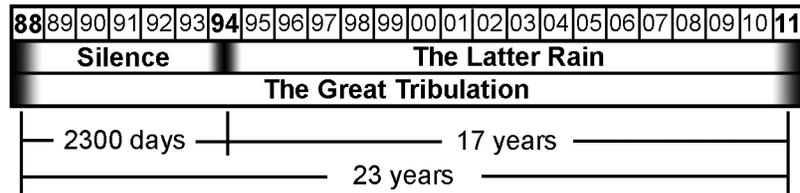
In other words, Josiah's death identifies with the beginning of the Great Tribulation, which we are learning began in 1988. Josiah was 39 years old when he died. The number 39 breaks down into 13 x 3. The number three signifies God's plan. The number 13 identifies with the end, which again points to the Great Tribulation occurring near the end of the world. Also, the year 1988 was exactly the 13,000th year from Creation.

Furthermore, we have learned in other time clues that the Great Tribulation is 23 years in length. We have learned in this time clue that Josiah's death, in a spiritual sense, foreshadowed the end

of the Early Rain. The Great Tribulation began the moment the Early Rain came to an end. Josiah's son, Jehoahaz, took the throne after Josiah, and he was 23 years old when he began to reign:

Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. (2 Chronicles 36:2)

Our timeline continues to remain unchanged as additional clues solidify our findings.



Time Clue 12: Feast of Jubilee

There are Biblical feast days instituted by God and these feast days foreshadowed a future literal fulfillment:

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17)

A summary of this is as follows:

Passover Feast

To Be Observed: The fourteenth day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5)

Focus: Lamb's blood placed over the doorposts to escape God's wrath (Exodus 12:21-23)

Foreshadowed: Christ's crucifixion as the Lamb of God (John 1:29)

Fulfilled: April 1, 33 AD

Feast Of Weeks

To Be Observed: 50 days after the Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16)

Focus: Celebration of the springtime harvest

Foreshadowed: Harvest of firstfruits, beginning at Pentecost (Exodus 23:16)

Fulfilled: May 22, 33 AD

The Day Of Atonement

To Be Observed: The tenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 25:9)

Focus: The high priest who made atonement for sins (Leviticus 16:30-33)

Foreshadowed: The birth of Christ, the permanent High Priest (Hebrews 9:11)

Fulfilled: October 2, 7 BC

The first Jubilee period began on the Jubilee Day of Atonement in the Jubilee year 7 BC. This was Christ's birth and it was Christ who made the harvest of the firstfruits possible. Earlier we discussed the Jubilee year of 1994 as the beginning of the second Jubilee period, also known as the Latter Rain.

Since the first Jubilee Period began not just in a Jubilee year but also on a Jubilee day, we might expect the same for the second Jubilee period.

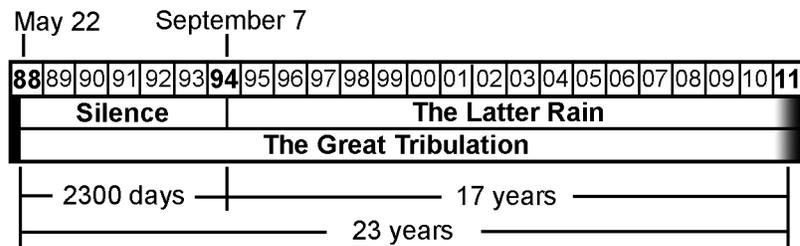
At this point we will have to make an educated assumption of what Jubilee day might be in view. The first day of the seventh month on the biblical calendar is a Jubilee day. We know that day fell on September 7 in 1994. For now, we can view this as an educated assumption, but as we progress in our study we will see how perfectly this date ties into our timeline, especially in our next clue. This will serve to confirm we are on the right track and will solidify September 7, 1994, as a significant date.

One fact that can help to solidify this date immediately is that if we count back 2,300 days from September 7, 1994, we land on May 22, 1988. When we check the biblical calendar we discover that the Day of Pentecost fell on May 22 in 1988. Moreover, we know the Early Rain began on May 22 in the year 33, and that means the Early Rain was exactly 1,955 years in length to the very day.

Furthermore, the number 1,955 breaks down into the significant numbers 5 x 17 x 23. We know the number 5 signifies salvation and judgment. The number 17 signifies God's Kingdom, which is of course closely related to salvation. The number 23 signifies judgment. The Early Rain was a time period in which the church was bringing the Gospel to the world. The Word of God brings salvation to the elect and condemns the unsaved. The spiritual significance of the numbers 5, 17, and 23 identify very closely with the Early Rain.

If this does not seem curious to you, then take another number close 1,955 and try to break it down into significant numbers like this. As mentioned earlier, it's not common to be able to break down a large number into all spiritually significant numbers.

This clue, when combined with previous clues, points to September 7 in 1994 as the first day of the Latter Rain. Counting back 2,300 days (the given length of the period of silence) yields May 22 in 1988 as the first day of the Great Tribulation. This is how our timeline looks as of now:



Time Clue 13: Nehemiah

Remember that the Bible speaks to us in parables, which are physical stories with spiritual meanings. In Nehemiah we learn about the construction of the wall of Jerusalem. The wall signifies the part of the eternal church that was built during the Early Rain. The completion of the wall foreshadowed the end of the Early Rain. There was a 6-day gap between the completion of the wall and the gathering of the multitude. This 6-day gap foreshadowed the period of silence that falls between the end of the Early Rain and the beginning of the Latter Rain when a great multitude is saved.

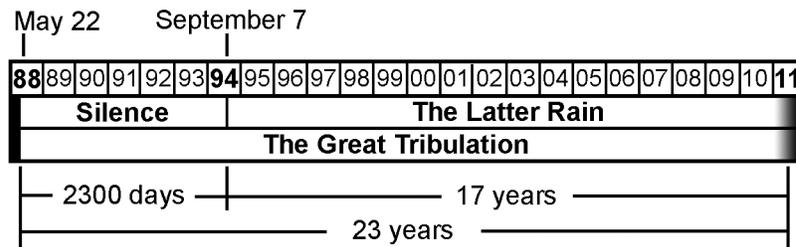
Previous time clues have led us to believe that the period of silence began in 1988 and ended in 1994. Interestingly, this is a 6-year timeframe and appears to identify with the 6-day gap in Nehemiah. We saw in a previous clue that God gives us biblical rationale to appoint a year for each day.

Furthermore, in our previous time clue we made an estimated assumption that perhaps September 7 in 1994 was the beginning of the Latter Rain because that was a Jubilee day in a Jubilee year, and we expect that the Latter Rain would begin on such a day. September 7, 1994, was the first

day of the seventh month on the Hebrew calendar. Likewise, the first day of the seventh month was when the 6-day gap in Nehemiah ended and the multitude began to gather and read the law of God:

And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. (Nehemiah 8:1-2)

Our timeline remains unchanged from the previous time clue, but this clue has given us additional support for the conclusions we have been developing.



Time Clue 14: The Door is Shut

We just examined in our previous clue how the doors to Jerusalem being shut identified with the end of the Early Rain when the period of silence began. When we study the Bible carefully we see the end of the Latter Rain is also connected to the shutting of doors.

In Noah's day, God gave seven days' notice that the world was going to be destroyed. In Clue 3 we tied this to a 7,000 years' notice of the destruction of the end of the world in 2011. After the seven days had expired, God sealed Noah and his family safely in the ark (Genesis 7:16). We examined this earlier and saw a connection between the ark's door being shut and the door being shut on the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25. We saw that the foolish virgins left out of the marriage chamber represent those who will be left behind when the door to salvation is shut at the Rapture.

God tells us it was the seventeenth day of the second month on the biblical calendar when the ark's door was shut:

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. (Genesis 7:11)

We learned earlier that 7,000 years will pass from the Flood till the point when salvation is no longer possible, namely the Rapture. We linked this to the year 2011. Why did God tell us the very day the ark's door was shut? Of what value is that information? This time clue would appear to be pointing us to the Rapture occurring on the seventeenth day of the second month on the biblical calendar. In the year 2011 that day falls on May 21.

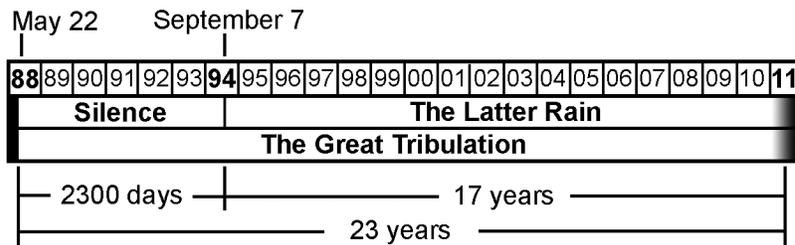
Even the day itself (seventeenth day of the second month) contains the significant numbers 17 and 2. The number 17 signifies God's Kingdom. Those who were saved from the Flood foreshadow those who are saved from God's judgment on mankind. The final five months have everything to do

with God’s judgment on mankind. However, the believers will be saved from this timeframe as they are taken to Heaven at the beginning of it. If we study the number 2 we will discover that it identifies with the believers. It’s interesting that the seventeenth day of the second month is identified with the salvation of God’s people before the Flood, and the Rapture of the believers before the final five months of judgment.

The Great Tribulation is therefore exactly 23 years in length. It would appear to be one day short of 23 years when we look at the timeframe from May 22, 1988, to May 21, 2011. This is where it comes in handy to have some understanding about how our modern calendar ties in with the celestial clock.

To ensure that our modern calendar lines up with the celestial clock we add a day every four years to our 365-day calendar and we call these 366-day years “leap years.” However, to keep the calendar in line we do not add the extra day on centennial years (1700, 1800, 1900, etc), even though they fit the pattern to be a leap year. The only exception to this rule is every fourth centennial year we still add the extra day. It just so happens that the year 2000 was one of these centennial years where we still added the extra day, unlike the years 1700, 1800, and 1900. Our modern calendar was instituted in 1582, so they decided to let the year 1600 be the first centennial year that would be a leap year, meaning the next one would not fall until 400 years later in the year 2000. The point is, any other centennial year could have just as easily been a leap year instead if the creators chose to do so. For example, they could’ve decided that the year 1700 was going to be a leap year instead of 1600 and that would mean that the year 2000 would not be a leap year, but the year 2100 would be instead. If this had been done, then May 21 in 2011 would have instead fallen on May 22. The number of days making up the Great Tribulation would not have changed. The only thing that would have changed is the label we applied to the day of its ending (May 22 instead of May 21).

This time clue, when combined with other clues, points to May 21, 2011, as the date of the Rapture.



Time Clue 15: Tribulation Number Patterns

We have already established that the Great Tribulation was typified by the tribulations in Canaan and Judah. We also find two additional patterns among them in relation to numbers and length.

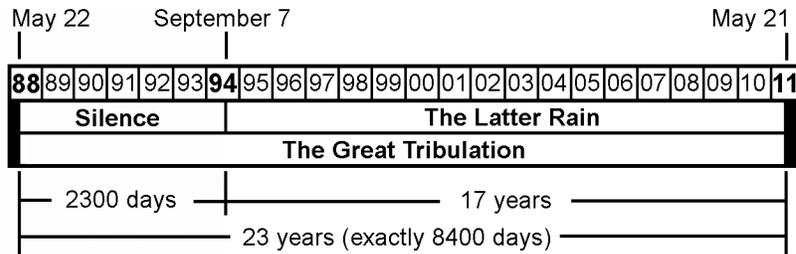
When we examine these three tribulations we find the number 84 connected to the length of each one:

- The tribulation in Canaan was 7 years in length, which is 84 months.
- The tribulation in Judah was 70 years in length, which is 840 months.
- The Great Tribulation is exactly 23 years in length, which is exactly 8,400 days.

We also find the number 23 in relation to all three tribulations:

- We've already seen that the first part of the Great Tribulation is exactly 2,300 days in length.
- We've also seen that the first part of the tribulation in Judah was 23 years in length.
- We know that the first part of the tribulation in Canaan was two years in length. We would say that two years is 24 months, but we would also refer to 23 months as two years. Furthermore, 24 months on the Hebrew calendar would be 23 months 6 days on our calendar. Given that we definitely see the number 23 in the first part of the Judah tribulation and Great Tribulation, and given the fact that God uses patterns, it is possible that we can safely use the above logic to find the number 23 in the first part of the Canaan tribulation.

This clue points to the Great Tribulation being 8,400 days in length and provides further confirmation that we are on the right track with the Great Tribulation beginning on May 22, 1988, and ending on May 21, 2011, a timeframe of exactly 8,400 days.



Time Clue 16: Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles was a ceremonial feast day observed by Israel in the Old Testament. It was commanded to be observed from the 15th to the 22nd day of the seventh month on the biblical calendar:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord. (Leviticus 23:34)

God ties this feast to the end of the world with the phrase “last day.” We only find this phrase eight times in the Bible. Six times it is used in connection with the end of the world (John 6:39-54; 11:24; 12:48). The other two times it’s used in connection with the Feast of Tabernacles, and in those verses we can definitely sense that a connection with the completion of God’s salvation program at the end of time is in view:

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. (John 7:37)

Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner. (Nehemiah 8:18)

We also find that God speaks of the Feast of Tabernacles (also spoken of as the Feast of Ingathering) as occurring at the end of the year:

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the year's end. (Exodus 34:22)

And the feast of harvest, the firstfruits of thy labours, which thou hast sown in the field: and the feast of ingathering, which is in the end of the year, when thou hast gathered in thy labours out of the field. (Exodus 23:16)

And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles (Deuteronomy 31:10)

But the Feast of Tabernacles wasn't in the end of the year; it was in the middle. Why does God do this?

The Feast of Tabernacles was connected to the year's final harvest, which is why it is also referred to as the Feast of Ingathering. The Latter Rain period, when God is saving a great multitude which no man can number, can also be spoken of as the final harvest of this world's existence:

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. (Revelation 14:15)

I think this is why God refers to the Feast of Tabernacles as occurring in the end. It celebrates the year's final harvest, which foreshadows the final harvest of the world during the Latter Rain. Therefore, the Feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the end of the world.

An interesting fact is that Enoch was the first example of the Rapture, as he was caught up to be with God without having to physically die. He was raptured at the age of 365:

And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him. (Genesis 5:23-24)

There are 365 days in a year and God has indicated that the Rapture will occur at the year's end, spiritually speaking. Is it coincidental that Enoch was raptured at the end of 365 years?

As we saw in a previous time clue, all other important ceremonial days have had a literal fulfillment. However, the Feast of Tabernacles has not. The literal fulfillment of every feast day occurred on the actual day it was commanded to be observed during the Old Testament days. Therefore, we should expect the literal fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles to occur on the days it was commanded to be observed.

The Feast of Tabernacles began on the 15th day of the seventh month on the biblical calendar and a Sabbath was celebrated eight days later:

Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. (Leviticus 23:39)

In other words, a Sabbath was observed on the 22nd day of the seventh month. Also, notice that the feast ended after the bringing in of the fruit of this final harvest. Spiritually speaking, the fruit of the final harvest is the great multitude being saved during the Latter Rain.

Now it is necessary that we briefly look at the dedication of Solomon's temple. It took Solomon seven years to build the temple (967 – 960 BC). When we read about the dedication of the temple in First Kings chapter 8 we learn that it took place in the seventh month. They held a seven-day feast of dedication followed by observing the Feast of Tabernacles. We read that on the eighth day the people were sent away to their tents:

And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people. (1 Kings 8:65-66)

The eighth day mentioned above is not a reference to the eighth day of the seventh month, but rather the Sabbath day that follows the Feast of Tabernacles:

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of this seventh month shall be the feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the LORD. On the first day shall be an holy convocation: ye shall do no servile work therein. Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the LORD: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein. (Leviticus 23:34-36)

The problem we run into here is that First Kings 8:66 says the people went back to their tents on the eighth day, which was the Sabbath day. However, they would not have been allowed to travel that far on the Sabbath day. The trip from the temple to their tents would have been quite far. The population of Israel at that time would have been perhaps 2 million so most of their tents would have been many miles away. We get an idea of how far it was permissible to travel on the Sabbath day in Acts:

Then returned they unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. (Acts 1:12)

The traveling distance from the summit of Mount Olivet to Jerusalem is about half a mile so how could the Israelites have been permitted to travel much farther than that after the Feast of Tabernacles? We get some help when we turn to Second Chronicles 7:10 where it speaks of the same event:

And on the three and twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people. (2 Chronicles 7:10)

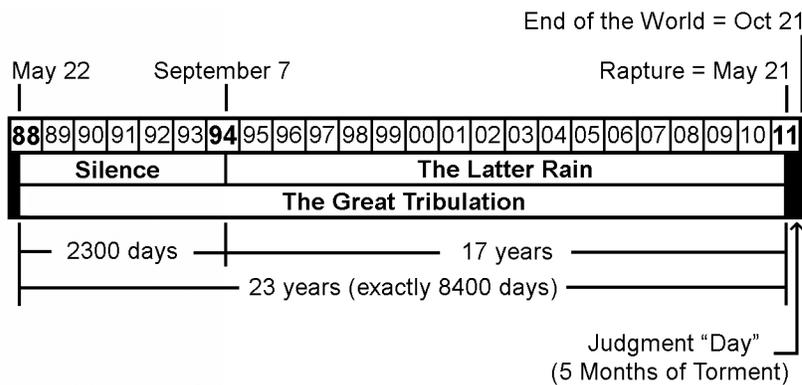
Notice that the language is the same as Second Kings 8:66, but here it is speaking of the 23rd day of the seventh month. The Sabbath day after the Feast of Tabernacles was normally observed on the 22nd day of the seventh month.

What God has done here is speak of the Sabbath day as a two-day period. We know the Israelites could not have traveled back to their tents on the 22nd day of the seventh month because it would've been a distance not permissible for travel on a Sabbath day, so they must have done it on the 23rd. By speaking of the 23rd day of the seventh month as the Sabbath day that normally marks the official end of the Feast of Tabernacles, God has directed our attention to the 23rd day of the seventh month as the complete end.

If the end of the Feast of Tabernacles relates to the end of the world, then we wonder if we should expect the end of the world to occur on the 23rd day of the seventh month. We have learned that 2011 is likely the year in which the world will be destroyed. The 23rd day of the seventh month on the biblical calendar in 2011 falls on October 21.

A previously examined clue revealed May 21, 2011, as the date of the Rapture. This clue reveals October 21, 2011, as the date of the end of the world. In a previous chapter we learned that the Rapture will be followed by five months of final judgment on the world before it is destroyed. Interestingly, May 21 to October 21 is exactly five months.

This time clue, when combined with other clues, points to October 21, 2011, as the end of the world.



Time Clue 17: 153 Days

We have discovered that the Rapture will occur on May 21, 2011. We have also discovered that this creation will be destroyed on October 21, 2011. Interestingly, there are exactly five months between these two dates. These dates were both arrived at independently of each other. Neither date was brought into view in order to create a gap of exactly five months; that happened on its own as we arrived at the two dates in separate examinations.

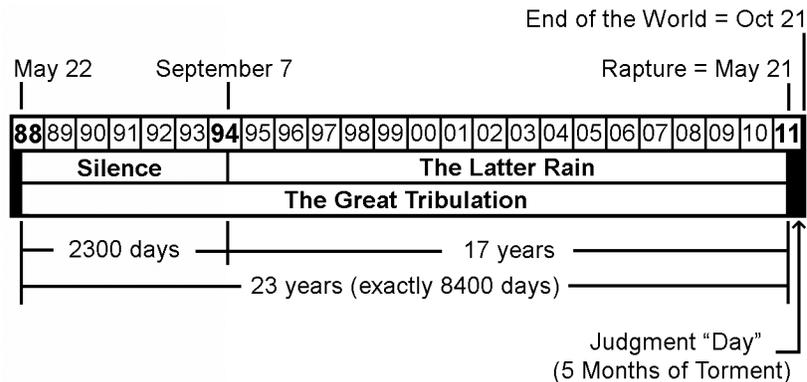
Additionally, these five months are exactly 153 days in length. When we see that number we immediately think of the 153 fish of John chapter 21:

Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. (John 11:21)

We know that bringing in fish signifies salvation as the elect are pulled from the wrath of God. The fact that the net did not break indicates that none were lost. The 153 fish represent all of the believers at the final ingathering. This points to the end when all of God's people are brought in to be with Him forever.

Also, the number 153 breaks down into 17 x 3 x 3. The number 17 signifies God's Kingdom and the number 3 signifies God's plan.

Our finalized timeline from examining the clues we have so far looks like this:



Time Clue 18: God Doubles Up

When Christ died on the cross He demonstrated how He did all the work necessary to make salvation possible. This event occurred on April 1, 33 AD.

The Rapture occurs on the day when God's salvation program comes to an end. After that day salvation will no longer be possible. We have learned that the Bible points to May 21, 2011, as the date of the Rapture.

The timeframe between these two dates encompasses 722,500 days. Interestingly that number breaks down into:

$$(10 \times 5 \times 17) \times (10 \times 5 \times 17)$$

It is very interesting that this time span is a number of days that can be broken down into all spiritually significant numbers. Note the numbers that it breaks down into. The number 5 identifies with salvation and the number 17 signifies God's Kingdom, both of which have everything to do with this time span and the dates located on each side of it.

We may wonder if there is significance to the fact that 722,500 breaks down into two sets of the same numbers. In Genesis chapter 41 we read about Pharaoh having two dreams. One was a dream about seven fat cows coming out of a river, and then seven skinny cows coming out of the river and eating the seven fat cows. The second dream was about seven good ears of corn springing up, and then seven thin ears spring up and devour the seven good ears. Pharaoh called for Joseph to interpret the dreams for him.

Joseph told Pharaoh that the two dreams were one. The seven fat cows and the seven good ears of corn represented the seven years of plenty that were about to come. The seven skinny cows and seven thin ears represented the seven years of famine that would follow the seven years of plenty.

God says that the dream was doubled as a sign that this timetable is firmly established and He will bring it to pass:

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass. (Genesis 41:32)

We may be able to say that 722,500 breaks down into significant numbers that are doubled up as a reminder that God's salvation plan and the timetable that goes with it are firmly established. Nothing will prevent the events in God's timetable from coming to pass when He has predetermined them to.

Time Clue 19: Other Clues

We have already looked at many time clues that all work together to support the same conclusion. The following are perhaps not direct time clues, but could more appropriately be looked upon as additional confirmation of our previous findings. By themselves, these mathematical details couldn't solidly support the conclusions we have come to, but when combined with the previous time clues we can see this as additional evidence.

The year 1877 BC was the year Jacob left Canaan during its tribulation and entered Egypt. The number of years from 1877 BC to 1988 was 3,864, which breaks down into $23 \times 7 \times 3 \times 2 \times 2$. These numbers point to the fact that it was God's perfect (7) plan (3) to bring judgment (23) on those who were supposed to be the bringers of the true Gospel (2). We now know this judgment began at the beginning of the Great Tribulation, which we've learned began in 1988. The information in this paragraph was not used in any way to come to that conclusion. It is merely adding confirmation that we appear to have done our homework correctly.

The year 2092 BC was the year Abraham entered the Promised Land. This officially began God's use of an earthly people to represent His kingdom, as it was the beginning of what would become national Israel. At the cross God shifted from Israel to the church as the earthly organization representing His kingdom. The year that marked the end of God using an earthly organization to represent His people was 1988 when the Early Rain ended and God abandoned the church. The timeframe from 2092 BC to 1988 includes 4,080 years, which breaks down into $17 \times 5 \times 3 \times 24$.

Christ was born in 7 BC. There were exactly 2,000 years from 7 BC to 1994. The number 2,000 breaks down into $5 \times 5 \times 5 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$. The numbers 3 and 4 are also brought into view by the fact that there are three 5's and four 2's. Through Christ it was part of God's salvation (5) plan (3) to establish the church to bring the Gospel (2) to the whole world (4), but in the end He brought judgment (5) on the church for its apostasy.

The year 1877 BC was the year Jacob left Canaan during its tribulation and entered Egypt. The number of years from 1877 BC to 2011 is 3,887 which breaks down into $23 \times 13 \times 13$. These numbers point to judgment and the end of the world.

The year 1357 BC was the first Jubilee year in history. The number of years from 1357 BC to 2011 is 3,367, which breaks down into $37 \times 13 \times 7$. These numbers also point to judgment and the end of the world, as well as indicating that all of this has gone according to God's perfect plan.

Conclusion

If we were to look at only one or two of these time clues we might say, "Well, that's just coincidence." However, as we have looked at clue after clue we find that each one provides additional information that lines up perfectly with the conclusions from the other clues.

The pieces of the puzzle fit together perfectly. Suppose we were to shift just one day of our timeline. When we examined the parallel between the Rapture and God shutting the door to the ark we discovered that we might expect the Rapture to occur on the seventeenth day of the second month. Suppose that day fell just a few days later on May 25 in 2011. If that were the case, then we would see our timeline start to fall apart. No longer would the Great Tribulation be exactly 23 years in length.

No longer would it be exactly 8400 days. No longer would the final five months be exactly five months. No longer would the significant number 153 show itself in relation to the final five months.

Likewise, suppose we discovered that the first day of the seventh month fell just a few days later in 1994 on September 12. No longer would we count back 2,300 days and land on the significant day of Pentecost. No longer would the Early Rain be exactly 1,955 years in length. No longer would the Great Tribulation be exactly 23 years or 8,400 days in length. You see, there's no wiggle room here. Can all of this really be coincidence?

Remember, all of this information came out of the Bible. We did not gather any information from a newspaper or history book. We did not think of the political world around us and look at how it might match up with the events described in the Bible. We kept our focus on the Bible and developed everything from that one source.

If we are tempted to doubt this information God is giving us in spite of how clear it seems, then consider two important facts:

1. We know God will reveal the timing of destruction.
2. We know that near the end of time He is going to remove the seal on end-times prophecies.

We can easily see that God has removed the seal so that the book is now open. We are understanding things in the Bible in a way we never did before. This automatically confirms that we are near the end so we should expect to be getting some information about when the end will occur. When we look at the time clues God has given us they all work together to point to the same conclusion. If the end was going to occur in a year other than 2011, then we should be seeing clues to point us in that direction. Furthermore, we would have to figure out what to do with all of the time clues we currently have pointing us to 2011.

26

CHAPTER

Hearken to the Sound of the Trumpet

God told Noah about the Flood 120 years before it happened (Genesis 6:3). There were only about one million people on the planet in 5110 BC when God gave Noah the warning. This was before the continents were divided so it is likely that the relatively small population of the world was not widely spread across the land yet. After 120 years everyone alive in that day probably had at least heard about the massive ship Noah was building. The Bible tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) so we know that as people questioned him over the 120 years he was warning them of what was going to happen. Rather than take the warning seriously, they probably used the warning to ridicule him: “Did you hear why that crazy man is building that boat? He thinks a flood is going to destroy us all.” This mockery would’ve served to spread the message to the whole population.

Today, a population of one million people is about the size of a mid-sized city. Suppose now you live in such a city and someone is building a very sophisticated glass structure the size of a football stadium. The glass structure is tightly sealed and has the ability to add oxygen to the air inside it. The inside of the structure is furnished and contains all the necessary supplies for people to live within it for years. This structure has been a work in progress for 120 years. When asked why he is building it, the engineer states that on a specific date all of the earth’s atmosphere is going to lose its oxygen. Anyone who is not inside this glass structure will die. The engineer is going to have to seal the door to the structure just before this happens. Once the atmosphere loses its oxygen he will not be able to open the door again. After 120 years of this story being spread around it has had no problem reaching the ears of all one million people. Of course, everyone thinks he’s crazy.

This illustration helps us understand the kind of mindset the world must have had in Noah’s day. However, we can imagine their reaction when the rain did in fact begin to pour down on the very day Noah had been warning them about. In a single moment, they would’ve come to the realization that the warning Noah was bringing them was very real. All of a sudden, they would’ve been running to find that big boat the crazy old man was building. They probably went up to the ark and pounded on the door begging to be let in...but it was too late. They hadn’t yet been destroyed but they now knew that destruction was in fact coming. They might’ve tried to somehow scale the side of the boat, but that would not have worked. The only way into the safety of the ark was through the door and God had shut that. They probably climbed the mountains, knowing that they were only prolonging destruction.

Likewise, the vast majority of people today, including professing Christians, will pay little to no attention to the warnings God has given us in our day. They will think the kinds of things written in this book are silliness just as in the days before the destruction of Sodom:

And Lot went out, and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, and said, Up, get you out of this place; for the LORD will destroy this city. But he seemed as one that mocked unto his sons in law. (Genesis 19:14)

But when the Rapture does occur on May 21, 2011, they will realize how very real the warning was... but by that time it will be too late. People will try to find another way into the Kingdom of God:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (John 10:1)

But the only way to be saved from destruction is through salvation in Christ, and that door will have been shut.

God is commanding us to declare the warning:

Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand (Joel 2:1)

As has always been the case, the vast majority of the world will mock us as we warn them. They will not be afraid:

Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid? (Amos 3:6)

This includes professing Christians. For the most part, those in the churches will continue to criticize this warning rather than hearken:

To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. (Jeremiah 6:10)

God is ensuring that this warning makes its way to the churches through the use of believers as they declare it. Unfortunately, almost no one in the churches will heed the warning:

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. (Jeremiah 6:17)

Again, in Ezekiel chapter 3 we read about God's command to warn those that call themselves His people:

And he said unto me, Son of man, go, get thee unto the house of Israel, and speak with my words unto them. (Ezekiel 3:4)

And God predicted that His people would not listen:

But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee; for they will not hearken unto me: for all the house of Israel are impudent and hardhearted. (Ezekiel 3:7)

However, we do know that a very tiny remnant of people in the churches will indeed hearken and flee the church before May 21, 2011. That is why we are commanded to sound the alarm.

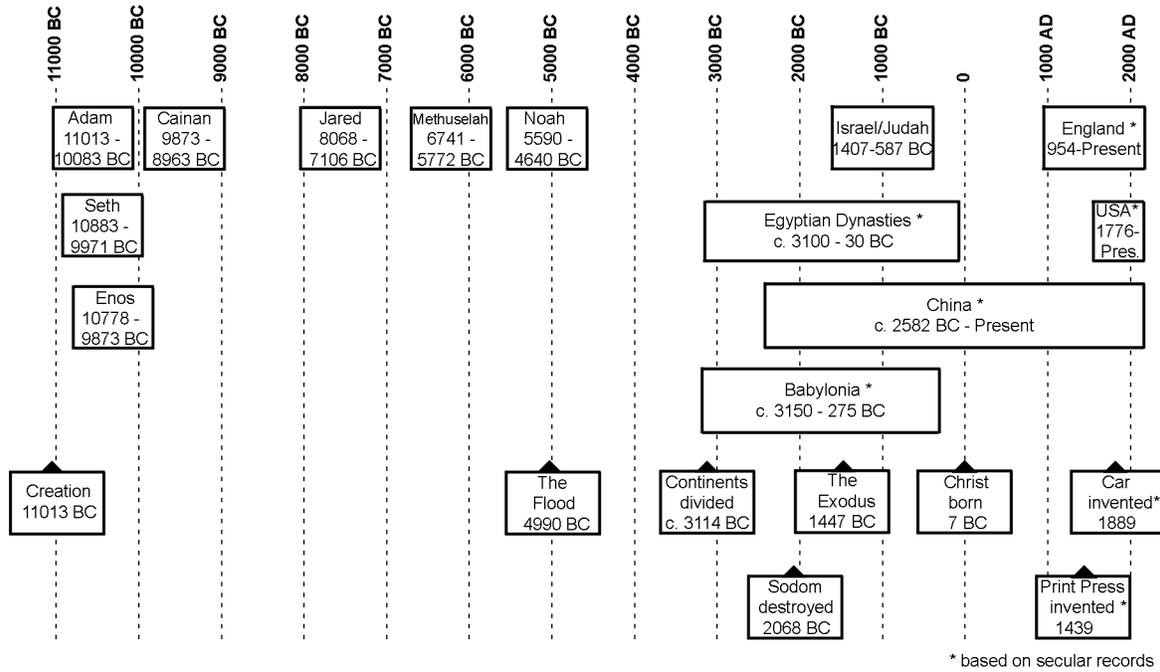
I encourage everyone to check this information out in the Bible themselves. Remember, we must approach the Bible with a willingness to accept whatever it teaches, no matter how much we don't like it or how unpopular the truth is. If we continue to think in our day that we already know what the Bible teaches, then the Bible will remain a sealed book to us:

For the LORD hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes: the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered. And the vision of all is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee: and he saith, I cannot; for it is sealed. (Isaiah 29:10-11)

May the Lord bless you and give you peace.

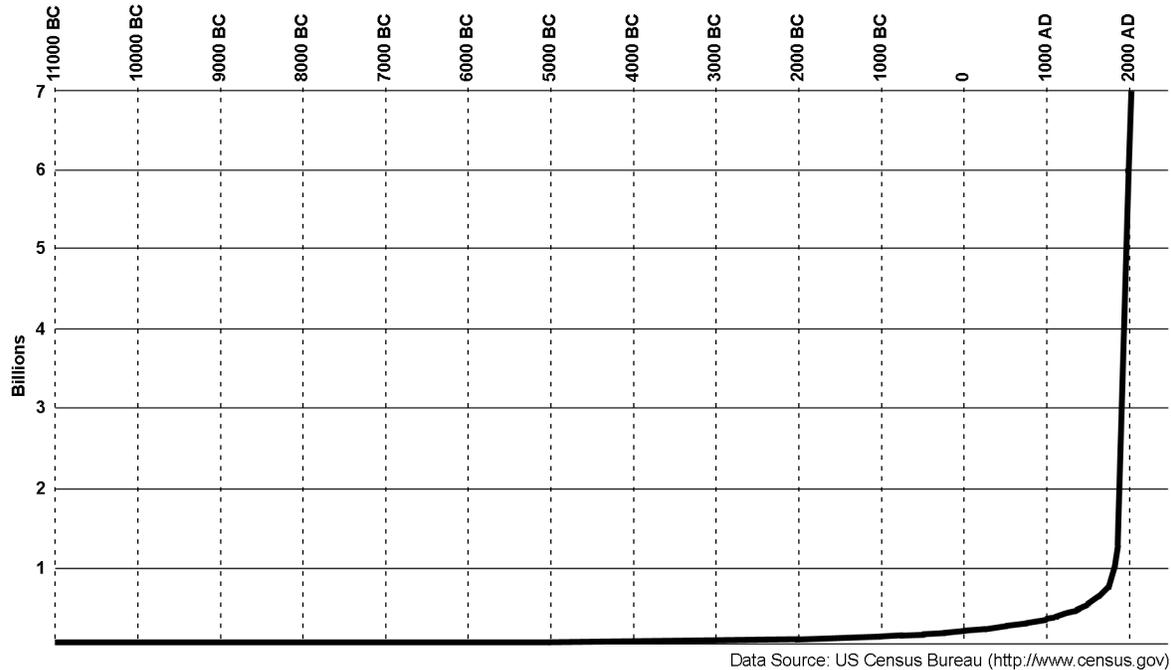
APPENDIX A

TIMELINE OF EARTH'S HISTORY



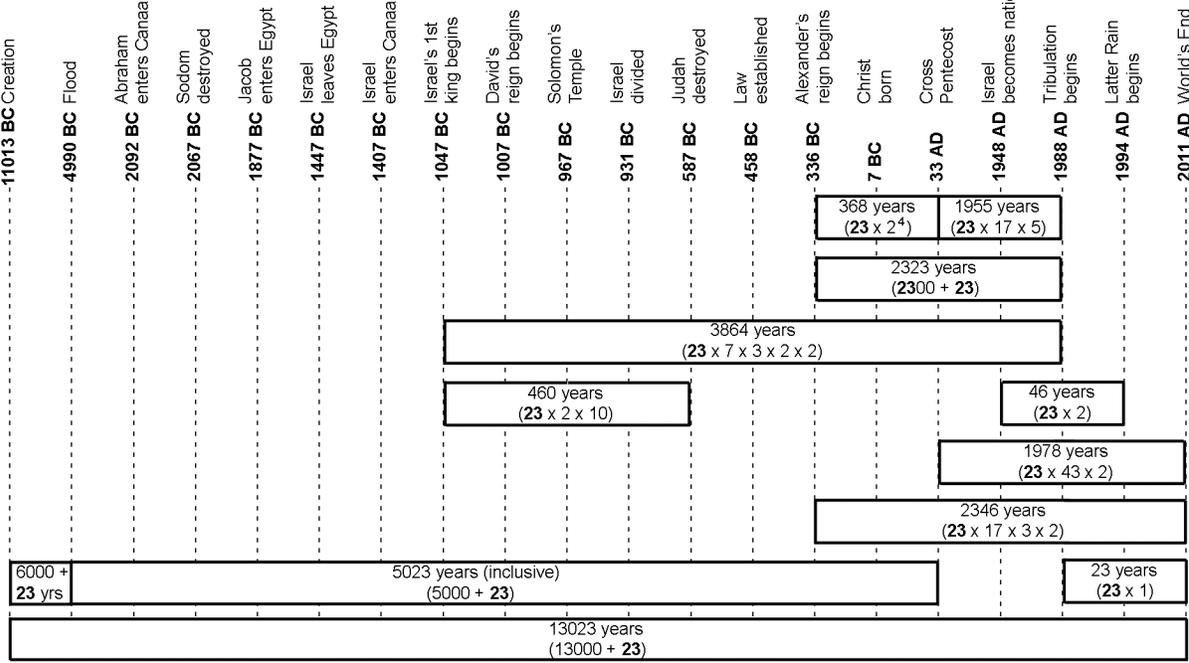
APPENDIX B

HISTORY OF WORLD POPULATION GROWTH



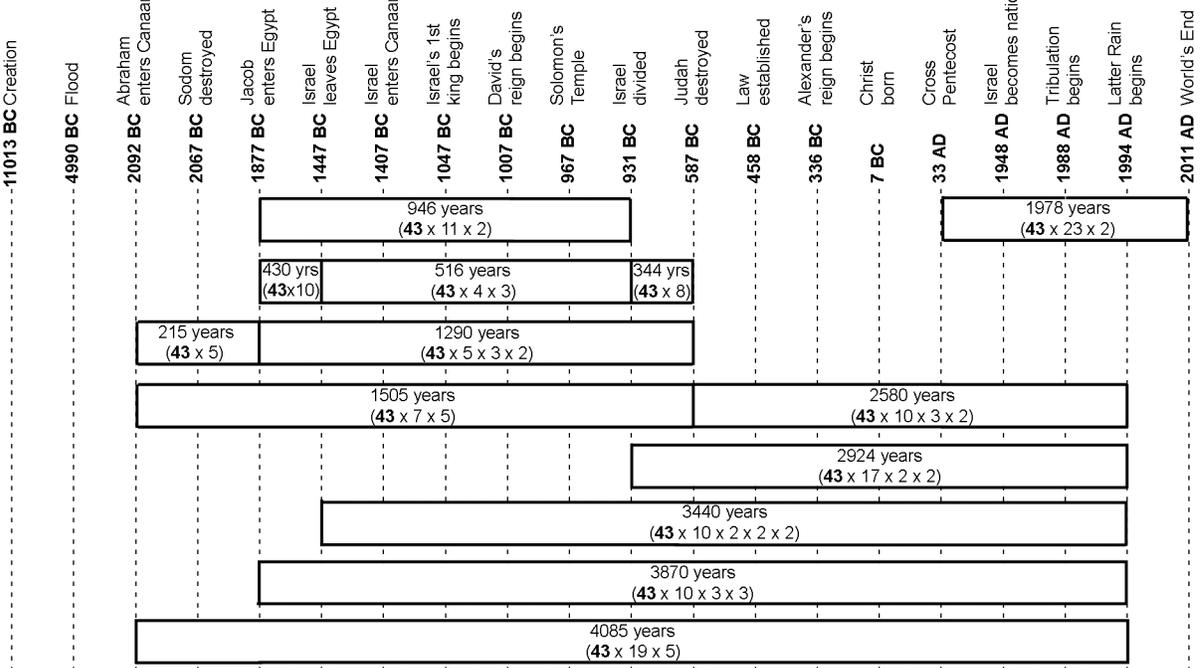
APPENDIX C

SIGNIFICANT DATE RELATIONSHIPS with the NUMBER 23



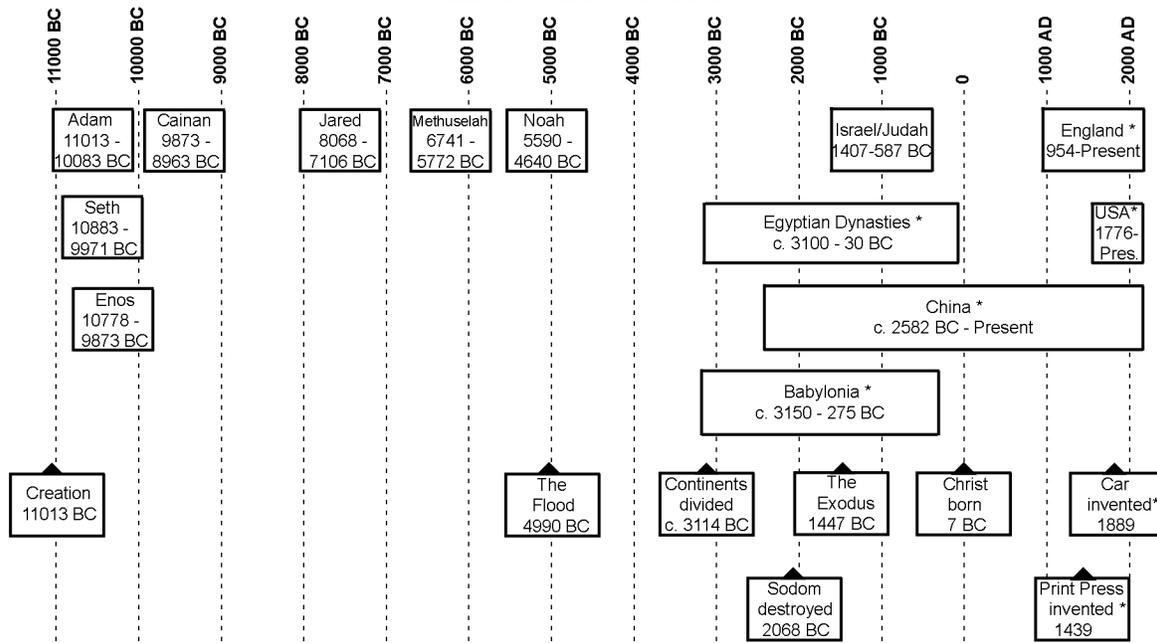
APPENDIX D

SIGNIFICANT DATE RELATIONSHIPS with the NUMBER 43



APPENDIX E

TIMELINE OF EARTH'S HISTORY



* based on secular records