

THE CLOCK OF GOD

THE PASSING OF THE MILLENNIUM

"This is what I meant when I said...that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled.' He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures..."

Luke 24:44-45

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To Patricia

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The Passing of the Millennium

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Introduction

Made up of 73 books sealed in mystery, the Bible is the ultimate anthology of mystery ever written. Its words have been an enigma to everyone who has ever tried to read them. Only in Jesus Christ do all these mysteries make sense. I have compiled the following manuscript to probe scripture's riddles, and to illustrate how all of its books are interrelated and fixed on a common six-thousand-year timetable that seems now about to end. All the prophecies, stories and essays of scripture were made for each other. None are independent of the others. Like diverse pieces in the same mysterious puzzle, they all fit together to form a single picture in Christ. The essence of that picture is eternal life—an eternal existence tied ironically to the end of the world. The close relationship between the two is one of the most profound paradoxes in the Bible. No discussion of the last days can ignore the prophet Daniel whose sealed writings, scripture reveals, pertain in a major way to the final cataclysmic events of history. God informed Daniel that the mysteries of his manuscript were to remain hidden, locked in a divine quarantine until the age for its unveiling should appear. Since then, many have tried to probe his document only to find the past. But that seems about to change. In the apocalyptic milieu of our times—one that has propelled the secular world to the brink of a destruction cataloged as 'minutes before midnight' on its own 'doomsday clock'—we can see the kind of scenario for annihilation the ancient biblical authors chronicled. Coupled with the recent reconstruction of a Jewish Jerusalem, the sudden crystallization of Daniel's prophecies has coincided with several major and pivotal biblical signs. All of these together have added what many see as incontestable weight to the perception that Christ's predicted return is almost at hand. Awash with violence, abandoning God and powerless to halt rapacious commercial interests from wantonly destroying the earth, the current age seems obsessed with global suicide. Issues and events that have molded this destructive climate are not only breaking open the seals on Daniel's writings, they have also exposed formerly enigmatic descriptions which fill the pages of the Book of Revelation as well, allowing us to view that manuscript with a clarity unknown even to our most recent predecessors. This has permitted us to explore the writings of the prophets in

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brand new ways that were not possible even a few years ago.

Since the Bible's prophecies and their meanings are defined here in ways far different than most people are familiar with, it has been necessary to go back and re-explore the religious basis for all these prophecies as well. In the Book of Hebrews, the developing Church was told that it was time to leave the elementary teachings about Christ (i.e., *"...doctrines about baptisms, and the laying-on of hands, the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment..."* Heb.6:1-2). It explained that such teaching was 'milk for babies', and that the time had come to go on to 'solid food'. But this noble goal has proved elusive and overly optimistic. In actual practice, a great many Christians have difficulty dealing even with the milk. Since the subject matter of this book concerns some of the heartiest of the solid food, a review of the basics seems essential. Especially since no one can understand biblical prophecy without a firm understanding of the ground rules which guide that prophecy. At the heart of our investigation is the Mosaic template. God gave Moses authority to state the pattern of the Law, and then interwove Jesus into the program which Moses had defined. Approaching the future through the Mosaic past, therefore, is a major key to biblical prophecy, because it allows us to define God's plan by triangulation, using the Old Testament as one of the primary bases for our understanding. Combining that information with the New Testament and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, completes the triangle. Jesus explained to His disciples that He was bound by the rules of heaven to fulfill everything written about Him in the Old Testament. And God's directive to Jesus that the Mosaic template be fulfilled in precise terms did not disappear with the cross. It is a rule that the Holy Spirit has decreed must be unerringly followed all the way to Armageddon. This fact assures us that the Law and the Prophets will continue to hold important messages for the world right up to the End.

In addition to defining important aspects of the Christian future according to circumstances described in the Old Testament, I have tried in these pages to answer key questions that have perplexed Christians from the earliest days of the faith. Probably the most important question in this regard concerns the Church itself. Has the Holy Spirit been responsible for the development and definition of the Christian Church that we now see on earth? Or has Satan? No one would dare ask this question outright, but a great many seem to be doing so silently in their minds, because this is the hidden question that has divided Christians since the Middle Ages. Its answer is fundamental to our understanding of biblical prophecy and its fulfillment. On one side of this question stand a vocal minority who see the older elements of the Church controlled by corrupt forces which they feel have virtually

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destroyed it—and therefore as a misleading organization which should be publicly reviled and abandoned. Launching repetitive fusillades against it, these maintain that the traditional Church is wicked and should be torn down. They see no difference between it and the forces of Babylon. On the other side are those who view the global Church as the architectural design of the Holy Spirit, promoting on earth the perfection of Jesus Christ in divine harmony with the will of the Spirit. In this view every church is seen to have unique importance because each contributes an essential ministry to the spread of God's life-saving Gospel across the world. Central to this question is the issue of the Holy Spirit. Those who view a Church structure on earth succumbing on its greatest front to the destructive power of Satan, must admit an impotent Holy Spirit incapable of blocking the power of the devil on earth. On the other hand, those who see the Church filled with the power of God and working on all its fronts to do good while staving off the attempted penetrations of Satan, see a powerful Holy Spirit holding the forces of Satan at bay while the Church of God works its perfection on earth.

We can see the same issue raised again in Christ's statement that *'many would be called, but few chosen'*. Jesus said that *'the way is narrow that leads to life and few would find it'* (Mt.7:13-14). The pivotal question in this declaration is simple. Is Christ's 'narrow way' to life a matter of theology or faith? If it is theological, His statement would have to mean that there are just a few good small churches on earth surrounded by an enormous number of bad churches (especially those with the largest membership). Again, this view implies that the Church of Christ on earth is mostly corrupt. If, on the other hand, Christ's statement is a matter of faith, i.e., a matter of faithfulness to His commandments, then all churches must be seen as good because they all preach the same righteousness—Jesus Christ. In this case, the 'many' who are called are all who hear the Gospel proclaimed to them while the 'few chosen' are those who actually put into practice what is being preached. The narrow road in this view is not based on church theology, it is based, instead, on obedience to the directives of the Gospel. The most controversial issue raised by this book—the idea of a contemporary millennium—has its roots in this question. Those who look toward a millennium tomorrow, must first disregard the world rule of the Christian church over the last 17 centuries. The opposite view is to see a millennium now, which acknowledges this 1700 year reign of the Church on earth as an act of God and a divine intervention in the secular course and rule of the planet.

This brings us to the whole idea of the *"mortal wound"* in the Book of Revelation (Rv.13:3)—and to just what that 'wound' really means. Understanding this mortal wound is

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crucial to understanding the end of the world. That is because, according to the Book of Revelation, the mortal wound itself left Satan locked in an Abyss, divorced temporarily from his personal reign of deception on earth. John said that it was only the healing of this wound at the end of time which could remove Satan's chains and allow him back into this world at the end of the millennium—a return scripture says will quickly precipitate the final war by the world against God (Rev.20:7-10). In his prophecies, John describes Satan's return from prison as a time of great armies. Since we are living today in a time of global armies and unprecedented anarchy against the Gospel, we must contemplate the serious possibility that we are currently witnessing the unchaining of Satan and the massing of his forces for the war of Armageddon. If this is true, we are witnessing the millennium about to end. That is the subject of this book.

PART 1

TRUMPETS OVER BABYLON

"Sound the trumpet in Zion, give the alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the country tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming, yes, it is near."

Joel 2:1

1

When Foundations Fall

"In the evening you say, 'It will be fair; there is a red sky', but if it is red and overcast in the morning, 'stormy weather today'. You know how to read the face of the sky, but you cannot read the signs of the times." Mat.16:2-3

This is a book about Christian prophecy. It is about a millennium no one noticed, and a war no one expects. It is about apostasy so great it is bringing the foundations of the world to the point of collapse. It concerns a time of flight when those who are righteous will soon be warned (despite their faith) to seek refuge in the mountains. *"In the Lord I take shelter; so how can you now say to me: 'Bird, fly back to your mountain'?* *'Look, the wicked are bending their bows and fitting their arrows to the string, ready to shoot the upright from the shadows. When foundations fall to ruin, what can the virtuous do?'* " (Ps.11:3). The order itself is ample proof that something grave is about to happen; and when it does, the saints will be powerless except to run and hide (Mt.24:15-22). More than anything else, though, this manuscript is a book about life. It concerns mankind's true but invisible struggle to survive, and the uncommon bravery of God's heroes who preach life while so many about them are filled with the inertia of death and want only to be left alone to succumb. From the day of Pentecost till now the world has basked in the glory of a spiritual Sonlight that has shone down on it from heaven and alchemized the nature of the human soul. For 1900 years this light of God energized the nations with gentleness and brought a peacefulness to the earth that interrupted a march of armies which, just before Jesus arrived, had threatened to drown the world in an endless reign of tyranny and violence. Christ brought into mankind a revolution of heart; tempering the souls He touched with the love of God, and thwarting what Satan had in mind for the world. As this love spread out across the nations, it offered to replace the swaggering pride of armies with the pomp and splendor of cathedrals. It was a peace revolution. And it came in the name of the Son of God. Satan's violent militia found itself trapped and impotent in the web of righteousness that suddenly had enveloped the nations from on high. All their attempts to extricate themselves from this net and block God's march across the world proved feeble. The peace of Christ was

everywhere and it flowed through the hearts of those who tried to revolt, sapping anger of its strength, and crippling the agenda of the sinister. Secular arrogance bowed to a priesthood, and the people of the world settled into a symbolic 'seventy years' to try to make themselves at right with God. Pagan rule gave way to Church rule and in place of monuments to warmongers appeared statues of the apostles, paintings of the holy family, church symphonies, great chapels, nativity plays, creche's, and throughout the entire period, the Gospel was preached without restraint and backed assertively by the governments and all of their surrounding nobility. Any look back at this period of world history shows us a planet in the grips of an immense Christian revolution. As the western world expanded its influence and set up colonies across the face of the planet, it took the message of Christ with it, spreading His word to all parts of the globe. All that has abruptly changed. Today this revolution in the name of righteousness is villified. The peace it brought to the world is now termed repression. In one single century, all that was before has disappeared. In place of gentleness, violence and anger have returned. Hearts, once tempered, are now hardened again; and with this steeliness has come a new reign of violence, bringing the phenomenon of world wars to the planet. The Church is ridiculed and has been thrown out of the schools and the governments which have turned their backs on its support. The artists now chronicle chaos, not bible stories. The cathedrals in Europe stand empty. There are no more nativity plays in the schools. Governments affirm Jesus no longer. Judges and courts consider the Gospel and the Ten Commandments biased and irrelevant. Psychiatrists consider faith madness. The world that lived in the light of heaven has changed. The 1900 years just past are no more, and, for this world, they will never be again. God's offer has been rejected. *"On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil."* (John 3:19). The Book of Revelation warns that the Beast's appearance will be cheered by the people of the world (Rev. 13:3). True to God's prophecy, His offer was short-lived (John 12:35-36). Now darkness is returning. There is a Revolt in progress, and it is bringing down the reign of Jesus on earth. The peace treaty is almost over and the seventy years of Babylon have come to an end.

Never before in human history has there been a time that can rival the chaotic upheavals of the 20th century. Like a pot that has come to a boil, the last 100 years have brought to a focus all the violence that has ever occurred on the earth—producing death and destruction on a scale unparalleled since mankind first appeared on the planet. This carnage has not happened by accident. Moved by the Holy Spirit 2500 years ago to foretell these times, Jeremiah warned, *"Your own behavior and actions have brought this on you. This is*

your fate! How bitter! How it pierces your heart! I am in anguish! I cannot keep quiet, for I have heard the trumpet call and the cry of war. Ruin on ruin is the news: the whole land is laid waste, my tents are suddenly destroyed, in one moment all that sheltered me is gone. How long must I see the standard and hear the trumpet call?' 'This is because my people are stupid, they do not know me, they are slow-witted children, they have no understanding: they are clever enough at doing wrong, but they do not know how to do right.' (Jer.4:16-22). All at once this wicked world has taken an ominous turn. Rescinding a temporary alliance with God, the earth has begun to mobilize itself according to Revelation's plan (Rv.20:8). Endless battles, planet-circling wars, ghastly weapons, terrorism, violence, anarchy, chaos and ruin on top of ruin have ruled the last century in a growing hatred that has steadily driven God's love out of the human heart. In no other time since the days that Jesus himself walked the earth have the people of God been able to watch so many pages of scripture unfold before their eyes in the circumstances around them. The two world wars of this century mirror Revelation's two battles of the end-times pitting the forces of good against the forces of evil. The holocaust of the Jews is a foretaste of the destruction of the saints by the coming Man of Perdition. Adolph Hitler, the short-lived seventh head of the dragon (Rev.12:3), seemed to evoke an image of the man of evil coming up out of the Abyss to mastermind the destruction. There can be little doubt he brought with him, a "tribulation" destined to lead into the final beast. The invention and use of nuclear weapons has brought the fire of the stars exploding across the surface of the planet. Rockets have been produced which can hurl these inferno's anywhere on the globe at a moment's notice. And just below the earth's surface anthrax and nerve gas lie at the ready in rusting containers. It is now like in the days of Noah when the drops began to fall; but in our time the rain that is starting is a reign of violence. In Noah's day the drops signaled flood. In our day they herald fire. *"I looked to the earth to see a formless waste; to the heavens, and their light had gone. I looked to the mountains to see them quaking and all the heights astir. I looked to see no man at all, the very birds of heaven had fled. I looked to see the wooded country a wilderness, all its towns in ruins, at the presence of God, at the presence of his burning anger. Yes, thus speaks the Lord, 'The whole land shall be laid waste, I will make an end of it once and for all; at which the earth will go into mourning, and the heavens above grow dark. For I have spoken and will not change my mind, I have decided and will not go back on it.'* (Jer.4:23-28). It is a good thing Jesus' kingdom is not of this earth. The images of horror this century has brought before our eyes are graphic and indisputable. We live in a world that is preparing itself for Armageddon. While many aspects of this preparation were described in advance, none of the visions could even remotely prepare us for the incredible specter of warfare or weapons of mass destruction that have poured out of the last hundred years. *"Out*

of the smoke dropped locusts which were given the powers that scorpions have on earth...To look at, these locusts were like horses armored for battle...they had body-armor like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings sounded like a great charge of horses and chariots into battle." (Rv.9). Modern military hardware looks even more macabre than the material John described. Like surreal locusts covered with battle armor, today's helicopter gunships clatter across firestained skies, virtually duplicating his vision—their spinning wings pounding the air like booming drums—huge iron machines with faces that seem almost human, and all this equipment spewing streams of fire, smoke and sulphur from their mouths and tails and under-bellys.

In the van of this stockpile of terror, a fierce anger has grown. No one can understand the torrent of barbarism that has suddenly erupted in the world. Yet these are the very days of violence that Habakkuk so accurately predicted: *"How long, God, am I to cry for help while you will not listen...Why do you set injustice before me, why do you look on where there is tyranny? Outrage and violence, this is all I see, all is contention and discord flourishes...Then God answered and said, 'Write the vision down, inscribe it on tablets to be easily read, since this vision is for its own time only: eager for its own fulfillment, it does not deceive; if it comes slowly, wait, for come it will, without fail."* (Hab.1:2-3,2:2-3). And come it has. No one can argue Habakkuk's prophecy today. The escalating violence forecast by Jesus as a sure sign of the last days has literally exploded across the planet in this century, getting worse year by year until at the present time anarchy threatens to bring civilization on earth to an end—even in the most utopian parts of human society (Mt.24:12). In the wake of this barbarism, the savage are taking the world by storm. Even in America, civil authorities are helpless to try to stop violent gangs from wreaking their havoc every night in the cities. God warned that rage in the last days would rise to such a peak that love in most people would grow cold. But who could believe that this prophecy would come upon us so fast? Or be as harsh as it is now, even as it is just beginning?

Jesus said that in the company of this violence the last days would be heralded by signs in the sun and moon and stars (Lk.21:25). At the start of this century, a large comet streaked out of the sky and struck Russia. *"Then the fifth angel blew his trumpet, and I saw a star fall down from heaven onto the earth..."* (Rev.9:1). A fireball that lit up all of Europe as it passed overhead, it impacted in Siberia with more power than a hydrogen bomb. Incinerating 2000 square kilometers of forest and causing vast damage, it covered the entire earth in a great cloud of dust. *"...and he was given the key to the shaft leading down to the Abyss. When he unlocked the shaft of the Abyss, smoke poured up out of that opening like*

the smoke from a huge furnace..." (Rev.9:1-2). Duplicating the kind of cosmic sign of the End which Jesus spoke about, the dust and debris which poured into the skies from Tunguska were like clouds rolling up to create a war century. Perhaps a momentous trumpet *had* suddenly sounded over Babylon—for this timely comet turned out to be a harbinger of unprecedented disaster. Within just six years of that celestial event Christian Russia fell to antichrist communists and World War I began its lethal roll across Europe. As if he had ridden that comet right up out of the bowels of the Abyss, Satan quickly deceived the nations and mobilized the world for war just as John's prophecy had forewarned (Rv.20:8), and the planet would never be the same again. From ancient times, the sight of comets has always been considered as a foreboding of impending disaster. This century has seen world-wide disaster greater than any other in human history. It has seen war on a scale never before imagined. It has witnessed the birth and death of three giant lethal world empires (each of them as large as ancient Rome) rising up and then disappearing in the span of less than eighty years. It has seen the massacre of more than nine million Jews in Europe, and almost thirty million unborn children in the United States alone by legal abortion. In almost the blink of an eye, it has witnessed the birth of atomic power and its swift growth into a vast and insane nuclear arsenal capable of annihilating all planetary life in a matter of seconds. Surrounded by these catastrophic changes, the global Church founded by Jesus Christ has begun its predicted fall from public favor. Fueling this collapse, the 'Great Revolt' anticipated by Paul (2 Thes.2:32) has erupted all around us. *"But you have abandoned God, and forgotten my holy mountain. That is why I commit you to the sword—all of you to fall in the slaughter. For I called and you would not answer, I spoke and you would not listen."* (Is.65:11-12). For almost 2000 years the people of the world have been flocking to the foot of the cross to hear the message of God, but no more. Deceived by the glamor of the modern world, the people are listening now to other voices. It is amusement centers and sports arenas that command the crowds today, not churches. The world's fascination with Jesus—a phenomenon that has distinguished all the past centuries since His birth—is grinding to a halt in our own. This denotes a major shift in the way the world has reacted to the Gospel of Christ. The change has been sudden and abrupt. Before the Revolt, Church-rule powered all aspects of daily life. Today, under fierce attack, the Church is the object of society's ridicule. The dissent has even invaded the Christian body, bringing the Revolt right to the foot of the altar. The outer structure may still be in place, but faith—the inner power of the Church—has joined the collapse. In this century, everywhere we look the political dominance of Church leadership in global affairs has been challenged and overturned, bringing to an end seventeen hundred years of world-wide Christian rule. In the United States this challenge has been made on secular and political grounds, implying that a strict

separation between church and state is more important to the national interest than is obedience to God.

In concert with this shift away from Christ, a runaway self indulgence promoted by the captains of commerce has obsessed the western world. Described in scripture as "*a land of shopkeepers and merchants*" (Ez.17:4), Babylon overflows with political and corporate tycoons who promote this life of ours, not as a chance for reconciliation with God, but "*as a kind of game, and our time here like a fair, full of bargains.*" (Ws.15:12). Using the hypnotic genius of Madison Avenue to glorify idols of steel and plastic, these ministers of money have brought a glamorous, but deeply avaricious competitor into the arena with the message of God. They have packaged it as 'the good life', but it's dark side (usury and greed) have plunged unsuspecting millions into unemployment and poverty, and filled even those who are successful with an abiding terror of failure. The Bible says that "*Man when he prospers forfeits intelligence: he is one with the cattle doomed to slaughter.*" (Ps.49:12). Prosperity has not softened any hearts in the United States, the wealthiest country of the world. While talk of interest rates, annuities and yields here dominate the conversation of the affluent, women, children and the infirm sleep on the streets, homeless, abandoned and ignored. As a counterpoint to the West's mercenary stampede, on the eastern side of the globe has angrily grown Babylon's competitor. Trying to free themselves from both capitalism and Christ, a great many of the nations of the east followed Russia's lead and mirrored its push toward militancy and communism. As a result, the confrontation between east and west has been the overriding political issue of the last half-century. It has filled the world with armies and brought us all face to face with the kind of confrontation predicted by the prophets for the last days. Amid this explosion of troops across the planet, the formation of the state of Israel a few decades ago fulfilled the prophecies of Joel, and provided the magnet that will soon draw all the armies of the world to their fatal date with biblical destiny on the plain of Megiddo. "*Enemies are coming from a distant country, shouting their war cry against the towns of Judah; they surround Jerusalem like watchmen round a field because she has apostatized from me—it is God who speaks.*" (Jer.4:16-17). The formation of Israel has created the national Jewish presence in Jerusalem demanded by the visions of the last days. It's sudden reappearance in the world after a 2000 year absence shows that the stage for scriptures' last drama has finally been set in place—the planet's gallows have now been erected with the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The circuit judge is on His way and everything has been made ready for His arrival.

Why? What in the world have we done, different from our ancestors, to deserve something so horrendous as Armageddon? We know that Armageddon exists. The scriptures are clear that such an event looms at the end of time. But why now? The thought of divine catastrophe in our own time seems so foreign to the kind of compassion we have come to expect from the loving God we feel we worship that the two can hardly be reconciled. He should be protecting us from the disaster, we say, not leading us into it (Ps.11:1-6). Yet the scriptures have made it clear. The catastrophe of the last days comes from Satan and sin, not God. What comes from God is the warning. And if we heed that warning there will be no disaster. The Wrath cannot occur if the world holds to faith. It is because the world's faith has started to collapse that God's warning voices have become so strident. The Revolt is leading the world to catastrophe. If it is not reversed, the Wrath cannot be stopped. That is why it is imperative that everyone pay close attention to the warnings and repent now before it is too late. All the terrible things that have evolved in this century stem from the world's revolt against the Gospel of Christ. And in that revolt, cause and effect have begun to unite. It is true that the cauldron has been heating like this for a long time, but in our day, it has finally come to a boil. Jesus warned that it would happen like this. He said God's harvest would have a short duration and that because of evil it would end in a sudden and terrible catastrophe. The question is, are these the days of that calamity?

All the signs say yes. Drugs and crime dominate the headlines. The angry kill without hesitation or reason. And fear has turned compassion in this world to stone. Those unaffected by the violence are obsessed with chasing the elusive gods proclaimed by the media and its sponsors, while all the rest arm themselves for war. Hammering hard at the doors where the wrath of scripture is stored, mankind has begun to spill its terrible contents down upon itself. Out of that opening has poured all the evil and violence of the twentieth century, and just behind it lies the catastrophic and terminal events of the century to follow, the "third day", the day God is scheduled to return and meet us face to face. *"Suddenly, unexpectedly, you shall be visited by the Lord God Almighty with thunder, earthquake, mighty din, hurricane, tempest, flame of devouring fire."* (Is.29:5). In the train of this wrath, a court will be held. Every person who has ever lived will be judged according to the conduct of their lives. Those who have lived their lives in the Gospel will receive the gift of eternal life in paradise and all the *"rich glories Christ has promised the saints will inherit"* (Eph.1:18). Those who have done evil *"...will come trembling to the reckoning of their sins. They will be utterly laid waste, anguish will be theirs, and their memory shall perish."* (Ws.4:17-20). On their way to the burning lake they will ask, *"Arrogance, what advantage has this brought us? Wealth and boasting, what have these conferred on us? All those things*

have passed like a shadow...like a bird flying through the air—leaving no proof of its passing." (W.s.5:8-11). Leading that awesome tribunal in the sky are all the signs of its coming—the signs of retribution for sin which continue to evolve before our eyes. Stories of genocide, pestilence, disaster and famine fill the airwaves nightly. Only fourteen years ago, the great plague AIDS appeared—a highly infectious scourge that kills everyone it touches—and which is now careening through the population like a runaway locomotive. This lethal blood disease has arrived in concert with a growing collapse of Christian moral codes. The call to practice same-gender sex is preached openly and is supported by the government and even by various churches who view it as a normal and acceptable lifestyle. Homosexuals today are becoming as militant and as aggressive as those who governed Sodom and Gomorrah at the time of Lot. The fact that our children are now being subject to outrageous daily assaults by pornographic and prurient forces beyond our control is graphic proof that what we are seeing in our time, amid immense disaster, is the revolt against the Gospel which Paul predicted. It is a Bedford Falls to Pottersville kind of transformation in which bath houses, strip joints and pornographic videos have replaced the public displays of crosses, manger and Christmas pageants of a fast fading yesterday. This revolt is returning the world to the kind of paganism that dominated the ancient civilizations of the past. And as it gathers steam, it is steering the planet toward even greater disaster. According to the Book of Matthew, a sure signal of these larger calamities will be a rash of violent earthquakes in the world's population centers.

Like a drunk driver careening down the highway, this burgeoning wickedness is bringing disaster down on everyone—on good and bad alike—because the entire world is about to be destroyed by sin. That is what all these catastrophe's are about. They are about signals ignored. Wars and rumors of wars, earthquakes, famine, pestilence and flood—maladies which the Bible says are the final warnings of a blazing fire that lies just behind the signs—a fire of burning sulphur, brimstone and a scorching wind that will bring down in ruins the very foundations of the earth. *"To his servants God will reveal his hand, but to his enemies his fury. For see how God comes in fire, his chariots like the tempest, to quench his anger with burning, his threats with flaming fire. For by fire will the Lord execute judgement, and by his sword, against all mankind."* (Is.66:14-16). Christ warns us that the events we have seen in this century are only the start of what is to come (Mt.24:8). Saying this, Jesus added, *"Then they will hand you over to be tortured and put to death; and you will be hated by all the nations on account of my name"* (Mt.24:9). This reveals what is soon to follow—open warfare against Jesus and His people by the citizens of this world. *"And then many will fall away; men will betray one another and hate one another...and with the increase*

of lawlessness, love in most men will grow cold; but the man who stands firm to the end will be saved. " (Mt.24:10-13). Christ's words indicate that not only is the world incapable of correlating the disasters of this century with the spiritual stagnation that drives them, they prove that animosity toward Jesus by the world's people will only increase as the terrible adversities grow. This hatred will increase until the day when it all finally erupts into open physical warfare against those who still cling to the truth. So, instead of leading the people to repentance, God's reproofs will only increase the people's hostility and bitterness toward Jesus and His Church. *"Men were biting their tongues for pain, but instead of repenting for what they had done, they cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores.* " (Rev.16:11). Instead of seeing their sins as the cause of this misfortune, the people of the world will blame God and Christianity as the source of all the miseries.

That blame has already started. Perceiving nothing inside themselves as sin, the secular world sees no need for Christ. His call to righteousness is simply an opinion as far as they are concerned—just a small column on the commentary page of life's newspaper. The maladies and misfortunes in the world all come from God and from the religious differences that surround Him they claim—not from the dominions and powers of Satan. Those who hate Jesus are convinced that the smaller they can make Christ's impact on the world, the more peace they will be able to bring to it. But their plan for peace is filled with war. No one can bring peace to humanity by taking away from it teachings of love, compassion and gentleness. The controversy they hate so much stems from their own hostility. They are infuriated by the call to righteousness because it convicts their own inner passion. But their anger cannot change what Jesus said—His message that virtuous conduct and brotherly love are the only avenues by which mankind can escape eternal death. The whole issue in Christ is immortality through love. While other religions may offer solace and less controversy, they do not prevent eternal death. Those who press for accommodation in religious preaching outside of Christ seek argumentative peace, but they cannot offer heavenly peace. Nor can they offer earthly peace. It is not peace that Jesus brought to mankind, he told his disciples, but a sword of division. Not a sword to divide Christians from Christians, but a sword against wickedness—to divide Christians from the sinfulness of this world. That is why controversy surrounds the religion of Christ. Jesus said that all men are born dead, and only the sound of His voice can raise them up out of that death into life. He came to wake and resurrect what had already been condemned and sentenced. Harmony in the prison—here, on death row—is not the issue. Escape is the issue. Christ's Gospel is the only chance any of us have for achieving life beyond death. God created this world, not to bring all men into harmony with each other, but to seek out and save the lost

children of heaven that Satan had dispersed throughout his great city-nation called 'Babylon'. While His message was geared only to the lost tribes of the House of Israel, Jesus extended God's offer to everyone on the planet so that He could bring all mankind into harmony with the will of the Creator so that every person on the face of the earth could have the opportunity to live forever. The issue in Christ is death itself. Not just the big one at the end of the sky, but the ordinary one bearing down on our own lives this very minute. Our life is very short and its term vastly unpredictable. The crisis issue, then, in every way is Armageddon. We need to make good the pardon before the sentence that has placed us in this prison is carried out.

Like an alarm clock ringing on the nightstand, the sound of the Gospel now pierces a twilight air. It is calling to a world that has fallen asleep in its faith. *"Wake up; revive what little you have left: it is dying fast. So far I have failed to notice anything in the way you live that my God could possibly call perfect, and yet do you remember how eager you were when you first heard the message? Hold on to that. Repent. If you do not wake up, I shall come to you like a thief, without telling you at what hour to expect me."* (Rev. 3:2-3) The blandness of faith in our times bears witness to just how serious the condition has become and the magnitude of the task ahead. *"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should become tasteless, what can make it salty again? It is good for nothing, and can only be thrown out to be trampled underfoot by men."* (Matt.5:13). *"I know all about you: how you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth. You say to yourself, 'I am rich, I have made a fortune, and have everything I want', never realising that you are wretchedly poor, and blind and naked too. I warn you, buy from me the gold that has been tested in the fire to make you really rich, and white robes to clothe you and cover your shameful nakedness, and eye ointment to put on your eyes so that you are able to see. I am the one who reproveth and disciplines all those he loves: so repent in real earnest."* (Rev.3:15-19).

The sound of this alarm will not go away. Setting the final seals on 'vision and prophecy', just before the end, scripture has decreed that a number of messengers will arise and herald the coming of the final days and their events. So just as prophecy flourished when Jesus first appeared, it will do so again when He returns. Several decades before the Lord was born in Bethlehem and many centuries after Moses had made his momentous prediction that a Messiah would be sent to Israel, a great wave of anticipation suddenly erupted in the land of Palestine. As if driven by a secret force, all at once much of the population of Judea began to feel that the time had finally come for the Mosaic Christ to make

His appearance before them. A profound excitement enveloped the people. The intensity of this anticipation was of such proportions that biblical scholars have coined the term 'messianic fervor' to describe the sense of expectancy which swept through Judea and gripped the Jewish people there during that era—a span of time which lasted about 150 years. This surge of anticipation for the coming of the Messiah was at its height when Jesus was born. During the years of that clamor many false prophets arose, but so also did the Lord. The passion of the age, then, came from the Holy Spirit. The fervor itself was the clock of God heralding the time. And now, suddenly it is happening again. It is exactly the same today. The signs of Christ's 'Second Coming' are cascading all around us. Never before in all of Christian history, except for the earliest days of the Church, has there been such intensity in anticipation of the apocalyptic events of the final days. In the eddy's of this fervor, clouding the vision, many false prophets have appeared—some bringing disaster to those who followed them. Yet the aura of the times swirls around their appearance. In the same way that a great clamor of expectation and false prophecy accompanied the first coming of Christ, the wave of anticipation for the last days that is now exploding around us today also must come from the Holy Spirit as well. *"Think of the fig tree...as soon as you see it bud, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that the kingdom of God is near."* (Lk.21:30-31). The Second Coming cannot be far away. Everything shows that these are the last days. The fervor is just too great for them not to be. All that Jesus predicted is happening now even as we watch. There are still many days to go, but we can tell by the reconstruction of Jerusalem that the final countdown is about to be launched. And as the end comes closer, we can expect the signs to increase and grow even more alarming. *"There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamor of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken."* (Lk.21:25-26). As these signs unfold in the days that lie directly ahead, they will provide certain proof of what is soon going to come to pass—the return of Jesus as he promised and the final destruction of the place that scripture calls Babylon.

2

Eden—A Brief Moment in Paradise

"For he it was who formed the mountains, created the wind, reveals his mind to man, makes both dawn and dark, and walks on the top of the heights of the world; the Lord God Almighty is his name."

Amos 4:13

In order to understand the end of the world, we need to go back to its beginning—to the start of creation itself. That takes us to the Book of Genesis: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."* (Gn.1:1). The word 'heavens' here is plural. This shows that more than one heaven was formed in the process of creation. Paul verified this when he said that there are actually three heavens (2 Cor.12:2). According to scripture, before any creation existed here, all was darkness and God's Spirit hovered over the water (Gn.1:2). This means that before there was earth or sea or sky, there was water—not H₂O per se—but the kind of 'water' that forms the primordial substance of creation itself. Into the darkness of this water, God sent His voice: *"God said, 'Let there be light', and there was light."* (Gn.1:3). We can see this explosion of light in two ways. One, literally, as the 'Big Bang' which created our universe, and then metaphorically, as an event more basic—a flash that occurred far earlier and formed something even more fundamental—the heavens themselves. *"God said, 'Let there be a vault in the waters to divide the waters in two'."* (Gn.1:6). This division, the Bible says, formed the three heavens of scripture—two made out of 'water' and another composed of a kind of deep space which the Bible calls a 'vault' or 'chasm'. *"God made the vault and it divided the waters above the vault from the waters under the vault."* (Gn.1:7). As soon as He had created it, God quietly put the body of waters that lay above the vault (the substance of the third heaven) away for safe keeping. This was a crucial moment in the earliest phases of the creation. It gave God the means for our rescue later. This hidden heaven is the place Paul described when he talked about the the highest heaven of all (2 Cor.12:2). It is a heaven that neither Satan nor any other angel has ever entered. It is inside this hidden and pristine 'upper waters' that God is creating the kingdom which Jesus will rule. No further reference is given in the Book of Genesis to the

mysterious body of objects formed below the third heaven—to the vault itself, for instance which is the heaven in which God and all the angels currently reside (a place we might call the 'middle' heaven); and to the lower waters—the waters that lay beneath the vault and which now constitute our own earth and sky (Gen.1:9). This is the 'lower' heaven—the visible 'heaven' above our heads—and it includes every star and galaxy in our universe. The lower waters not only house all of physical creation, they also contain a spiritual realm that is invisible to our eyes. We can see this invisible part in our own division of body and soul. Originally body and soul were meant to exist in the same substance, but sin created a division between them. So God split them apart in order to manifest the exile. Understanding this split is crucial to the comprehension of bible prophecy and all the codes on which it is based. While this division is not much different from the way God split the creative waters in the beginning, in this case it divided only the lower sea. And it happened, not for glory, but for sin. In the code of scripture the lower waters are referred to as the 'nether sea', or simply 'the sea'. This spiritual ocean, once created in the perfection and light of God, is now a darkened and chaotic malestrom of churning mist—the domain of Satan's kingdom—the part of creation that Satan corrupted—a corruption which took away its immortality. Sin brought such corruption into the lower waters that God was forced to refashion a part of this 'sea' into a material existance opposite of His true nature. Filled with cosmic firestorms of exploding galaxies, stars and colliding planets, it also reflects the chaos of Satan's warfare against God. Scripture tells us that it was Jesus who brought this second part into existance with an explosive blast (John 1:1-5). Blinding the vision of science to see beyond it, the immense power of this cosmic explosion created the stars and planets we now see in space.

If one were to visualize all this in terms of blocks of modeling clay, it would be as if God took one block of clay that no one knew about and locked it up in the attic of His house; and then took a second block of clay (a block scripture calls the 'lower waters') and placed it in the basement of His house. The block of clay in the attic (the third heaven) He kept safeguarded and out of sight. But using the block of clay in the basement, God fashioned our own earth and sky—the creation of the first-born. This is the portion Satan contaminated—the block in the basement. To prevent this contamination from spreading, God split the basement block of clay in half. *"Did you not split Rahab in two...?"* (Is.51:9). *"By your power, God, you split the sea in two and smashed the heads of the monster in the waters."* (Ps.74:13). This division created the material universe and made one part of the lower waters invisible to its other part. Satan had been blocked. It is this split which created the exile—body in one substance, soul in another. Because of this division, we who are in the physical part are now blind to the real substance of God. We can see physical things but

we have no receptors to see things that are made of spirit. That is why both God and Satan are now invisible to our eyes. God has placed us in the isolation of this physical nature so that Satan's infection cannot spread. Where we *do* see spiritual elements, it is only because God has replicated images of them in material form. When we look out into space, for instance, we can see that all the planets and galaxies in the physical universe are separated from one another by gigantic chasms of blank space—and that is the way it is in the separation between the heavens themselves. A vast chasm exists between the upper waters and our own lower waters—a chasm not even the angels can cross. God is spirit and by imprisoning man in physical form, He has made it impossible for us to see His face or even to understand the nature or certainty of His existence. How God could do all this is inexplicable and totally mysterious. But one thing is clear, almost everything in the house of God exists in a spiritual dimension we have no 'eyes' to see.

Not all spiritual elements are good. Satan and his angels are spirit. And it was in this spiritual plane that all the great warfare took place which resulted in Satan's defeat and his imprisonment in the lower waters. We should not confuse the spiritual realms that exist above the lower sea with the elements of the sea itself. Because God divided them to block wickedness, the lower waters now have both spiritual and material natures. That is why Satan's warfare still rages within us. The material part of the lower waters is the universe we see around us and which came to be as a result of the separation between man and God. *"To God belong the earth and all it holds, the world and all who live in it; he himself founded it on the ocean, based it firmly on the nether sea."* (Ps.24:1-2). The hidden spiritual half of these lower waters probably once housed the Garden of Eden, because while in it, Adam and Eve could see God (who is spirit). Therefore, it was different than the world we now occupy where angels and other spiritual things are invisible. And where it once contained the garden, now all it houses is that garden's wreckage—the prison of souls for instance, and the dominions and powers of Satan. Called the Abyss, it now sits incurably ruined. Our souls, since they are spiritual, exist on one side of this split and our bodies lie on the other. The fact that, despite this split, the two remain somehow attached as a single unit is one of God's greatest mysteries, and it is a key mechanism in our salvation. That is because this mysterious union between body and soul can be cut apart by baptism in the blood of Christ, ridding us of our contaminated clothing and providing the means for our soul to unite with the Spirit of God, and in that way obtain a body that is eternal—a body Jesus called 'the wedding garment'. Paul said that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Neither can a soul that has failed to unite itself with the Holy Spirit. Our escape from Satan's prison depends completely on our robing ourselves in God's garment of salvation. The

codes in scripture are very clear in this regard. It was the splitting of the lower sea into its two individual parts that provided God the means for our rescue. *"God drove back the sea...and he made dry land of the sea. The waters parted and the sons of Israel went on dry ground right into the sea, walls of water to the right and to the left of them."* (Ex.14:21-22). See also, Ex.15:8, Neh.9:11, Ps.18:16, Ps.74:13-14, etc. The banks of water represent the two halves of the nether sea. On each side, towers a hidden spiritual wall of water and running through the middle of it, the material universe. God formed the earth and galaxies in the benthic depths of this divided creation so that His people could have a way to walk to safety across dry land, and so escape the malestrom of Satan's mists and darkness. *"Reach down your hand from above, save me, rescue me from deep waters, from the power of foreigners..."* (Ps.144:7). By parting the waters of the lower sea, God has been able to lead us out of sin and transport us to the upper waters where He has built His new kingdom. It is important to understand that the parting of these waters was not initiated by Moses, but was re-enacted at the Exodus so that we could see its relationship to our divine escape in Jesus Christ. Perceiving this relationship allows us to comprehend one of the most important prophetic codes in the Bible.

The entire nether sea and everything in it is doomed. Both halves of the lower waters (both its visible and invisible parts) are going to be consumed in what John calls 'a lake of burning sulphur' when God's day of Judgment comes. This lake of fire will be born out of the incineration of the lower sea itself. It is the torching of these waters that will destroy Satan and the first heaven forever, and along with it, everything that is evil. Because Satan has made it perishable once God has rescued us out of this existance, all of it will pass away. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea."* (Rv.21:1). When the Lord first created the lower sea it was good and there was no evil within it. The Book of Genesis describes how God went about forming His creation and all the life within it, including Adam and Eve—forming all of it in goodness out of the substance of the primordial water which lay below the second heaven. During this period, scripture says that God discussed the creation of man with others: *"Let us make man in our own image."* (Gn.1:26). This immediately raises a question. Who was with God when He first created man? The first thought of course would be Jesus; but there were also many angels around Him, and a group of powerful beings called 'Elders'. John in the Book of Revelation said that when God comes at the Last Judgment He will be accompanied by a hundred million angels and thousands upon thousands more than that. *"...there were ten thousand times ten thousand of them and thousands upon thousands..."* (Rv.5:11). In addition to all these angels, John saw in his

vision that the 'Elders' he described, will sit circled around God on 24 thrones at the time of judgment (Rv.4:4). These elders were mentioned briefly in the Book of Isaiah who wrote of Jesus that *"his glory will shine in the presence of his elders."* (Is.24:23). All of this indicates that there is a definite hierarchy in the kingdom of God—one of great age and very holy. It also shows that God had been the head of an immense established community in heaven filled with angels and beings for an infinite period of time that extends far back before any of the things that relate to this world ever happened. We are inclined to think of God's chain of command in human terms where those in higher offices lord it over those beneath them. But this is not how it is in heaven. Jesus said that the hierarchy in heaven is a reverse of our own. Within the rules governing this heavenly gradient, God appointed an angel named Satan to rule over His new creation, giving this being great power over the administration of the nether sea. Within God's pyramid of authority were a number of angels who were called 'God's Sons'. Satan was one of these 'sons'. *"One day the Sons of God came to attend on God, and among them was Satan."* (Job.1:6). Satan, in fact, seems to have been one of the highest ranking angels in the court of God. We will show later how the codes of scripture define this relationship when we examine the prophecies in the Book of Esther. All of these beings—Satan and the angels under his direction—were a part of a heavenly contingent already in existence at the time of the world's beginning. This is clearly evident by the fact that Satan's rebellion was made manifest at the Garden in Eden. This means that Satan and the angels who followed him in his rebellion all existed at the time the Garden and Adam and Eve were first formed. When Satan rebelled, he plunged the lower waters—the whole new creation—into the contamination of sin. Immediately, God threw the entire creation into isolation to prevent the imperfection that had contaminated it from spreading. Since there was an ancient heavenly civilization that predated the creation of this world and Adam and Eve, just where the Bible picks up the story we do not know. Scripture does not probe very deeply into the creation of the ancient ones and all the angels. Instead, it concentrates on the apostasy of Satan and mankind's escape from the captivity of his rebellion. Scripture seems to be structured almost completely around mankind's escape from Satan's grasp. By allowing both darkness and light to coexist from the beginning, God showed that He had no intention of legislating righteousness by force, even in heaven. Since in the scriptures light and darkness are always related to right and wrong, even the angels have been left free by God to choose between the two. Satan, in his freedom, decided on his own authority to rebel and leave the way that God had commanded. He apparently convinced a third of all the angels in heaven to join him. *"A huge red dragon which had seven heads and ten horns appeared. Its tail dragged a third of the stars from the sky and dropped them on the earth."* (Rv.12:4). The rebellion of Satan and those who collaborated with him brought death into

the creation. This is because sin and death are intimately related. The Bible shows that when Adam and Eve chose to defy God, all of mankind was instantly plunged with them into sin and made subject to the death that enwrapped them. It would seem that the resulting disaster is sure proof that God should have prevented Satan from making that choice in the first place, but God is perfect righteousness and had He restricted Satan's freedom to choose in any way, He would have compromised, not only His own perfection, but that of heaven as well. As it was, He had an answer to it—a solution which would save everybody Satan tried to destroy. What made the devil rebel is not known. Perhaps Satan felt that God's mercy would prevent Him from annihilating the creation He had just made—and that this impasse would cost God His Kingship. But God had not revealed all of His secrets to Satan. He had built into the creation hidden barriers to rebellion. The meaning of the upper waters (that part of heaven which lay above the vault, and which was set aside at the beginning) was unknown to Satan, so it represented an entirely new creative base—one where new heavens and a new earth could be rebuilt in perfection because no contamination existed there. After Adam and Eve had consumed the forbidden fruit offered to them by Satan, *"God turned to those who were with Him and said, 'See, the man has become like one of us with his knowledge of good and evil. He must not be allowed to also stretch out his hand and next pick from the tree of life, and live forever. So God expelled him from the garden of Eden. He banished man, and in front of the garden of Eden he posted the cherubs, and the flame of a flashing sword, to guard the way to the tree of life."* (Gn.3:22-24). This prevented man in his sinful state from becoming eternal. As a consequence of this banishment, while Satan and his fellow fallen angels were doomed, mankind still had a chance for redemption.

The first thing Adam and Eve discovered when they ate from the forbidden tree of knowledge was that they were naked. At first they tried to make clothes for themselves *"...they realized they were naked so they sewed fig-leaves together to make themselves loin-cloths"* (Gn.3:7). But God showed them that the kind of clothes they now needed, only He had power to make. *"God made clothes out of skins for the man and his wife, and they put them on."* (Gn.3:21). This clothing is the key to the banishment. The 'skin' we wear today is the same kind of skin that God made for Adam and Eve to wear—flesh and blood—the clothing of the exile. The banishment, then, was mankind's exile into the material world where God is invisible. Since matter cannot see spirit, man in the flesh cannot see God. *"No one has ever seen God; it is only the Son who has made him known."* (Jn.1:18). . The Bible decrees that we can 'see' God only by voice. *"...you heard the sound of words but saw no shape, there was only a voice."* (Dt.4:12). Not an audible voice, but one that we hear in our hearts when we read the words God spoke. When we read the Gospel, Jesus comes

alive and we can hear Him speak and in this sound, see God. This is the whole meaning of God as 'Word' (John 1:1). It could be argued that those who saw Jesus saw God, but only a handful of people ever saw Jesus in the flesh. For the untold billions who were born after he was crucified, there has only been a voice—so it is singularly in this voice that most of the world has been able to see God. We do not even have a photograph or a painting of Jesus. Even the image on the shroud may have been proved false. This is why Paul said, *"Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh, that is not how we know him now."* (2 Cor.5:16). Flesh and blood cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. This is why God found it so important to discuss with us the clothing of Adam and Eve. Until they rebelled, these two had lived in a world that was in the same substance as God, but when they sinned, God split their world into two opposite but co-existing natures—banishing them (and us) from His sight and presence. The result was a long lived spiritual soul clothed in a short-lived body of material flesh—a soul made in the image of God, clothed in a prison of chaos and exile. While this division would seem to border on science fiction, it is an issue that Christianity has had to deal with from the very beginning.

In the early days of the religion it was thought by many that this meant that flesh was evil and the spirit good. But that idea was quickly discarded when it was shown that the sovereignties and powers of the underworld are not flesh and blood either—Satan and his angels are all spirits. Flesh is made evil only when the spiritual dominions of Satan enter it (Spiritual dominions which can be thrown out by the power of God). Instead of being evil, then, flesh and blood is simply a weak and temporary existence that marks the foreign outpost of God's exile. In essence then, flesh is Babylon. Flesh and blood is part and parcel of the exile—and that exile is the ultimate meaning of Babylon.

With the banishment of man into the material world, God brought mankind into contact with death. Nothing material can last very long—it all begins to dissolve the moment it is created and eventually it falls apart. The human body has a life of only about 70 years. That is because the flesh is not made in the image of God—in fact, with its short life and decaying nature, it is just the opposite of God's image. The soul, on the other hand, which *is* made in the image of God, lives much longer. For this reason, the soul does not die with the body, but returns intact, after the flesh dies, to a spiritual repository on the other side of the curtain dividing the world. The flesh, then, is an outer garment that covers our true nature—a nature we can understand only in terms of soul—a nature we cannot see because of the blindness caused by our exile. Jesus proved this when he told the Jews that no one who had died in the past was really dead: *"...for to God all men are in fact, alive."* (Lk.20:38).

Since the flesh dies and returns into the dust of the earth, what remains alive is something altogether invisible. This means that, hidden from our eyes, somewhere in the lower waters (somewhere in the dungeon of Satan), a vast storehouse exists, holding all the souls Satan has taken prisoner. One by one, through the power of God, this storehouse has been yielding everyone who has ever been born on earth. God has raised each of these souls (ours and everyone else's) up in a temporary body, one by one, bringing each of us to life on this earth to see the saving light of Jesus Christ—each person brought before that light to make a choice whether to follow Jesus or the world. After we have made our decision, God returns us to the other side of the curtain to make room for those who are in line behind us—so that they can have an opportunity to make the same choice. Those who choose to come to Jesus are cleansed and given new robes to wear, and when their earthly bodies die, they are brought to a place just underneath God's altar (Rv.6:9). Those who have not yet been born on earth are still in the storehouse—still waiting for their turn to come to earth and pass through this holy examination which will give them a chance to shed the contamination of Satan which now marks them for death. All of these souls were created in a single instant long ago when God formed the creation at the beginning. No End can come until God has emptied this storage place in Satan's dungeon and everyone in it has been given a chance to choose Jesus, and with Him, the clothing of the new kingdom. The new garment that God gives to those who choose Jesus is called in scripture a 'wedding garment'. It is the clothing of the new kingdom of heaven, and is the new eternal body that the Holy Spirit has built to house our soul. The food that creates our new body is the Gospel that Jesus preached. In the Old Testament, using the metaphore of allegory, Ezekiel gave us God's description of the luxurious nature of his heavenly garment using world terms: *"I spread part of my cloak over you and covered your nakedness...I bathed you in water...I anointed you with oil. I gave you embroidered dresses, fine leather shoes, a linen headband and a cloak of silk. I loaded you with jewels, gave you bracelets for your wrists and a necklace for your throat. I gave you nose-ring and earrings; I put a beautiful diadem on your head. You were loaded with gold and silver, and dressed in fine linen and embroidered silks. Your food was the finest flour, honey and oil."* (Ez.16:8:13). This is the perfect beauty that Israel almost lost when it fell into Satan's hands (Ez.16:30). And it would have lost it forever had Christ not restored God's clothing through the words He preached. When Satan corrupted God's creation, everything that existed within it fell under his sinful control, allowing him to become the figure which Jesus called 'the prince of this world'. The extent of Satan's wicked princely reign stretches to the ends of the lower waters—encompassing both sides of the spiritual curtain. His kingdom involves the entire lower sea (Job 7:12). That is why our souls were in his possession in the first place. This possession is the captivity we were caught in, and

the light of Jesus Christ is the key which unlocks our chains and sets us free from Satan's bondage. Our souls can live forever only if we leave this place and follow Jesus to His new kingdom before the catastrophe arrives. According to John, once everyone has been given the chance to escape to freedom, God will destroy Satan and the kingdom which he corrupted in a fiery pit of burning sulphur (Rv.20:13). It is that event which marks the true end of the world.

The Bible shows us, then, that before there was Babylon there was Eden—the world which came before ours—the world that God destroyed (2 Peter 3:5-7) It was a world where people could live much longer than a hundred years. It started as a garden in paradise, but ended up a wasteland. Because it grew up outside of faith, the corruption of Eden was almost total. And that is why God covered it in the waters of the flood. We will describe this flood and the codes that are attached to it in the next chapter. Scripture shows that Eden's corruption was so vast that only nine exceptions to it existed in the history of its civilization: Enoch, and the eight people who were saved at the time of Noah. Enoch was a type of the rapture in the land of Eden. *"Enoch walked with God. Then he vanished because God took him."* (Gn.5:24). He lived in the land for 365 years and then ascended directly into heaven. *"It was because of his faith that Enoch was taken up and did not have to experience death."* (Heb.11:5). Because he pleased God, Satan and his battalion of evil angels had no power over him. There is something very special about Enoch—his holiness, his companionship with God and the fact that his life of 365 years (a year of years) relates symbolically, like Jesus, to our sun. What that importance is, we can only speculate, but it is as if Jesus, Himself, had been planted there and then divinely removed because the creation in Eden was too faithless and evil for Him. Enoch was unique because every other person in Eden was filled with corruption and violence—a violence which came to a peak in the days of Noah. When the wickedness of that first world reached a certain point, Noah and those who were with him were warned by God to get on an ark and to load it up with the seed of the world and to seal the ark behind them. Once they had complied, God destroyed His first creation in a deluge of waters. Except for that tiny group of people (Enoch and Noah, and Noah's immediate family) everyone else in Eden perished in the chaos of the watery darkness that had suddenly enveloped their land from on high. Severing Himself from the creation and returning to His own heaven, God abandoned the lower sea, leaving behind a shattered world swallowed up in the chaotic turbulence of divine punishment and facing eternal disaster. This was the time of the mist and darkness spoken of by the prophet Ezekiel (Ez. 34:12), and alluded to by Hosea (Hos.5:15), a darkness broken suddenly by the light of Jesus.

3

The Return of God

*"He has his rising on the edge of heaven, the end of
its course its furthest edge, and nothing can escape his
heat."
Psalm 19:6*

The flood constitutes a great dividing line in the creation. Not only does it separate Eden from Babylon, it marks the deepest part of the separation between man and God because it defines intense world-wide rebellion followed by divine Judgment. While God was destroying Eden in the waters of the flood, He directed the angels who were loyal to Him to make war on Satan and on the wicked angels who had sided with Satan in the rebellion. Led by Michael the Archangel, God's holy army successfully defeated the rebels and drove them out of the vault of heaven, throwing them down to this world. Jesus told us that he watched this event happen. *"I watched Satan fall like lightning from heaven."* (Lk.10:17). Accompanying Satan in his fateful fall from the vault of heaven down to the earth were all the angels he had misled (Rv.12:4). These are the dominions and powers of the underworld who promote and foment all the social chaos we see today on earth. No longer a force in heaven, they concentrate their mayhem on the people of this planet, encouraging jealousy, rage, murder, greed, corruption, sexual perversion, lying, stealing and every other manner of evil seen on earth. From that point on (from the moment the war in heaven took place) everything that happened afterward relates to the judgment of sin and to the destruction of Satan (and all of his works) by the forces of God. With the flood of Eden, God's judgment had begun. The first creation was destroyed and Satan thrown out of heaven. Because he had stood firm when the Revolt first occurred, and then later led God's forces in Satan's defeat, Michael was chosen by God to take Satan's station. We can see an allegorical reference to this in the Book of Esther: *"The king, who had recovered his signet ring from Haman, took it off and gave it to Mordecai, while Esther gave Mordecai charge of Haman's house."* (Esther 8:2). With this appointment, Michael became the guardian angel of God's people. Confirming this, Jesus, when he appeared to Daniel in a vision, told him, *"In all this there is no one to lend me support except Michael your prince, on whom I rely to give me support and reinforce me."* (Dn.10:21-11:1).

The flood shows the intensity of God's judgment once He decides to act. What ensued in the wake of the flood was a period of '40 days' called by scripture, the time of 'mist and darkness' (Ez.34:12). It was a black chaos in which all physical life had been extinguished except for that which existed on the ark, and so it represented God's temporary abandonment of the world. *"God is going to abandon them till the time when she who is to give birth, gives birth. Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel"* (Micah 5:2-3). At that point God rolled the heavens of Eden up like a scroll (Is.34:4), flooding the lands with the waters of creation. In the aftermath, Eden disappeared forever. Where it once stood only chaos remained—the time of clouds and darkness. It was an infinite darkness because God had withdrawn His presence. *"Yes; I am going to return to my dwelling place until they confess their guilt and seek my face; they will search for me in misery."* (5:15). In Eden's place appeared Babylon, the new world which God created out of Eden's wreckage—a world populated not by Adam and Eve's children, but by the sons of Noah (Gen.9:18-19). It was a world made by Jesus just for the rescue which He had been commissioned by God to effect: *"I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness."* (Ez.34:12). Yet Babylon is not destined to last either. According to scripture, our world is going to be destroyed and for the very same reason that Eden was destroyed. Babylon is just a temporary replacement of Eden—made only for our rescue by Jesus. It has no other meaning. But because there is a fundamental difference between the people who died before the flood and those who came afterward, Jesus had to preach twice. Scripture says that Jesus went down to preach to the dead after he was crucified. *"I went down into the countries underneath the earth, to the peoples of the past."* (Jonah 2:7). But when Jesus did this, he did not go to the people who had died on earth before he was born, he went instead to those who had died before the flood took place (1 Peter 3:18-20). This means that everyone who was born on earth after the flood occurred (even though they came and went thousands of years before Jesus appeared) God was able to rescue from our own scriptures. How He was able to do this is a mystery, but Jesus confirmed it when he said, *"On judgment day the men of Nineveh will stand up with this generation and condemn it, because when Jonah preached they repented; and there is something greater than Jonah here."* (Mt.12:41). The same with the Queen of the South (Mt.12:42). But those who lived in Eden had to be preached to another way. They never repented at all during their time, but went right on sinning until their world was destroyed. That is why Jesus had to go to them himself after he was crucified. *"In the body he was put to death, in the spirit he was raised to life, and, in the spirit, he went to preach to the spirits in prison. Now it was long ago, when Noah was still building that ark which saved only a small group of eight people 'by water'...that these spirits refused to believe."* (1 Peter 3:20).

The dividing line that separated those souls from ours was a boundary of both faith and flood. Everyone born in Babylon is descended from Noah, and therefore has come to life in the seed of faith. The people of Eden were just the opposite. Since they had no faith, God had no power to raise them up to see Christ the same way He was able to do with us. Their souls could not be raised to life in this world because of their lack of faith, and for the same reason there is little likelihood that any of them listened to Jesus when his spirit preached to them in their captivity either.

The universe was created in a blast of light the scientists call 'the Big Bang'. In this event, light fractured an immense darkness and began an explosive race to its farthest edge. Following the instructions of Jesus, the Holy Spirit has created this world in such a way that its elements and events mirror divine reality. Therefore we are able to see in nature the reflections of the hidden truths of God. They are not the same, but they often *look* the same. This is why we can see an image of the glorified Son in the burning brilliance of the sun above us. God created it this way on purpose—a creation reflecting in metaphor a vast reservoir of images all pointing to the sacred spiritual reality on which the creation was based. That is why it is possible to see in the birth of our physical universe images of the return of God to a world He had abandoned to the flood. Because God's time lines are so different from ours, it is conceivable, in the immense scope of the creation, that Adam and Eve and the world of Eden represent people and events that existed on the other side of the Big Bang. Perhaps that is why this great primordial explosion at the dawn of time (bringing light into impenetrable darkness) represents such a compelling image of Jesus returning into the darkened lower waters to rescue the people of God trapped in it by Satan. Science has recently discovered a great paradox in its search of the sky—stars in the universe that seem to be older than the Big Bang. One might argue from this that the Big Bang is younger than the universe. This supposition, of course, is untenable. But by its mere thought, even science has been forced to the doorstep of the possibility that our universe exists on both sides of that great fireball. Scientists will certainly reject that notion and take another door, but the idea of a previous world on the other side of current creation is not as far-fetched as it might seem. Peter said that there were heavens at the beginning formed by the word of God, and that these were destroyed and replaced '*by our present sky and earth*'—and that these, too, would be destroyed by sin (2 Peter 3:5-7). As we will see later, God has created a world in which there is great replication—a world in which everything seems to be repeated over and over again all the way back to the beginning. There can be no question that history's first fiery explosion vanquished intense darkness in a blast of light and triumph. The images that scripture's prophecies evoke is that of a Satan running at top speed across a universe that he

himself made dark, being pursued by the light of God which is chasing and overtaking him from one end of it to the other. *"He has his rising on the edge of heaven, the end of his course its furthest edge, and nothing can escape his heat."* (Ps.19:6). This same image seems to have repeated itself in the birth of the sky above us. And it continues, because we can see the physical image of Satan's darkness when we look into the sky at night. It is only then, when the sun's light is blocked that we see the real nature of the universe we inhabit (Is.50:3). It is infinite darkness—dressed all in sackcloth—but made luminous by billions of stars scattering all through it from one massive single event at the sunrise of history when God commanded it into being, by saying: *"Let there be light."* (Gn.1:3). *"See how he spreads out his light, covering the roots of the sea."* Job.36:30. Since God is light, and the universe we see just the opposite, we are able to see in the night sky the extent of the contamination of this world by Satan. Death, the result of Satan's apostasy, reaches as far as we can see—to the very ends of the universe. The stars and galaxies all die. Even the universe, Steven Hawking acknowledged, must one day succumb to death. This is very significant. It means that everything in this universe was created under the sentence imposed on it by Satan's apostasy. Therefore it must have all come into being afterward. Creation to God is forever. *"Death was not God's doing, he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living. To be, for this he created all."* (Ws.1:13-14). Thus Adam and Eve and their world must have been earlier. This universe came into being after the spiritual Flood. It was created by Jesus when He returned into the void of mist and darkness which the flood had created in God's absence. This shows that the true dimension of the lower sea is quite vast and much larger than most of us appreciate. Yet it is all destined for annihilation because of sin. The primordial light, then, can be viewed as a symbolic image of the sudden appearance of Jesus as he left the Vault of God's heaven and returned to the shattered and darkened world of Satan to rescue us from the bondage of our chains—bringing us out of the contaminated waters of the lower sea. *"My salvation shall come like the light, my arm shall judge the peoples."* (Is.51:5). Parting the waters of chaos, God brought order into the disorder, forming a road for the redeemed to walk along so that they could follow Jesus out of the lower Sea to the glory of his holy kingdom. *"The Lord has promised. I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the bottom of the sea..."* (Ps.68:22).

Despite the fact that it was born in faith, Babylon is a wicked world. That is why God has raised it up in a place so far removed from His own kingdom—bringing it to life on a remote island in the depths of the lower sea—simply for the purpose of judgment. As a signal of this fact, the angel of God showed the prophet Zechariah a bushel with a Woman sitting inside of it. The angel told him that this woman was wickedness, and that the bushel

she was imprisoned within was being taken to the land of Babylon—to Shinar—where a temple was to be built for it, together with a pedestal on which to place it. Our own world is Babylon, so we are the destination this bushel was headed for. *"I saw a bushel moving forward and asked, 'What is it?' The angel answered, 'this is their iniquity throughout the country.' At this, a disc of lead was raised, and I saw a Woman sitting inside the bushel. The angel said, 'This is Wickedness'. And he forced her back into the bushel and closed its mouth with the mass of lead (Zech.5:5-11).* The Woman inside the bushel (Wickedness) is the famous prostitute of the Book of Revelation. *"On her forehead was written a cryptic name: 'Babylon the Great, the mother of all the prostitutes and all the filthy practices on the earth'." (Rev.17:5).* The relationship between these two prophecies shows that Babylon (this secular and pagan world) is the wickedness that God has allowed to be built (under His control) in a dim outpost far removed from His own kingdom. Imprisoned by God and His angels, wickedness and everything that it infected were carried away by the power of God to this designated and isolated spot to be raised up for judgment. But first, because of the love of God, just ahead of that judgment came an offer of mercy. It was into this hostile world erected far out in space that Jesus—God's righteousness—suddenly appeared. *"When peaceful silence lay over all, and night had run the half of her swift course, down from the heavens, from the royal throne, leapt your all-powerful Word; into the heart of a doomed land the stern warrior leapt. Carrying your commands like a sharp sword, he stood, and filled the universe with death; he touched the sky, yet trod the earth." (Wis.18:14-16).* Even though he had been prophesied in advance, Jesus came in a sudden and unexpected appearance and changed everything. *"With his power he calmed the Sea, with his wisdom struck Rahab down, His breath made the heavens luminous, his hand transfixed the Fleeing Serpent." (Job 26:12-13).* These prophecies point to the world dominion of Satan being suddenly and terminally interrupted by the coming of the word of God. This is why Jesus told the Pharisees, *"But if it is through the Spirit of God that I cast devils out, then know that the kingdom of God has overtaken you." (Mt. 12:28).* Jesus was showing the world that the spiritual darkness of the 'Fleeing Satan' had been overtaken and transfixed by the overwhelming speed and substance of the light of God—a conquest foretold in our own sky in the explosion of light which 'made the heavens luminous' at the beginning of time. Jesus, who was with the Father from the beginning, created it all—symbol and reality—everything that we can see was created by Jesus for the sake of our salvation. *"He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him." (Jn.1:1-5).*

Whatever the actual circumstances, God has made the creation point to the fact that He has constructed Babylon out of the wreckage of Eden, starting this time, from a base of faith. Noah and his seven passengers of faith were the only people from the civilization of Eden allowed to board the ark. So the new world that they started began in the seed of faith. But along with the seed faith of Noah appeared others as well. An angel came to God in one of Jesus' parables and said, 'I thought you planted only good seed here, where do the bad ones come from?' and God answered, 'Some enemy has done this. Let them both grow up together and when they are mature we will select between them and keep the good, but throw the others in the fire.' (Mt.13:24-30). Like pharaoh and his army following the Israelites into the Red Sea, a people of Satan has followed God's creation into the divided lower waters. *"The returning waters overwhelmed the chariots and the horemen of Pharaoh's whole army, which had followed the Israelites into the sea; not a single one of them was left."* (Ex.14:28). So the world that we see—the Babylon that surrounds us—is a divided creation where good and bad coexist—where there is faith and non-faith and the two live together side by side. Jesus was sent by God to separate the two. And to prepare the world for the last judgment which would represent God's final condemnation of Satan and the end of the war that he had started against God. *"I will punish Bel in Babylon..."*. Satan intended this world to be a gallows for God's people, but God has reversed Satan's plan and turned it into a gallows for wickedness instead. God's judgment will bring an end to death once and for all, and return the kind of perfection to creation that God had established in the beginning. *"I seemed to hear the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing, 'Alleluia! Victory and glory and power to our God! He judges fairly, he punishes justly, and he has condemned the famous prostitute who corrupted the earth with her fornication; he has avenged his servants that she killed'."* (Rv.19:1-2). This world—the entire lower waters which lay below the vault—is destined to be plunged into an everlasting fire—a fire described by John in his vision as a 'burning lake of sulphur'. This is why we all have to leave Babylon. God is committing it to the flames. *"...earth and sky vanished, leaving no trace...The first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea."* (Rv.20:11, 21:1). The new creation destined to replace it will be formed in the upper waters—in the highest or third heaven (2 Cor.12:2)—the heaven that Jesus came to lead us to. In that new creation, Jesus will be King because he rescued us from Satan's grasp and set us free from the sentence that condemned us to death, allowing those of us who believe in him to live forever. The third heaven has not yet been opened. This heaven is the bride of Christ and cannot be entered until the day of the wedding. Therefore all of us who are chosen will enter together at the same moment. The day that this third heaven opens is not the day each of us dies, but is a day that will immediately follow the Last Judgment. That is why all who have already died in Christ are

being kept in a safe place underneath God's altar—awaiting the day of the bride—a day still to come (Rv.6:11). For those who have put their trust in Jesus, rescue is assured. *"I rescue all who cling to me. I protect whoever knows my name."* (Ps.91:14). *"Write this: ...I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give water from the well of life free to anybody who is thirsty; it is the rightful inheritance of the one who proves victorious; and I will be his God and he a son to me. But the legacy for cowards...is the second death."* (Rv.21:6-8). Jesus Christ, therefore, is a narrow door that God has opened for us just before the End to allow those who want to, to escape the punishment that is coming—the fiery wrath destined for Satan and all his angels when the waters of the lower sea come crashing back together once again.

God can only rescue us through faith. The same choices given to the angels are given to us. Armed with a full knowledge of both ways, we are free to choose for ourselves which to follow. God has given us all the chance to be a Michael or a Satan. How little faith we really have can be seen in how we approach this wicked world. Even while we claim Christ, many of us worry far more about the cares and tribulations of this world, plotting whatever course it takes for us to succeed in the kingdom of Satan. So we ride the fence because that seems smart. We have the world talking to us on one side about living wisely according to the smartest ways of Babylon. On the other side is Jesus and his Gospel. And it is only because of the weakness of our faith that we have a problem between the two. That is because the world goes on as it has since the beginning and nothing has changed. *"Well where is this coming?"* they ask (2 Peter 3:4). *"They are choosing to forget that there were heavens at the beginning, and that the earth was formed by the word of God out of water and between the waters, so that the world of that time was destroyed by being flooded by water. But by the same word, the present sky and earth are destined for fire, and are only being reserved until Judgement day so that all sinners may be destroyed."* (2 Peter 3:5-7). God maintains control over our ultimate fate. We can see this in the conditions under which God allowed Satan to tempt Job: *"Very well, God said to Satan 'he is in your power. But spare his life.'" (Job.2:6).* While this seems to imply that God has trusted Satan to obey Him as far as our physical lives are concerned, it actually represents a mandate from God that concerns our soul—a mandate Satan has no power to undo. *"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell."* (Mt.10:28). Satan has no power, independent of God, to take away the life of our soul or our body. It is God who makes the ultimate decision that determines our fate. That is what the Day of Judgement is all about.

That Satan's temptation of Job and his temptation of us are related is clear in Jesus' words: "*Simon, Simon! Satan, you must know, has got his wish to sift you all like wheat; but I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail, and once you have recovered, you in your turn must strengthen your brothers.*" (Lk.22:31-32). Physical death is not death as far as God is concerned. Jesus said that God intends to bring us all back to life because we must come and stand before Him at the Day of the Trial. "*Do not be surprised at this, for the hour is coming when the dead will leave their graves at the sound of his voice: those who did good will rise again to life; and those who did evil, to condemnation.*" (Jn.5:28-29). Forest Lawn, then, is an image of the mouth of the dragon. When it swallows us up in death Satan seems to have won his war. But the promise of Jesus is that God's power over the grave is absolute. When God called us into this world to live for a time in the flesh, He raised us up out of a dungeon—a dungeon scripture calls the belly of the dragon—a pit we can see reflected in the graves we must return to at the end of our lives . And it is from this same belly that we will be resurrected on the Day of Judgement. "*I will punish Bel in Babylon and take from his mouth what he has swallowed.*" (Jer.51:44). On that day those who pursue evil will follow the dragon into the lake of fire, but the people who chose to follow Jesus will escape with their lives. Jesus said they will never die.

4

Six Thousand Years

"By the word of God the heavens were made, their whole array by the breath of his mouth...He spoke and it was created; he commanded, and there it stood."
Ps.33:6-9

A scientist once said, *'The Bible teaches us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go'*. To a certain extent this is true. The Bible is the meaning of science, not its replacement. That is why it is written, *"Do not try to discover what is beyond your powers. Concentrate on what has been assigned you, you have no need to worry over mysteries. Do not meddle with matters that are beyond you; what you have been taught already exceeds the scope of the human mind. For many have been misled by their own presumption, and wrong-headed opinions have warped their ideas."* (Si.3:22-26). What science has done is to prove scripture completely correct when it says that most of the works of God go unseen. *"The storm wind itself is invisible, and most of what he does goes undetected."* (Si.16:21). The universe is infinitely larger and more complicated than any of us can imagine—God has made a physical creation that extends so far beyond the scope of the human mind to contemplate that it thoroughly neutralizes intellect. But the Bible is not about that, because as immense and aged as this universe is, everything in it is going to be destroyed. Reaching into areas science has no ability to go, the Bible teaches what is beyond the scope of physical search. It begins where science stops, taking us deep into the arena of the invisible. And as far as the beginning is concerned, science and the Bible both agree. There was nothing and then suddenly, in a blinding flash, there was everything. The end will come in the same way—but in reverse. Scripture says God brought the entire universe into being with a single command of His voice. He then spent the next six days fashioning His creation into the world we know today. Measuring the time-lines given to us in the Bible, the Holy Spirit has brought us to an understanding that our creation is now almost 6000 years old. These two revelations by the Spirit have become a major battleground of faith and now form unlikely trench lines separating the forces of this world from the people of God. Tracing the Bible's stories through history the Jews long ago discovered that the chronology it detailed covered an era that today measures slightly less than 6000 years. This conclusion forms the basis for

the time-frame around which the Jewish New Year is celebrated. According to Jewish tradition Adam and Eve were created in the Garden of Eden in the fall of 3761 B.C. To orthodox Jews, this was the year 'one', the first date in biblical history. Jewish scholars maintain that every subsequent event listed in the Bible can be traced from this beginning. Ignoring Adam and Eve, Christians measure their calendar from the birth of Jesus Christ. As a result, what is to Jews the beginning of the year 5754, is for Christians the fall of 1993. When Jesus unsealed the secrets hidden in the scriptures, he showed us that God's Book was written in divine metaphor. Everything in the Bible has a higher hidden meaning. Not just its statements, but its dates as well. God has constructed the Hebrew religion for the sole purpose of heralding the coming of the "Messiah" who would bring God's own Word (His true Law) to the world. This is why Christians could change the calendar. The Bible was leading to Jesus Christ. Adam and Eve led us to disaster and Jesus rescued us from that disaster. So a new era began when Jesus appeared. The world of the past was gone; swept away by Christ's Gospel. Buried in a literal interpretation of the scriptures, the Jewish leaders rejected Jesus and sent him to crucifixion. This polarized the two Houses of Israel. In this polarity, one stood on the Bible, the other on the Gospel—the two dates of creation signaling the two points of view. The clear boundaries between these two groups have become blurred over the ensuing years. Many Jews no longer take the Old Testament literally. But a growing group of Christian fundamentalists now do. Further complicating the picture, into this mixed soup has jumped a third party, the disciples of science and their ideas about evolution. In terms of logic, the issues appear clear, but they are not. The battle would not be raging so intensely if they were. And the fact that the world is about to be destroyed adds immeasurably to the debate. How can there be evolution where there is Armageddon? Evolution leads to extinction only when something better has made the old obsolete. Since scripture has set a day for the world to end, that 'something better' must be Jesus Christ who confirmed the end as a fact soon to happen.

Since scripture has shown us that *"one day to God can be like a thousand years to man"*, the six thousand years that have passed on earth since Adam and Eve appeared can be reinterpreted as six days in God's calendar. This correlates the age of human civilization with the first six days of creation as described in the Book of Genesis. In this sense, the seventh day and the seventh millennium are symbolically related. This relationship is at the heart of God's purpose as far as Babylon is concerned. As every Christian knows, the seventh day marks the final completion of God's work in this world. It is the day of rest. And as far as the end of the world is concerned, it marks in millennial terms the perfect *Jubilee*—the time, according to Moses, when everything that belongs to God must return to

God (Lv.25:8-10). Daniel uses the term "*seventy weeks of years*" (Dn.9:24) to describe this End, proving that it is not just an ordinary seventh-seven (in the terms of Leviticus), but the seventieth-seven—and therefore the ultimate Jubilee of God. That climactic 'seventh day' is now only a short time away. According to the Jewish calendar, the epochal seventh millennium (the seventh day) will dawn sometime in October in the year 2239 A.D., 246 years from now at this writing. In light of this fact, the literal interpretation of the scriptures takes on renewed significance because it means that we are now locked on a countdown to the end of the world which will come to completion within the 6000 year framework that the Jews and fundamentalists have defined as the age of creation—a creation that applies as far as Jesus is concerned, only to human history (from Adam and Eve to Armageddon). Because we exist in 'a time cut short', the world's extinction is certain to occur even before the seventh day arrives. Bypassing completely evolution's physical processes defined by science, human history will have begun and ended entirely within the seven day boundary fixed by scripture. Both of these calendars, then, (both Christian and Jewish) have divine significance. They mark the two sets of dates defined by the House of Israel in its relationship with God. One embraces the 6000 year history of God's people on the planet and the other defines the time period needed to build God's new creation in heaven, a three-day period structured according to the rules established by Moses as 2 days of "washing and cleaning" followed by a third day, early in which God descends from His holy mountain and meets mankind face to face *"The Lord said to Moses, 'Go to the people and tell them to prepare themselves today and tomorrow. Let them wash their clothing and hold themselves in readiness for the third day, because on the third day, the Lord will descend on the mountains of Sinai in the sight of all the people."* (Ex.19:10). The termination of these chronologies can be seen in Daniel's prophecy in which he indicated that the Rebel in the last moments of history will attempt to change the Christian calendar. Having ended the rule of Christ in his kingdom, the Rebel will have no use for the calendar describing it.

Historically, the basic issue facing Christianity has always been this: do we glorify the planet earth or do we glorify its replacement kingdom in heaven? Is the material world the sine qua non of creation? Or is it as Jesus said, just an outer garment—a shell made by God to house the divine creation God has hidden within it? Biblical literalism defies the earth—the outer shell. This approach to the Bible was the veil that blinded the Jews to the hidden truths of scripture. It is a veil still there. For instance, a Jewish rabbinical court in Jerusalem recently banned pictures of dinosaurs on commercial products in Israel because, they ruled, animals that lived millions of years ago mock the Bible's contention that the world is only 6000 years old. Peter and Paul tried to squelch this kind of obsession for worldly

things when they threw out all the rules and regulations of the Old Testament and left only the rules of Jesus in its place. In doing this Paul told the world that there were no special days or seasons or years as far as God was concerned. *"...How can you want to go back to elemental things like these, that can do nothing and give nothing, and be their slaves? You and your special days and months and seasons and years! You make me feel I have wasted my time with you."* (Gal 4:9-11). The Apostles replaced Mosaic Law with Apostolic Law; setting us free from the severe constrictures of the Old Testament and replacing these with the freedom of Christ offered by the New Testament. As soon as this declaration became scripture (Acts 15:1-29), Christians were irrevocably freed from all the rules and obsessions of the Old Testament and were bound only to the commandments of Jesus. The change in the calendar confirmed this separation beyond doubt. God permitted the Apostles to demote the authority of the Old Testament and even to change the years that defined it so that only Jesus and His Gospel would be seen as absolute. They had to do this so that the Torah's veils would not return and hide Christ. When taken literally, the Torah could be made an adversary of Christ. It was on just such a point that the Sanhedrin justified His crucifixion. And because of these same veils, the Old Testament is often seen as an adversary of natural law as well. We can see that in the discoveries of science. Yet natural law works for God because God created it to do so. Whatever science discovers, God made. So scientific discoveries only serve to reinforce what Jesus said: the Bible is not about this world. Its truths are pointing to a higher reality. While science sees only the physical universe (the dying half of God's creation) the Bible was designed to reveal another world: God's eternal and hidden creation in heaven. Jesus came to lead us to this other world—to this 'something better' that has made the old world obsolete. If we join ourselves to Christ we can escape the extinction destined to overtake this planet—and we can live forever. God's true message, then, is about heaven. In literal terms, however, the Old Testament glorifies the earth. And that is why the Apostles replaced it. This world is corrupt and dying and so it must not be viewed as the supreme monument of God's creation. Temples, stones, walls, altars, flesh, and even dinosaur bones—these are all passing away. And once gone they will never be remembered (Is.65:17). Science shows us that these monuments are only vibrating electrical charges. Nothing more. A vapor held together by the will of God. That is why Jesus came to lead us away from all these material preoccupations. He freed us completely from Adam and Eve and their entire existence—and like Lot's wife, we are not supposed to look back. Our passion should be with heavenly things, not earthly things. The similarities between Sodom and Gomorrah and our earth are clear. We have already seen how Jewish obsession with physical rituals blinded them to the spiritual truths of Christ, and when we allow ourselves to indulge in the same kind of obsessions, a similar spiritual darkness of our own

is inevitable. Paul said, *"Are you foolish enough to end in outward observances what you began in the spirit? Have all the favors you received been wasted?"* (Gal.3:3). *"Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, and the perishable cannot inherit what lasts forever."* (1 Cor.15:50). The fact that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God proves that our soul is greater than our flesh. God made the physical world first, and then put our souls (made in His own image) into that world later when the time was right. That time was 'right' six thousand years ago. God, then, has put us into one kind of world to lead us to another—and we should not get the two different worlds confused. We live in this one only to get to the other. The flesh of man is not supreme. Nor is the Old Testament which glorified that flesh. Jesus is removing us from the flesh because He is changing creations. That is why the date of Christ has replaced the date of Adam and Eve. The reflection of the Law has been replaced by the truth of the Law. Yet, as shown above, both sets of dates still have important meanings.

Nowhere do these two meanings become more obvious than in the warfare currently being waged by the scholastic community against the word of God. It is an unlikely battle. There should be no disagreement. God made the world and He made the natural laws that govern it. He also guided the words which make the Bible. They should not disagree. When He unwrapped its veils, Jesus showed us a Bible filled with metaphor. That revelation should have made it easy for us to reconcile any discrepancies. But it has not. And the answer is not simple blindness. Part of the reason why all these arguments now swirl about in a fog is that the discoveries of science—the natural laws of God—are being controlled and manipulated by a cadre of irreverent pagan scholars who currently command the institutions of higher education. These individuals are not as interested in presenting the pure discoveries of science as they are in manipulating the data to promote their own atheistic beliefs. Jesus, these scholars maintain, is simply the promoter of a human conceit that mankind and the earth are somehow very special in the universe. Something they are convinced is not the case. What science discovers, God made; but what the professors teach has become another matter. In California, for instance, a professor may not say in a science class that God created the world. The priests of knowledge have solicited the backing of the government to make unprotestable their promotion of the Godless concept that the creation was formed accidentally and randomly out of the elements of chaos. No God. No divine order. Just chance. And underlying this chance, chaos. This has created a ruling aristocracy in the academic system which has sided with Satan by taking a position which denies a creation based on the order of God and promotes one designed in the image of the dragon—angry, anarchic and chaotic. There can be no doubt that chaos forms the fundamental framework of

this world because Satan is its true master, but the order here did not come from Satan. Order comes only from God. God has taken the chaos of this world and formed it into a temporary order so that He could raise us up out of our captivity to Satan's chaos and show us the light of escape. We did not evolve to birth here, we were placed here for examination and decontamination. "...*Satan, you must know, has got his wish to sift you all like wheat...*" (Luke 22:31). And that cleansing comes by our own choice. Order is leading us to order. If we follow Jesus we will be cleansed and live forever. If we follow chaos, we will end up in the eternal flames of the burning lake. So we are not dealing with pure issues of natural law and biblical law. Those two work together. Instead, we are caught in the middle of Satan's war. On one side are the priests of this world and on the other, the warriors of God. One group is trying to use education to prove that God doesn't exist and the other the Bible to insist that He does. And in the end, God will prove the latter true. God spoke and it was all created and in a few more years He will speak again and it will all dissolve in fire. When that happens, the fractals will come apart and order will be no more. And all this will happen before the 6000 years have come to an end.

So what does the 6000 years actually define? The age of the earth? As far as the fundamentalists are concerned, yes. But in historic terms it encompasses something more important—the age of human civilization. According to the Jewish calendar Adam and Eve were born in a garden near the Euphrates river in 3761 B.C. And according to the history books the earliest civilized life on earth began two or three hundred years later (about 3500 B.C.) in nearly the same place—in the fertile valleys of Babylon and Egypt. The coincidence should be obvious. If we choose to accept the historical framework then, we can see that the 6000 years defines *the age of Babylon*. It encompasses the borders of planetary civilization as it is described in the books of human history—the time period Jesus called 'this generation'. Dinosaurs and stone-age people are irrelevant here because they do not involve this generation. It makes no difference whether this planet has been stationed in space for 6000 years or 4 billion years. All that counts is 'this generation'—the generation Jesus came to visit and convert. This population began to form itself into society 5800 years ago in preparation for the Gospel's message and today, at the end of that message it has begun arming itself with hydrogen bombs and missiles in preparation for its predicted collapse in the valley of Armageddon. All of this neatly encompassed within the boundaries of the 6000 years. What is even more obvious in this description is the role of the House of Israel. Human society became civilized as soon as God placed His people into it—as soon as God gave it a soul. A new kind of order appeared when this happened—one that initiated civilized behavior. This placement started with Adam and Eve 5800 years ago. When God placed

Adam and Eve here, there already existed people for their children to marry. From the very beginning there has always been a division between the people of this world and the people of God. So the 6000 years does not define the beginning of outer creation, it describes the beginning of *God's* creation. It is the time of the *soul* and therefore it defines the appearance of the people of God in this world and all the things that have transpired here since they showed up. Jesus has specified that the kingdom of God is internal. We can see Adam and Eve in the same way. God is spirit (Jn.4:24), so if God made us in His own image, that image has to be spirit as well. It has to be soul. What is significant in the Spirit's revelation is the 6000 years itself, not physical evolution. The Bible describes a history that relates to the people of God; it has nothing to do with a textbook of science. Science sees evolution only because it always looks backward. Everything it sees, it sees from a rear window. The bigger the telescopes, the farther back in time we see. The more sophisticated our instruments, the better we can read the ancient rocks. The Bible is just the opposite. It always looks forward. It is all about spiritual conversion—the transformation of our soul into the Spirit of God. The reason why scientists are at odds with God is that all scholastic studies are keyed to matter, not spirit. And because their only view is backward, they must postulate a material future based on past events. So science always looks behind. It can read the biology of the past, but it cannot tell the future. The only front windshield on this planet is the Bible. Because Jesus has removed its blinds, the Bible now tells us clearly where we are going. According to Jesus, this world is headed for catastrophe, and only those who follow the path He has prescribed can survive its cataclysmic demise.

Looking at the past, the scientists see a creation growing from simplicity to perfection through an evolution punctuated by catastrophe—i.e., a chaotic world molded into perfection by disastrous events. Looking ahead, the Bible shows a flawed creation *doomed* by catastrophic events, with rescue by faith in God its only option. Only in the fact of catastrophe do the two agree. It is not man or catastrophe that leads to perfection, only faith in Christ. Faith in Jesus *overcomes* calamity. "*Up to the time of John it was the Law and the Prophets; since then, the kingdom of God has been preached, and by violence everyone is getting in.*" (Lk.16:16). As far as the Bible is concerned it is the sins of the people that have brought all the upheavals. To science, people mean nothing. The scientists see a universe that considers mankind insignificant and irrelevant. In Christ, however, people are the most important entity in the creation. For the Bible the whole issue is people, and so it speaks to us in a spiritual language about people. This is true even in its puzzles. Where did the wife of Seth come from—the son of Adam and Eve from whom we are all descended? This question has always been an enigma to those who read the Bible as if it were a textbook

of science. We can see the admixture of God's people with those of the world around them throughout the scriptures. Who did Noah's grandchildren marry? Who did the sons of Jacob (Israel) marry? From the very first day, the people of God have been reaching out into the world, civilizing it, and bringing it toward the greatest order of all which is Jesus Christ. From the beginning God has been leading the world toward the millennium. And here both Testaments agree, when the devil is released from the Abyss and comes out to destroy the millennium by gathering all the people of the world against the House of Israel, the civilization created by the existence of that 'House' within it will collapse and disappear in flames. So those who look backward must change their view. The 6000 years listed in the scriptures is not about the beginning of the world—it has nothing to do with dinosaurs or even with cave men. Instead, it describes the tenure of God's children on the planet—from the moment their captive spirit was implanted here until the day to come when the prison gates open and all who choose Him are free to join God in the glory of His true kingdom. This concept leads us to the future, not the past. It defines the *end* of this world, not its beginning. Six thousand years is the time limit for the captivity. The only 'evolution' it deals with is our transformation from flesh to spirit by the 'holy selection' of the angels when they sit on the banks of the end of time and pick and choose from the net of God (Mt.13:47-50). Survival of the fittest is a term that can only apply to Jesus Christ because nothing outside of Him will survive. If God made the physical world in the image of that divine plan, it would only figure. Adam and Eve were the first souls but the clothing they wore (flesh) made them only half alive because that clothing was subject to sin and only lasted 70 years—and then it wore out. When Jesus came He brought the 'wedding garment' of the Holy Spirit which, when put on, covers our soul with a body that is eternally alive. But to put it on we must take the old off first. That is the meaning of baptism, where Christ's death becomes our own. If we then exchange our mortal body of flesh for a new heavenly body offered to us by God, we will live forever. Only Jesus can give us this new body. He alone gave His life on the cross to take our sins on Himself so that we could be cleansed of Satan's sinful contamination. Without that sacrifice eternal life would be impossible. He alone has the magic formula that makes this exchange of bodies possible. Survival of the fittest, then, is the 'race' of Paul by which this transformation is achieved. Only when we follow Jesus by faith can we change these clothes. That is why the Apostles changed the calendar and the Law—so we wouldn't look back and glorify the garment that baptism legally destroys, and which is passing away.

Evolution is meaningless in the face of Armageddon. Wickedness has implanted in creation an automatic self-destruct, and all creation is scheduled to come to an end because of

it. Catastrophe is going to terminate this world, not make it perfect. And Jesus said this calamity will happen in our own time—before the society of man has passed away. This means that whatever role evolution played in the past, it has ceased to be a factor in the creation process. It is true that a part of life is scheduled to rise to a new height and go on after the physical universe is destroyed, but as we have seen, this will not happen by physical evolution. A 'fittest' will survive and be selected for eternal life. But that new life does not *evolve*. It comes suddenly through baptism and faith. And it comes to us, not to our descendants. And when it comes, it will take us instantly to a level vastly higher than anyone can now foresee physical evolution ever building to. The highest evolutionary life-forms in science fiction are like 'Q' in the stories of Star Trek. Yet the new life that Christ revealed is far higher than that, and we do not have to wait for a problematic evolution to create it long after we have disappeared. In all the stories of science fiction the battles between good and evil still rage, showing that no matter how sophisticated these civilizations become, they still are built on the contamination of Satan. Even 'Q' exhibits a streak of evil. By sending Jesus into this universe, God has put a stop to evil. There can be no further spread of evil anywhere in the universe because God's light is now racing through it and vanquishing Satan's disease from one end of the sky to the other. Order and chaos are not locked on a perpetual stage of conflict. Jesus has brought the battle to an end. Evolution is over. All the arguments of science to the contrary fail to grasp the importance of sin in the creation process. Wickedness stops evolution cold. Sin will always bring higher life to death and the only 'evolution' out of that death is Jesus Christ. Physical life is nebulous in this creation to begin with—a 'foreigner' to the chaos of the universe. It exists on a very fragile thread by the power of God. The hostility of the universe makes life's creation and stability here rare at best. God has formed this creation on a base of chaos on purpose in order to show that Satan is the base on which He has worked. Jesus has come into this 'foreign world'—this prison Satan has entrapped us in—and offered a way of escape. God made the whole universe just to provide a way for this evacuation. Having formed the universe for this purpose, God will commit it all to flames once His purpose is achieved. The processes of the past—from the beginning to now—only pointed to Christ. And with His appearance here, those processes no longer matter.

In the universe, are there others beside ourselves? Scientists have shown that God has brought us to life in the middle of an immense extragalactic explosion—as it is going on—and thus in an environment that is extremely hostile to life. We can see in this planet how precarious its development to the point of man was, even when all the right conditions were met. The hostile factors in this universe severely limit the number of planets able to

reach the stage that this world achieved. Yet even if there are others which did survive to this point, the presence of wickedness throughout creation would bring them to a point of disaster no different than ours. They, too, in their sinful violence, would come to a time where the balance of terror reached termination proportions. Wickedness would blast them out of existence—and at the same stage of development. Satan's presence is everywhere in the universe. Wherever we look, even to the edges of the universe, we see death, and death is Satan. Only where there is no Satan is there no death. And a place like that is not in this universe. Jesus himself told us this. And we can look out in space and see it for ourselves. Jesus said that he had other people who were not of this flock. We take that to mean that God favors people in other churches, but it can also apply to the universe as well. *"Beyond is the sea, great and wide, teeming with countless creatures both great and small."* (Ps.104:25). Since God has created this immense universe to seek out and save what Satan has hidden away in it, there is no reason why we should try to limit God's ability to replicate His salvation anywhere in the heavens. The scope of Satan's contamination may involve a population as vast as the universe. We do not know. Scientists would have us believe that outer space is teeming with other civilizations. But wherever the radio telescopes probe, there is only the sound of silence. Teeming? No. Some? Perhaps. But one thing is certain, Jesus is the culmination of the growth process. The war rages only where God has planted His seed. It means nothing that a planet has biology. It must have the Spirit of God in it as well if it is to be like ours. And this is what the 6000 years is all about. It is the time of the seed of God. And that seed had nothing to do with evolution. It was breathed into man's flesh when the conditions were right. The universe was made only for Christ's appearance in it. It was made so that evil could be destroyed. God brought it into existence with a command from His voice, and it will all end abruptly with another command when Jesus returns to take us out of it and into God's new creation in heaven.

The Word of God which created the universe is true. God has sworn to uphold it, and we have seen in the lengths that Christ went in order to keep the Law that God will not allow His word to be broken. Whatever scripture defines, God will do. That is because God has power to do with creation as He pleases. We see into that power only dimly and so the descriptions we give and the truths we see are only partial descriptions and partial truths. *"For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but when perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear."* (1 Cor.13:9-10). None of us want to admit that our sight has flaws—especially since we live in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But if imperfection applies to Paul (as he has said that it does) how could it not apply to us as well? We want to be perfect. But only God is perfect. While we see its words as metaphors,

encompassing sophisticated truths that bring us to deeper understanding, the simplicity of the Bible's literal truths have not been taken away. Scripture contains two truths, not just one. And that is the real issue. Hidden behind the literal words of one truth is a cascading fountain of greater truth. The Bible is a book filled with concealed pictures illustrating a creation incredibly sophisticated beyond imagining. It defines a future world filled with happiness and eternal life. And Jesus is the only roadmap that leads from here to there. God wants us to see the higher truths behind His words, because in that vision our faith is made stronger and the roadmap more visible. When we settle for the simplistic answers and then close the book, we close the book on understanding as well. Ultimately, though, both views will be proved right. The Christians and Jews will combine. Their calendars will coalesce. That which is metaphor and that which is literal will unite in the return of Christ. And when this happens—when Babylon collapses in sin and disappears—all the truths of the Bible will be vindicated once and for all.

5

Two Cities

"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, king of the Jews, 'Listen to the word of God, 'The days are coming when everything in your palace, everything that your ancestors have amassed until now, will be carried off to Babylon. Not a thing will be left'".

2 K.20:16-17

A symbolic name in the Bible, Babylon stands for worldliness and is identified with paganism. At the time of Christ the Jews considered Babylon to be Rome. But almost 3000 years ago it was a real country that stood in the exact same spot now occupied by Iraq—in the Mesopotamian valley between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Its capitol was just a few miles south of what is now Baghdad. Running right through the middle of ancient Babylon just as it flows today through the center of modern Iraq was the Euphrates river. Then as now, this river stood as the biblical separation between east and the west. All of the symbolism of Babylon revolves around a short Jewish captivity that occurred about 500 years before the birth of Christ. Led by King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon conquered Jerusalem and forcibly marched the entire Judean nation to the banks of the Euphrates river where they were kept prisoner for 70 years. After the 70 years had ended, a strange handwriting suddenly appeared on a wall in the king of Babylon's palace and he called in Daniel the prophet to decipher the words. Daniel told him that the message said that he (the king of Babylon) was going to die and Persia (now Iran) was going to take over his empire. That very evening it happened just as Daniel had prophesied. The east regained its strength and conquered Babylon in one single night. Since then, these events have become major themes in biblical symbolism: Babylon versus Jerusalem, the 70 year captivity, the rise to power of the east (Persia), its ultimate victory over Babylon, the handwriting on the wall that foretells that victory, and the Persian proclamation releasing the House of Israel from pagan captivity. The original country of Babylon disappeared into time but its name and the prophecies about it have remained firmly fixed in the scriptures showing that all these themes were meant for another time. The captivity of the House of Israel in ancient Babylon points to our own captivity today to the sinfulness of this world, and the war between Babylon and

Persia points to the coming termination of that captivity. Our freedom from world captivity, then, is inevitably tied to a future recapitulation of that ancient war. For that reason, these two long forgotten kingdoms (Babylon and Persia) and the events surrounding them hold the prophetic key to the structure of the end of the world. The final separation of the House of Israel from the grasp of this world's captivity will not occur until that echo sounds and the war between the future counterparts to these two kingdoms has taken place—a war predicted in advance—its major events carefully documented in God's sealed book. Daniel's interpretation of the handwriting on the wall of Babylon (sealed since the day he first wrote it down) is finally becoming legible, and it shows that all these prophecies will come to pass in our own time—a fact that can be seen in the words of Peter: *"Through events of their own time, the prophets were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write down their visions, but the words they used were symbols for another time and even though they spoke them and wrote them down, the prophets did not know what their own words meant. That is because their words were meant for us and not for themselves."* (1 Peter 1:10-12).

Babylon had its beginning at the dawn of civilization thousands of years before Nebuchadnezzar was born. It was located at the very center of the fertile crescent, and because it was here that world civilization first came into being, history calls Babylon the 'cradle of civilization'. It was given the name 'Mesopotamia' by the Greeks. The name means 'land between the rivers' and stems from the fact that both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers run through it. Many consider the Garden of Eden to have been located very near to Babylon because the Bible says that these same two rivers also flowed into this garden (Gn.2:14). Babylon is the very first city mentioned in the Bible (Gen.11:1-9). Called 'Babel', this city represented the entire civilization of the world, for it was here in the plain of Babylon (Shinar) that all mankind had gathered into a single population to build a 'tower to heaven'. The intent to build this tower, in fact, is where the idea of a worldly city acting in opposition to God first appeared. Watching them, God told those who were with Him that this tower would be just the start of humanity's undertakings and that nothing would be impossible for them to accomplish—especially because they were a united people with a single language (Gen.11:6). To slow their progress down, God confused their language on the spot—shattering it into thousands of dialects and tongues. Then He scattered the people of Babel to the ends of the earth. This dispersion of Babel is the Bible's description of the genesis of all the world's civilizations. With that scattering the boundaries of Babylon became world-wide, stretching from the banks of the Euphrates to the four corners of the planet (Gen.11:9). The borders of Babel are important because scripture predicted that the House of Israel was destined to be uprooted from the Promised Land, exiled from it, and

scattered to the farthest boundaries of civilization. God's wholesale scattering of Babel at the beginning of history, then, meant that this dispersion would send the House of Israel into every language and people on earth—not just to Iraq or Rome, but to the ends of the globe.

Babylon, then, is a mighty empire encompassing untold nations. But the prophets often refer to Babylon as a city. "*The woman you saw is the great city which has authority over all the rulers on earth.*" (Rev.17:18). Underlying this spiritual designation is the ruling power that it exerts over its population—over all the people collected together and living within its borders, like a mother with her children. Essentially the borders of this wicked mother who rides the dragon are the boundaries of the earth itself. In symbolic terms, Babylon stands for paganism, i.e., worldly behavior—a violent and carnal lifestyle obsessed with the pleasures of this world and antagonistic to the commandments of God—a way of life promoted by all who live independent of Jesus (The only way out of Babylon is conversion into Christ). It is termed a ruling city because everyone on earth is born into the lifestyle that it dictates. Babylon, then, is worldliness itself—the way mankind perpetually behaves and lives (and trains its children to live). Fighting, competing, chasing after riches and social status; filled with pride, unchastity, jealousy, anger, selfishness, greed, and obsessed with sex and debauchery—all of the things that we, living in this world, have come to regard as 'normal' human behavior, and which Jesus has called us to deplore. It is the kind of behavior our magazines and newspapers and television glorify with almost every word they print or speak. From the very beginning—from the day of the tower of Babel until now—Babylon has stood for a way of life that is antagonistic to the laws and principles of God. Because we have been born into this kind of a world, our presence here is spoken of in scripture as a 'captivity'. The whole meaning of Babylon, then, is a secular world population that lives in defiant opposition to the holiness of Christ's Gospel and which holds God's people prisoner in the grasp of its ambitious lifestyle. The captivity of God's people in Egypt in the old covenant manifested the template of this incarceration—the allegory of Egypt serving as proof that the Law of Moses was insufficient to effect the kind of rescue necessary to free God's children from the clutches of a life of sin. Only Jesus had that kind of power. Sending His Son into this captive community to offer His life in payment for our penalty, God broke our bonds, and provided a sure road to lead us back to heaven in the perfection of an exodus that really worked. The call of Jesus petitioned all people to leave the corruption of Babylon behind and take refuge in another city—a city living in obedience to the spiritual righteousness of the Gospel. Opposite Babylon in the scriptures, then, is the city of Jerusalem—a city where the people of God are being gathered together in unity to worship and obey God's will. Since there is no earthly city where this ingathering can take

place, we must view Babylon and Jerusalem in spiritual terms. Both are cities of spiritual influence. Our citizenship (we are all citizens of either one or the other of these two cities) is determined by our relationship with Jesus Christ. For many centuries the lifestyle of Babylon was offset by a powerful Christian Church that had replaced Babylon's rule with its own in the name of Jesus Christ. The rule of Christianity on earth was a mortal wound to Babylon because this seditious city dies wherever there is Christian conversion and repentance. God's purpose in His establishment of Church rule on earth was not to compel the populations to act in righteousness, but to give the people the choice between God and Satan in an environment that honored virtue. But now, engineered by atheism, virtue's honor is dissolving into the licentiousness of paganism's return. In the separation of Church and state, Babylon's mortal wound has begun to heal. Babylon has sprung back to life again, freed from the rule of the Church which had earlier countered its satanic reign. That is why we see a once mortally wounded Babylon coming back to life in our own time. With the influence of the Church in guarded retreat on earth, the lifestyle of the Babylon it once counteracted has again clambered to the fore of public favor. Behavior, then, is the key to both cities. While the city of God is in heaven—in a kingdom beyond the universe, those who leave Babylon to journey there, leave simply by changing their behavior. *"I am not asking you to remove them from the world, but to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world any more than I belong to the world. As you have sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world..."* (Jn.17:15-16). With this statement, Jesus decreed that the two cities must live in the same place for now, one held captive inside the other; but when Christ returns, the two will be separated by a chasm so great it cannot be crossed.

When the Lord brought His people out of the captivity of Egypt and allowed them to settle in the Promised Land, God's holy city was thought to be located in Palestine, especially after the temple was constructed there. But the prophets decreed that such was not the case. Jeremiah said that God could build and tear down temples at will (Jer.7), and Ezekiel predicted that the glory of God would abandon Jerusalem and take up residence with the exiles in Babylon (Ez.10:18-11:23). Even more to the point, Isaiah revealed that the Jerusalem in Palestine was not God's holy city at all, but was actually another part of Babylon (Is.47:1). That is because the people of Jerusalem didn't behave any differently than the people in any other human city. The people who ruled the city of Jerusalem had left the path that God had marked out for them, bringing the ways of Babylon into Jerusalem, and, even after repeated warnings, the city would not repent and return to the righteousness of its name. Jerusalem, then, was being spiritually governed by the same 'prostitute' as every other city on the planet. This 'whoring' is the reason for its exile and captivity

(Ez.16). It was obvious in these prophecies that the conduct of the people of Jerusalem in Palestine had evolved into the same kind of *worldly* behavior that had bewitched all the other people on earth. When Jesus was about to be put into the hands of the leaders of this city, he underscored this fact by telling his disciples that he was being turned over into the hands of the prince of this world (the prince of Babylon). This is why John, in the Book of Revelation, referred to the Palestinian Jerusalem—the city in which Jesus was crucified—as 'Sodom' and 'Egypt' (Rev.11:8). Isaiah called this Jerusalem a '*daughter*' of Babylon (Is.47:1): "*Listen to this, House of Jacob...(you who swear by the name of God and invoke the God of Israel)—though not in good faith or uprightness—calling yourselves after the holy city. Down with you! Sit in the dust, virgin, daughter of Babylon.*" (Is.48:1-2, 47:1). Notice that in this prophecy, Isaiah states that the people who ruled Israel were calling themselves 'after' the holy city—showing that God's *true* city was not really in Palestine even then—not even at the height of Jerusalem's glory. Sin had cloaked this city in darkness, blinding it to the will of God. So what the land of Israel and its city of Jerusalem in Palestine actually represented on earth was the nation of God *defiled* by sin. It was God's unrepentant nation living in the grip of Satan's lifestyle. It stood (and still stands today for that matter) as an allegory of us all before we were cleansed by Jesus. It waits for the day of its conversion. And as with us, its conversion will not return it to Palestine, but will take what has been purified away from the earth completely—rebuilding the city of God anew in heaven. That is why the world will end abruptly the day this unrepentant city finally turns to Jesus. The reason why Jerusalem in Palestine was thought of as God's holy city was because it had come to represent the rule of God under the Mosaic covenant. That city was the Mosaic covenant's *reflection* of God's sacred city. It was an earthly model made to show God's true city in another kingdom. Despite its holy expectations, its rule had fallen into the hands of men who used it for their own ends. In the process they blinded the people of Jerusalem to God's true will. That is why Isaiah announced that God intended to tear divine authority away from these Jewish leaders—away from their city and away from the Pharisees and Sadducees who governed her—and give that rule to other tenants instead: "*I was angry with my people, I had profaned my heritage. I had surrendered it into your hands, but you showed them no mercy...You said, 'forever I shall be sovereign lady'...so listen now, voluptuous woman... you shall be widowed and lose your children both on the same day.*" (Is.47:1-15). Isaiah's claim that God had *surrendered* His people into Jerusalem's hands made it obvious that this city in Palestine was not God's favorite city at all. It was never destined to be a sovereign lady forever. Instead, Isaiah calls the city a '*voluptuous woman*' who is about to be widowed. This brings us to a major theme of scripture. The city of Jerusalem on earth represents the last refuge of the Father's creation (this world)—a creation

seduced by wickedness and firmly locked into that obsession by Satan. Scripture designates this creation as the Father's *wife*—a wife who has turned herself into a prostitute through sin (Hos.1:2). Jerusalem in Palestine abrogated her responsibility to lead the people into righteousness and instead, winked at the House of Israel's pursuit of evil. She has been widowed because God has terminated her covenant (Hos.2:1-2). This world is doomed and so is the city in Palestine (the 'voluptuous woman' Isaiah termed 'Babylon's daughter'). In her place a new wife is being built in the third heaven (2 Cor.12:2)—the city of the Son—a city built in the image of the Father and free from Satan's grasp. And that is why the prophets made such an issue of there being two spiritual cities. All the works of God go in pairs by opposites. Opposite the city of God, every city on this planet (including Palestine's Jerusalem) is a spiritual participant in Babylon's sinful lifestyle. Changing that lifestyle by following the Gospel is the only thing that allows us to escape the captivity of Babylon. Proof of this came from John when he wrote that God's new city of righteousness—the Jerusalem of heaven—is to be wrapped in white linen made out of the good deeds of the saints (Rv.19:8). These two cities were dedicated, each to their own covenant—to their own law. The first has been dismissed because of wicked behavior—a dismissal which will be made manifest when the world comes to an end. The second city is being built to take her place and will exist forever.

To show that the first wife had, in fact, been dismissed as predicted (i.e., that the two covenants had actually been exchanged), God allowed the Israelites to be evicted from Palestine leaving Jerusalem desolate and empty in fulfillment of the prophecies. Physically the scattering of Israel to the cities of the world started soon after the death of Solomon and took centuries to occur. But spiritually—in terms of the covenant itself—the scattering to Babylon was instantaneous. The same is true of the Return. *"Who has ever heard of such a thing, who ever saw anything like this? Is a country born in one day? Is a nation brought forth all at once, that Zion only just in labor should bring forth sons?"* (Is.66:8). When Jesus drove the money lenders out of the temple with a whip, the old covenant was immediately dissolved. That action was God changing the tenants. *"God will whirl the whip like the time he stretched his rod against Midian at the rock of Oreb and raised his rod over the sea on the road from Egypt."* (Is.10:26). *"Listen. An uproar from the city! A voice from the Temple! The voice of God bringing retribution on his enemies."* (Is.66:6). Just before he did this, Jesus spoke to the city, saying: *"So be it! Your house will be left to you desolate, for, I promise, you shall not see me any more until you say: 'Blessings on him who comes in the name of the Lord!'"* (Mt.23:38). Since the Jews have not yet invoked these words, the desolation decreed by Jesus continues to this day—a deprivation Moses predicted with these

words: *"I will scatter you among the nations. I will unsheathe the sword against you to make your land a waste and your towns a ruin. Then the land will observe its sabbaths indeed, lying desolate there, while you are in the land of your enemies."* (Lev.26:34). Because of the wickedness that had enveloped Jerusalem, its covenant was rescinded and all of its citizens were exiled to Babylon. *"Writhe, cry out daughter of Zion, for now you have to leave the city and live in the open country. To Babylon you must go and there you will be rescued; There God will ransom you out of the power of your enemies."* (Micah 4:10).

The city Satan corrupted could rule no more (Hos.2:1-2). It died with the first covenant. The Son's city had taken its place. *"All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me."* (Mt.28:18). *"Moreover, I tell you that from this time onward you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."* (Mt.26:64). With the nation of Judah terminated by Rome and its entire population in exile, the new tenants appointed by God to rule over the House of Israel's reconstruction had to all come from Babylon under a new set of rules. *"Go, therefore, make disciples of all the nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to observe all the commands I gave you. And know that I am with you always; yes, to the end of time."* (Mt.28:19-20). From that day onward, God's Jerusalem became a city made visible on earth only when its chains were removed in each Christian conversion.

Plunged into widowhood by the cancellation of the Father's covenant, the city of Jerusalem lost her children (Is. 47:8-9) when they were taken from her and exiled into the desert city called Babylon. This event can be seen on two levels. Both of them bring the words of Moses to fulfillment: *"I will scatter you among the nations. On that day I will call heaven and earth to witness against you; and at once you will vanish from the land which you are crossing the Jordan to possess. God will scatter you among the peoples, and only a small number of you will remain among the nations where God will have driven you."* (Dt.4:26-27). On one level of this prophecy, the House of Israel had to leave the 'Promised Land' of the Mosaic covenant and take up residence among the citizens of the world in the wilderness of Babylon. God did not destroy His creation when Satan infected us. Instead, He has taken us all out into the desert (the desert is scripture's alternate designation for Babylon) and rescued us in His Christ—the Messiah which scripture had promised for the purpose. The dispersment, then—the historic exiles which tore the House of Israel out of the land of Palestine—mirrors a greater exile that involves the entire world. The word 'desert' in this prophecy relates to a lifeless environment. Therefore it images both the desert of space through which this oasis called earth must travel; and it also images the desert of godless behavior practiced by most of human civilization during that journey. Once God

implemented His decision to force the exile of His people into this hostile environment, no one was allowed to remain behind. Everyone had to go. Buried in the ways of sin, the people of God have been handed over to Satan to be sifted like wheat, and everyone—the entire House of Israel—has had to go into the exile of this sifting (Lk.22:31). On the historic level, those who tried to prevent the exile from taking place by trying to stay in Jerusalem (imaged by the Jews who tried to fight the Roman army) were destroyed for resisting the will of God. This is why Jeremiah had said, *"Look, I now set in front of you the way of life and the way of death. Those who stay in this city will die by sword, by famine, or by plague; but anyone who leaves it and surrenders to Babylon will escape with his life."* (Jer.21:8-10). These words have nothing to do with surrendering to pagan ways (Babylon's behavior). Instead, they refer to a covenant which had to be exchanged because it had no power to destroy sin. Jeremiah's words show that no one can be rescued by the old covenant—everyone must come to God through Jesus Christ, because our rescue is from sin, not geography, and it is only Jesus who can forgive sin. Moses, for all the authority he had been given by God, still had no power to forgive sin; so Satan still held the entire House of Israel in the grip of eternal death despite the Mosaic Law. To break that grip, all twelve tribes were expelled from their homeland in Palestine (where the word of Jesus was forbidden) and were sent, instead, to a foreign land where Christ's preaching was promoted. As a result, the House of Israel was carted off into Satan's kingdom where they were forced to live under the dominion of foreigners. *"He handed them over to the pagans, those who hated them became their masters; their enemies tyrannized over them, crushing them under their rule."* (Ps.106:41-42). No matter where we are born on earth, we are all born into the captivity of this tyranny—the captivity of Babylon's lifestyle. It is a tyranny harsher in some places than others, and it has become significantly worse in this last century. Yet for everyone, no matter what part of Babylon we live in, the escape is the same. The only way the exile and captivity can end is when we repent our participation in the lifestyle of this world and convert our lives to live in the commandments of Jesus—our new citizenship conferred by baptism. We can see from this that the remainder of the twelve tribes of Israel continue to reside in Babylon to this very day. That is why we can be in places as diverse as Hong Kong or Idaho and still see ourselves as a true part of this scattering, and therefore as a true part of the House of Israel in Babylon. We are not in Palestine, and most of us are not Jewish, but we are a true part of the House of Israel nonetheless. And the 'perverse generation' into which we have been scattered and from which Jesus has called us to leave is just as perverse in Hong Kong and Idaho as it is in Europe or Italy or in the land of Palestine.

The Bible promised that the people of Israel would not be left to die in Babylon but would be permitted to leave their captivity when they heard the call of the Son of David—the ancient prophecies instructing them that in this name God would come and call each of them back from their exile—one by one—to rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem. For this reason, some of the words of scripture call for the people of God to leave Jerusalem while others exhort the people to return and rebuild her ruins. But the call back, as we have seen, is not to Palestine. *"Mine is not a kingdom of this world, if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind."* (Jn.18:36). When Jesus informed us that the city of God was not in this world, the true boundaries of Babylon should have become clear to everyone. There is no Promised Land on the earth. Babylon is this world and every city in this world is a part of Babylon. Therefore, the rebuilding of Jerusalem called for by scripture does not relate to any earthly city. We can rebuild this city by our work on earth, but the city we rebuild does not exist on the earth. The city of God is spiritual and our rescue is spiritual. *"In the days to come the mountain of the temple of God shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All the nations shall stream to it, peoples without number will come to it. They will say, 'Come, let us go to the mountain of God that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.'"* (Is.2:2-3). Jesus has brought us to a city of ethics—a city of righteous behavior that we have to obey to rebuild. *"There is no eternal city for us in this life, but we look for one in the life to come."* (Heb.13:14). Thus the Zion of scripture is a spiritual mountain in a land that is invisible to us in this life. *"What you have come to is Mount Zion and the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem where the angels have gathered for the festival with the whole Church, and in which everyone is a 'first-born son' and a citizen of heaven."* (Heb.12:22-23).

When Jesus issued the call to return and rebuild the ruins of Jerusalem, the blueprint he gave for this reconstruction was the Gospel that he preached. These ruins were caused by immorality and they can only be rebuilt by conversion into righteousness (Acts 5:32). But it actually goes much deeper than that. In the metaphor of these two opposing spiritual cities, God has shown us that concepts of right and wrong can only be measured by the Gospel Jesus preached. Babylon cannot tell us what is good or bad as far as God is concerned, because it is not 'good' or 'bad' according to Babylon that the Bible is about, but our journey to eternal life. The Gospel is God's blueprint for eternal life—that is why it has to be followed so closely. We must not be fooled. The Gospel does not tell us how to be good, because only God is good. The Gospel describes what we must do to escape eternal death. And its words warn us that the two most important moves we must make in this regard are

to repent our past sins and be baptised, which is our pledge to God that we will convert our lives into the way of Christ. We must leave the violent and corrupt behavior that characterizes the lifestyle of this world (Babylon) and embrace the merciful and gentle behavior of God's commandments if we want to live forever in Christ's eternal city. *"I tell you most solemnly, whoever keeps my word will never see death."* (John 8:51). All the citizens of the world are being divided between these two cities by the Gospel of Christ, because Jesus is the only definition clarifying the boundary between the two.

We have seen that the prophets have described these two cities allegorically as two mothers, with their populations their respective children. The metaphor relates to how they raise their children to behave, and therefore to the kind of 'spirit' that each of them impart into those that they are raising. When we are born on earth, we are all born citizens of this world's city (Babylon) which belongs to Satan. As children of Babylon the worldly spirit of Satan is imparted into us the moment we are born. This can be seen clearly in the way we used to live before we discovered Christ. Listening to the world, we grew up one way, but when we discovered Jesus and his Gospel, our world view changed and our behavior became quite different. This is because the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ had entered us and called us to repent our former lifestyle and to convert out of the ways of this world. This conversion—our conversion from the way of men into the righteousness of Christ—is our journey out of Babylon. This journey is an exodus out of sin. It is a road opened by baptism and traveled by Christ's commandments. If we do not change our behavior—if we continue to live sinful lives after we have been baptised, it means we have not left Babylon at all, but continue to live there in violation of God's command: *"Go away, go away, leave that place, touch nothing unclean. Get out of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. But you are not to hurry away, you are not to leave like fugitives. No the Lord will go in front of you, and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard."* (Is. 52:11-12). This separation is not easy. The call of the world is so strong that some people are unable to break free from it. We can see this in popular ministers who have publicly fallen from grace before our eyes. The world laughs at them and says, *"See —they thought they were so haughty and look, inside they are no different than the rest of us in Babylon. So much for Jesus"*. The world loves to expose the behavior of Babylon in fallen Christians because it gives them an excuse not to have to change, and it brings God into ridicule. Yet, even so, because of God's mercy anyone in Christ who falls can stand up again if he wants to. *"Though the virtuous man falls seven times, he stands up again."* (Pr.24:16). It is only those who remain fallen, refusing to get back up who are doomed, because everyone who remains a part of Babylon is coming to ruin. The catastrophe that is coming—the end of the world that the

prophets have been warning us about—will destroy even those who are baptised if they refuse to leave their evil ways behind. This is why anyone who falls must get back up and return to the path of safety. *"If, by the Spirit, you put an end to the misdeeds of the body, you will live."* (Rom.8:13). This means that each of us must turn away from sin and from the things which cause us to sin. This turning away from sin is what leaving Babylon is all about. We were all born in Babylon, but when we were baptised in Jesus we became citizens of the spiritual city of Jerusalem in the kingdom of heaven, and the whole life that we live in Jesus thereafter is our journey from the one city to the other. This shows that there is no physical destination that can save us. True Babylon is a Babylon of the heart and true Jerusalem is the kingdom of heaven that we can reach only by a change of heart.

PART 2

DISPERSION AND EXILE

"To Babylon you must go and there you will be rescued; There God will ransom you out of the power of your enemies."

Micah 4:10

6

The Scattering

"If you do not keep and observe all the words of this Law...You will be torn from the land which you are entering. God will scatter you among all the peoples, from one end of the earth to the other."

Dt.28:58-64

Six hundred years before Jesus was born, the prophet Jeremiah warned the Jewish people that the kingdom of Judah was going to be overrun by the nations of the Babylonian North. Because they had abandoned the religious reforms which would have led the country back to God, and had embarked on a deteriorating course of militancy and social corruption, Jeremiah was commissioned by God to announce the fulfillment of the Mosaic warning. The curse which Moses had prescribed in the Torah's Book of Deuteronomy was about to be unleashed on Jerusalem. The whole country of Judah, Jeremiah declared, was destined to be devastated and reduced to a desert in the aftermath of this attack. Its citizens were to be uprooted from the Promised Land and exiled into slavery—a slavery that would last seventy years. And during this fateful seven decades, Jeremiah continued, many devastations would overtake Jerusalem and the people of Israel. *"But when the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and his nation for the wrong they have done and make their land a desert forever."* (Jr.25:12). Underscoring the length of this captivity, Jeremiah ordered his people, when they got to Babylon, to *"Build houses, settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce...for the Lord says this: Only when the seventy years granted to Babylon are over, will I visit you and fulfill my promise in your favor by bringing you back to this place."* (Jer.29:10). Now that we have the perspective of history to help enlighten his words, we can see that Jeremiah was delivering two messages. One, concerned the immediate citizenry of Judea who were leaving Jerusalem bound in the chains of Nebuchadnezzar. The greater part of his prophecies, however, focused on the 2000 year Jewish diaspora which would later follow the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The people of Judah had no idea that Jeremiah's warning held a metaphoric significance that would bridge dozens of centuries and dwarf the actions of Nebuchadnezzar. Brought to fulfillment by

Christ, the scattering predicted by Jeremiah has turned out to be one of the most momentous events in history. Formed under the terms of a treaty of peace that Jesus made with Babylon from the cross, the seventy years has turned into a nearly doubled millennium.

The scattering of the people of God to Babylon was predicted by Moses even while he was leading the Israelites out of their captivity in Egypt. During the journey across Sinai, Moses sternly warned them that they were required to keep God's law of peaceful holiness. The covenant which the Holy Spirit had Moses structure between the House of Israel and God was not unconditional. It bound the twelve tribes to righteousness: *"If you obey my voice and hold fast to my covenant, you, of all the nations on earth, shall be my very own nation...I will count you as a kingdom of priests, a consecrated nation."* (Exodus 19:5). Failing that obedience, Moses warned, the Hebrew tribes would be removed from the Holy Land and scattered into an exile that would spread across the planet. *"See, I set before you a blessing and a curse: a blessing if you obey the commandments of God...but a curse if you disobey and leave the way marked out for you."* (Dt.:11:26+). *"I will destroy your high places and your altars...I will scatter you among the nations. I will unsheathe the sword against you to make your land a waste and your towns a ruin. Then the land will observe its sabbaths indeed, lying desolate there, while you are in the land of your enemies."* (Lv.26:30-34). This scattering of the twelve tribes of Israel out of the Promised Land, then, was to be the great sign of the truth of the whole Bible. When it occurred it would be a signal that the two covenants had been exchanged (Jer.31:31+). Instead of listening to Moses, the leaders of Israel corrupted the Law of God, writing into it rules of anger and vengeance—an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Instead of peace, they pursued war. And just as God had promised, war came their way. Everything that Moses prophesied concerning the House of Israel came true—not only spiritually, but physically as well. About 700 years before the birth of Christ, the ten tribes of the north were conquered by Assyria and taken away into captivity. Quietly, they were assimilated into the genetics of the pagan world and, to most eyes, disappeared from sight never to be seen again. The other two tribes (the Jews and the tribe of Benjamin) were taken captive about a hundred years later. These two southern tribes were marched to Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon. Although some of these Jews were able to return to Jerusalem after 70 calendar years had passed, the prophecy calling for the dispersion of the twelve tribes to Babylon was still evolving even as a portion of one tribe made its journey back. The return, then, was only temporary. The Holy Spirit brought this small handful—this Jewish remnant—back from the banks of the Euphrates to prepare Jerusalem for the Messiah's appearance there. While a sturdy contingent of Jewish pioneers made the journey back to Jerusalem. A great many of the captives stayed in Babylon where

they had built homes, bought property and had jobs. Thus, when Jesus was born, only a small part of one or two of the original twelve tribes still lived in Palestine. All the rest had been dispersed throughout the world. This fulfilled Moses' prophecy that, because of sinfulness, only a small number of Israelites would be left. And once Jesus appeared before them, even this remnant was forced to leave again, proving beyond doubt the metaphoric elements of Jeremiah's prophecy. The Jewish rejection of the Messiah's call to righteousness was the final confirmation of the degenerating wickedness and rebelliousness of the House of Israel against God, and it brought the final culmination of Moses' warnings crashing into fulfillment: *"For failing to serve God, you will submit to the enemies that God will send against you. They will come as a far-off nation from the ends of the earth, speaking a language you do not understand and they will besiege you in all of the towns that God gave to you. There will be only a handful of you left. You will be torn from the land which you are entering, and God will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to another."* (Dt.28). Had they listened to God, none of this would have happened. The Israelites would have ruled the earth. *"Listen, Israel, to commands that bring life; hear, and learn what knowledge means. Why, Israel, why are you in the country of your enemies, growing older and older in an alien land...? Because you have forsaken the fountain of wisdom. Had you walked in the way of God, you would have lived in peace forever."* (Baruch.3:9-13). Because the tribe of Judah still remained in Palestine after the other eleven tribes had been exiled, they mistakenly thought that they were God's favorite tribe and the sole beneficiaries of scripture's promise. But this proved not to be true. They were simply the last of the twelve tribes to be exiled. This was demonstrated just a few years after Jesus was crucified when the Romans destroyed Judea and abolished the Jewish presence in Palestine. The exile that followed has lasted almost two thousand years. The signal, then, was obvious to everyone except to the Jews.

Instead of listening to God's rules, the leaders of Israel decided to make their own. They applied the admonition of Moses, not to the righteous covenant of God (i.e., to the Ten Commandments), but to their own traditions—all the regulations which they had developed over the years to act as exceptions to the commandments, and which Jesus said were designed to make the word of God null and void. Assiduously they kept the latter, but paid little heed to the former. As a result they placed themselves in direct opposition to God. *"Because they have rejected the Law of God and failed to keep his precepts, because the false gods which their ancestors followed have led them astray, I am going to hurl fire on Judah to burn up the palaces of Jerusalem."* (Amos 2:4-5). By abandoning the Commandments which God had personally given them, the House of Israel locked itself into the scattering that

scripture had decreed. *"On that day I will call heaven and earth to witness against you; and at once you will vanish from the land which you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You shall not live there long; you shall be utterly destroyed. God will scatter you among the peoples, and only a small number of you will remain among the nations where God will have driven you. There you will pay service to gods that human hands have made..."* (Dt.4:26-28). God turned the nation over to its own idols. Thus, despite the fact that the Hebrew people remained intensely religious, their behavior condemned them to Babylon's exile. The fact that all these events actually happened historically, and in such a momentous way, producing a 2000-year Diaspora still in progress bears stark witness to the truths underlying scripture's words.

The twelve tribes were convinced that it was because they were God's chosen people that God had given them the land of Palestine for a heritage, but this was not true. Moses told them that the Canaanites were being dispossessed for their own wickedness; it had nothing to do with Israel's goodness. He said, *"It is not for any goodness or sincerity of yours that you are entering their land to possess it; no, it is for the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is dispossessing them for you..."* (Dt.9:5). This was a significant difference. It was a clear warning that they too could be replaced—something that Moses and the prophets had persistently announced. But it was a warning the Israelites did not take seriously. They kept seeing themselves as better than their neighbors and, therefore, as somehow above the law of God. For this reason, the Lord sent Jeremiah to announce what was about to occur: *"Now go to my place in Shiloh where at first I gave my name a home; see what I have done to it because of the wickedness of my people Israel! And now, since you have committed all these sins—it is God who speaks—and have refused to listen when I spoke so urgently, or to answer when I called you, I will treat this Temple (in Jerusalem) that bears my name, and in which you put your trust, and the place I have given to you and your ancestors (the Promised Land), just as I treated Shiloh. I will drive you out of my sight, just as I drove all your kinsmen, the entire race of Ephraim."* (Jer.7:12-15). Jesus made it clear that the Law which was being ignored, and around which the curse of Moses revolved, was the Ten Commandments—the way that God Himself had marked out for the House of Israel to follow—it had nothing to do with all the traditions the tribes had built up to circumvent that Law.

This brings us to the Ark of the Covenant—the holy chest Moses built to house the word of God. When we speak about the word of God today, we think of the Bible, but Moses was not permitted by God to put the writings of the Bible in the Ark of the

Covenant—the Ark contained only the Ten Commandments, the two stone tablets written by the hand of God which Moses brought down with him from the holy mountain in Sinai. This fact points out the two different natures of what we call 'the word of God'. There is inspired word where God moves men to speak in His name, and then there is direct dialogue from heaven where God speaks to us Himself in person. The inspired portion of the Bible is called the 'Law and the Prophets'. The word from heaven is called the 'Testimony'. While both were contained in the Bible, only one was sufficiently holy to be repositied in the Ark of the Covenant. The Ark was a sacred container constructed to house only God's own personal words—the Ten Commandments. Because this acacia chest was the holiest object in the Hebrew religion, the Ten Commandments were shown by their presence in it to be greater than all other writings of scripture. The Torah, the prophets and all the other books of scripture represented a *reflection* of the Law and so had to be stored *outside* the ark. By commanding this separation, God made clear the difference between His own Testimony and the writings of the Law. He did this in preparation for the Testimony of Jesus Christ—the unfinished Testimony of God that would come down from heaven to complete the Ten Commandments. The Ark of the Covenant, then, *defined the covenant*. And in that definition, made the Ten Commandments greater than anything else that surrounded it in the Hebrew religion. So when Moses commanded the Israelites to "*hold fast to God's covenant*", he was ordering them, above all, to obey the ten sacred articles of God housed in the Ark.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that a relationship exists between the Ten Commandments and the Gospel of Jesus. It says the 'Good News' (the Gospel) was first preached during the time of Moses at Sinai (Heb.4:6). This revelation ties the Ten Commandments of Sinai to the commandments of Christ. In both cases it was God in person who issued the directives. Because the Israelites had diluted the Testimony of God with so many of their own rules—the traditions of the elders disdained by Jesus—God commanded a new covenant—one founded only on the Testimony of Christ. It was not 'religion' that God wanted the people to have, but *salvation*. So in the place of the guardian's reflected light, God sent His own true light. In that new covenant, all the shepherds and all their laws were completed and replaced by one true Shepherd and one true Law (Ez.34:10-16). This exchange of covenants is one of the major points in scripture and can be seen manifestly prophesied in Jeremiah's writings (Jer.31:31-34).

In order to clearly understand the circumstances behind this exchange of covenants it is necessary to briefly examine the history of the Ten Commandments. Having led the

Israelites out of Egypt, Moses was instructed to stop at the foot of a mountain in the Sinai desert. There he was told to gather all the tribes of Israel together in a single body so that God could come before them personally and give them His laws face to face. This was a momentous event, and it crystallized the purpose of the Hebrew religion. At first the Israelites were excited at the thought of God's appearance before them and their hearts swelled with anticipation. They washed and cleaned for two days according to Moses' instructions, but on the third day, as God began to approach the people, this expectancy gave way to grave apprehension, and soon a feeling of terror overwhelmed them all. The mountain erupted in fire, the earth began to quake violently and the sky blackened with intense clouds like smoke from a furnace. Out of the clouds great flashes of lightning spewed. Peals of thunder rolled across the desert together with the sound of a great trumpet whose blast grew louder and louder the closer God came to the terrified Israelites (Ex.19:16-20). Suddenly realizing that many of them were going to die during God's visitation the Israelites' ran to Moses and begged him to have God send an intermediary in His place (Ex.20:18-20). God agreed to their request and it is this event which structured Jesus Christ into the Law. It is this legal compromise between God and the people of Israel that is the reason for their enduring and growing expectation of a "Messiah". At first the people thought that Moses was to be the intermediary (Ex.20:19), but he said no, explaining that the intercessor was to be someone else (Dt.18:14-16). Moses told them: *"The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves, from your own brothers; To him you must listen. This is what you yourselves asked of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the Assembly. 'Do not let me hear again' you said, 'the voice of the Lord my God, nor look any longer on this great fire, or I shall die'; and God said to me, 'All they have spoken is well said. I will raise up a prophet like yourself for them from their own brothers; I will put my words into his mouth and he shall tell them all I command him to say."* (Dt.18:15-19).

The compromise at Sinai not only deferred God's visit, it left a void as far as the Testimony of heaven was concerned. Most of the Lord's commandments remained unstated. There were always meant to be more than ten, but the balance of God's commandments had to await the voice of heaven's intercessor. The proof that the Israelites fully understood all of this was revealed by their consuming expectation ever afterward of the coming Messiah. The entire Hebrew religion was built on the promise of this holy Intermediary defined at Sinai. That is why, a thousand years later, the people of Jesus' time were so astir—they were waiting in fervent expectation of the Christ predicted by Moses. When Moses said, *"God will raise up for you a prophet like myself, from among yourselves...to him you must*

listen." (Dt.18:15), he bound the Israelites to the obedience of Jesus, who was the prophet of God that these words were written for. But when he appeared, Jesus turned out to be more than a prophet and more than an intermediary. He came as God Himself, clothed in flesh. This fact is the meaning of the Trinity, and it freed the world from the Law's stipulation for an intermediary because the moment Jesus was glorified in heaven, the intermediary became our ruling God. At that instant of glorification, the master of the Law of Moses became the Master and Lord of all creation. This meant that Jesus' words were far more than mortal inspiration; they were, in fact, the direct Testimony of God. This put his Gospel on the same level as the Ten Commandments. *"He who comes from above is above all others. He who is born of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven...speaks God's own words."* (Jn.3:31-34). Jesus brought the missing Testimony which the compromise had blocked at Sinai. Jesus brought a peaceful visitation by God. There was no theophany associated with His appearance. The sky did not cloud over. The earth did not heave and roll. There was no lightning; no thunder. He did not bring words of judgment. Instead He brought an offer of peace and salvation—an olive branch. Accompanying this offer of reconciliation Jesus issued a stern warning of what would happen if that peace was rejected. The theophany of God, He said, would return in a world display that would bring Judgment. We can see in the great event at Sinai all the overtones of that final day at the end of the world when, again, because of God's personal appearance, dark clouds will cover the land and terrifying signs will signal the termination of all who have not obeyed God's Messiah and broken with sin in His name. All this will occur early on another "third day" in association with Christ's promised Return. At that time, repentance and baptism in His name for almost 2000 years will constitute the two "days" of washing and cleaning prophesied to precede His face to face appearance before the world's people.

When Moses led the twelve tribes of Israel out of Egypt and took them to the land of Palestine, each tribe was given a share of the country. The tribe of Judah (the Jews) received the land within which lay the city of Jerusalem. At first the Jews had not achieved a special place among the Israelites because, in the beginning, the Ark of the Covenant—the shrine housing the Ten Commandments—was situated at Shiloh, not Jerusalem. The town of Shiloh was located in land administered by the tribe of Ephraim. This meant that the Ephraimites were the initial focal point of Hebrew worship, not the Jews. Because of this, Jerusalem had little religious significance in the early years of Hebrew history when the Israelites first came out of Egypt and entered the Promised Land. As scripture shows, God later abandoned Shiloh and moved the temple to Jerusalem because of the wickedness of Ephraim's religious leadership. By moving the temple from Shiloh to Jerusalem, God

showed again that He had the power to move the city of God, its temple and the people of Israel wherever He wanted them to go, whether it was out of Egypt, across Sinai, out of Shiloh, out of Jerusalem, or into or out of Babylon. Illustrating that fact, God instructed Jeremiah to tell the Jews that if they did not change their behavior, the Jerusalem temple was going to end up just like the one at Shiloh (Jer.7:12-15). In bringing these words to action, God proved that He had the power to blind anyone He wanted *"Tell this people, 'Any jug can be filled with wine!'"* (Jer.13:12-14),. God could place the rule of the House of Israel into the hands of whomever He chose. *"Put no trust in delusive words like these: 'This is the sanctuary of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Lord, the sanctuary of the Lord!' Yet here you are, trusting in delusive words, to no purpose! Steal, would you, murder, commit adultery, perjure yourselves, burn incense to Baal, follow alien gods that you do not know?—and then come presenting yourselves in his temple saying: Now we are safe—safe to go on committing all these abominations! Do you take this temple that bears my name for a robbers' den? I, at any rate, am not blind—it is God who speaks. "* (Jr.7:4-11).

God was not speaking these words to atheists. The Jews at the time of Jesus believed in God. In fact, almost everything they did seemed to be an expression of *deep* faith. Yet, according to Jesus, this belief counted for nothing because it was insincere. *"This people honors me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. The worship they offer me is worthless; the doctrines they teach are only human regulations."* (Is.29:13). Their faith was defined by tradition and not by the Ten Commandments, and because of this, it had more to do with their own will than it did with God's will. The Jews could not accept this because as far as they were concerned, they really *believed* in God and therefore saw their worship as intensely sincere. Looking at the planet today, we might easily concur. In a world gone out of control where very few people even bother to acknowledge the existence of God, the religious fervor of the Jews at the time of Jesus now seems profoundly holy. What this shows is that the faith of salvation is different from believing in God—no matter how intense and heartfelt that belief is. Even though they were God's own people, the Jews could not simply slap the name 'God' over their system and be saved. They had to make a deep and heartfelt conversion into righteousness—and so do we. The issue is eternal life. Jesus brought a path out of death. Only the path He prescribed can accomplish salvation. While other paths may be perceived as righteous, they do not lead to eternal life. According to Jesus, the love of God has far more to do with God's personal commandments than it does with bowing in prostration to the artifacts of the temple or giving lip service to the Father. Faith, therefore, relates to faithfulness to God—not to personal perception. Jesus stated this over and over again. *"Why do you call me "Lord, Lord" and*

not do what I say?" (Lk.6:46). We cannot be saved by simply accepting the reality of God—or even by accepting that that reality is Jesus. We are saved when we change our behavior—when we come into union with the nature of Jesus Christ. "If you wish to enter into life, you must keep the commandments." (Mt.19:17). It is this change of behavior into the commandments of Jesus that brings us into the forgiveness of God. "It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. When the day comes many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, work many miracles in your name? Then I shall tell them to their faces: I have never known you; away from me, you evil men! Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on a rock...but everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them, will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand." (Mt.7:21-27). These words reveal that Jesus was not giving us suggestions when he spoke, but commandments. He was completing the missing Testimony on the tablets God gave to Moses. Eternal life, then, is part and parcel of Christ's words. "We can be sure that we know God only by keeping his commandments. Anyone who says, 'I know him', and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, refusing to admit the truth. But when anyone does obey what he has said, God's love comes to perfection in him." (1 Jn.2:3-5). This proves that the word of Jesus is divine Law. A Law tempered by grace, but not destroyed by grace.

7

The Twelve Tribes of Israel

"Son of man, the citizens of Jerusalem (the Jews) are telling the rest of the House of Israel, that since they were sent away from God, that it is to them that the land has been given as their domain. Say therefore, The Lord says this: 'Yes, I have sent them far away among the nations, and I have dispersed them to foreign countries...but I will gather them together from among the peoples, I will bring them all back from the countries where they have been scattered and I will give them the land of Israel.'"

Ez. 11:14-21

Most of us, when we hear the word 'Israel', think only of the Jews. But from the beginning the Jews have had to share this title with a great many others, because in scripture the House of Israel consists of twelve tribes and the Jews are just one of those twelve. It is the same with the word 'Hebrew'—it describes twelve tribes, not just one. Everything that is written in the Old Testament was written for the the House of Israel as a *group*, not just for one tribe. Understanding this is a major key to understanding the Bible. And as we shall see in the descriptions that follow, it is also the key to understanding the varied churches of Christ. The clan of Judah rose to dominance over the other tribes of Israel when the Hebrew leaders in Ephraim proved unworthy. And they gained complete control over the Mosaic religion when the Israeli nation was torn to pieces because of sin. Attacked and taken away into foreign captivity by Assyria, the other tribes vanished into the land of the North. By the time Jesus was born, only a small remnant of two tribes remained in the Holy Land. The others had all disappeared—vanishing into the genetic infrastructure of the human race. With their disappearance, the Jewish remnant remaining in Palestine came to the conclusion that they were the sole beneficiaries of all of God's promises to the House of Israel. But the prophet Ezekiel told them no. They were simply the last tribe to go into Babylon's exile. Ezekiel scolded the Jews for their arrogance in trying to usurp the covenant. He told them in no uncertain terms (Ez. 11:14-21) that all twelve of Israel's tribes were going to share equally in the fulfillment of scripture's promise. God was going to bring them back from the land of the North. Ezekiel put the Jews on notice that the missing Hebrew tribes were not missing as

far as God was concerned. Jeremiah agreed. *"In those days",* Jeremiah said, *"the House of Judah will unite with the House of Israel; together they will come from the land of the north to the land I gave your ancestors as a heritage."* (Jer.3:18). The Jewish leaders did not believe these predictions because they could not see how the other eleven tribes could ever be recovered. After all, at least ten of these missing tribes of Israel had completely disappeared. Their genetic identity had evaporated—disappearing from the face of the earth. It appeared to be irretrievably lost. The Jewish scholars could not conceive a divine intervention powerful enough to restore these missing people because the lost tribes had become indistinguishable from the Gentiles into whose stock they had disappeared. For this reason, the Jews steadfastly (even to this day) see themselves as the sole beneficiaries of all the ancient promises in scripture concerning the House of Israel. Scripture had long predicted a royal lineage for the tribe of Judah and the rabbi's translated that to mean exclusivity. There were so many prophecies all seeming to say the same thing, who could deny it? But all those prophecies of royalty were for Jesus, not the Jews. It was not the roots that were royal but the One who sprang from them. The royal heir was Jesus, the Christ—the Son of the Almighty King.

The name 'Israel' means 'rebel'. It was the name the Lord gave to Jacob because he rebelled against God by fighting against an angel. Jacob, the son of Isaac, was Abraham's grandson. He sired eleven sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin. These were the sons whose descendants were to form the twelve tribes of Israel. The number 12 stems from the fact that 2 grandsons were added later. This happened because, out of jealousy, the brothers listed above conspired against their younger brother Joseph and sold him into slavery. He was taken in chains to Egypt, where he rose to a position of great authority, becoming a personal friend of the Egyptian Pharaoh who put him in charge of the Egyptian grain stores. A skillful administrator, Joseph filled the Egyptian silo's to overflowing, staving off a disastrous famine that engulfed all the other nations of the Middle East. Later reconciled with his family after they came looking for something to eat, Jacob (Israel) elevated Joseph to Patriarch, and promoted his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh to positions equal to his own sons. This completed the formation of Jacob's 12 tribes. In response to his rebellion against the angel, God changed Jacob's name to 'Israel', and, as a result, his eleven sons became known preferentially as the 'House of Israel' rather than the 'House of Jacob' (which is an alternative phrase used occasionally by various prophets). The name 'Israel', therefore, is symbolic. It means 'house of rebellion'. And it stands for a nation that made war against God by rebelling against His will through sin—certain death—but which was allowed to

survive by the mercy of God. The name, therefore, has two derivatives, rebellion and mercy. The people of Israel were born into rebellion because of Adam's sin and they have gained their life only through the forgiveness offered by Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to take that sin away. Because of our birth into Adam's sin, we all share a common relationship with Israel—having rebelled against God—and, despite that fact, having been allowed to regain our lives through repentance and conversion into the sanctifying grace of Jesus Christ who paid the penalty for this sin in all of our names. We might gather from this that everyone in the world belongs to the House of Israel in a spiritual way, but Jesus, Himself, has declared otherwise: *"If God were your father, you would love me, since I have come here from God...I was sent by him. Do you know why you cannot take in what I say? It is because...the devil is your father, and you prefer to do what your father wants."* (Jn.8:42-44). Not everyone belongs to God. Of those who do, one has been made blind for the sake of the world's salvation (their identity will be made known later) while the other proves its kinship only through faith in Jesus Christ. The salvation of these faithful—the 'lost' Israelites hidden in the deepest recesses of the world's population—is one of the most important themes of scripture. Everyone who accepts the sanctifying grace offered to the world by God through Jesus Christ is brought into unity with God's twelve tribes of Israel in heaven.

The ingathering is not genetic. This is one of the most important truths we have learned from Jesus. The people of God are not determined by DNA or by any other genetic factor. God has no favorite people. There is no divine race. Only a divine behavior. The missing Hebrew tribes, scattered among the people of the North, have been recovered by God, not by genetic tracking, but by faith in a preached Gospel. Jesus said our enemies would be members of our own families—people who share our own genetic lineage (Mt.10:34-36). And this applies to Jews as well as to pagans. Paul said that *"it is not physical descent that decides who are the children of God"* (Rom 9:8). There is no such thing, then, as a 'divine gene'. This will be seen most clearly at the End when the Jews in Jerusalem divide into two camps. The Jews who are saved will be saved by their faithfulness to the commandments of God—not by the fact that they are Jewish. The true House of Israel are those who hear and obey the voice of God. *"Those who do not love me do not keep my words."* (Jn.14:24). Jesus told the Jews that those who do not obey His commandments do not belong to God (Jn.8:47), so that obedience to the Gospel is the actual measure that divides the true House of Israel from the civilization ruled by Satan among whom these 12 Hebrew tribes have been sent to live. *"Glory to him who is able to give you the strength to live according to the Good News I preach, and in which I proclaim Jesus*

Christ, the revelation of a mystery kept secret for endless ages, but now so clear that it must be broadcast to pagans everywhere to bring them to the obedience of faith." (Rom.16:25-26). The people of the Ingathering, therefore, are those who listen to Christ's words: "I told you, listen to my voice; carry out all my orders, then you shall be my people and I will be your God." (Jer.11:4). The lost tribes of Israel can be seen today only through Christian conversions. The fact that there are twelve tribes of Israel rather than just one explains the variations between the different churches of Christ. If there are eleven different tribes of Israel pursuing Jesus, it only stands to reason that they will each manifest themselves in different ways. Instead of hating and vilifying churches of Christ that differ from our own, then, we should glorify God that these differences exist because they prove the truthfulness of scripture by showing a rescue that spans all the different tribes. This diversity shows that Jeremiah's prophecy has come true. And that means the Bible is correct. "God said to me, 'Next to faithless Judah, disloyal Israel seems virtuous. So go and shout these words towards the North: 'Come back, disloyal Israel—it is God who speaks—I shall frown on you no more, since I am merciful...' (Jer.3:10-12). "See, then, that the days are coming—it is God who speaks—when people will no longer say, 'As God lives who brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt!', but, 'As God lives who brought the sons of Israel out of the land of the North and back from all the countries to which he had scattered them'." (Jer.16:14-15). Jesus has initiated a rescue of the scattered lost tribes of Israel from all across the earth and recalled them to God's Jerusalem in heaven—just as scripture promised He would. Christians need to see themselves, then, in the context of this return, not as sole heirs like the Jews do, but as a family of heirs—a family with a great many brothers and sisters all committed to the same master. As far as the Jews are concerned all these other vanished Israelites have been lost and forsaken forever. But the Bible tells a different story: "God is going to abandon them till the time when she who is to give birth, gives birth. Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel" (Micah 5:2-3).

The reason why so many Christians do not see themselves in the context of these mysterious charter members of the original House of Israel is that most do not know the difference between the Hebrews and the Jews. Ever since the schism, Israel has been divided into *two* houses, not one. The 'House' that disappeared into the pagan North was immense—at least 11 times larger than the Jews. Anyone who has ever worked with genealogies knows that when they track an ancestor who lived even just 300 years ago, they discover a network of descendants from that single source large enough to fill the pages of a telephone book. By the same token, the genetic descendants of those 11 tribes, ten of which disappeared 2700 years ago, and which numbered at least a million people *then*, have to be

infinitely vast at this point. Virtually the entire population of the earth. As we know, the ingathering is not genetically based, but the template of the scattering which is genetic, points overwhelmingly to a massive hidden community scattered across every part of the earth. It is in this immense hidden pool, that the spiritual House of Israel has its roots. The disappearance of these 11 tribes into the pagan world created the opportunity for the Jews to claim that all of God's promises were for their tribe alone. Their genetic lobbying with respect to this claim has been so intense (and supported by so many) that most Christians today tend to view themselves as a kind of '13th tribe' of Israel, bound to the Jews as an 'adopted' son of Abraham—a sort of second class citizen of heaven. But as the prophets have shown, this is not true. Nor was it ever. Genetics plays no part in the determination of God's people. Not even with the Jews. It is true that pagans were given a way to become a part of the House of Israel through a Jewish graft, but that was so that God could bypass the gene pool and open up His offer of salvation to the entire human race. Even so, the ten missing tribes still form a key element of the prophecy. Scripture dictated the terms which Jesus had to follow in order for His appearance to be legal according to Hebrew Law. And so when the prophets for that Law prophesied (and therefore dictated) a return based on the framework of the lost tribes, the return had to follow that format. And it did—but spiritually, not physically. So what seems at first glance to be a group of outsiders (gentiles and pagans) rising up to administer the highest offices in God's new covenant, turns out on closer inspection to be otherwise. A great many of these Christians actually represent missing members of the original House of Israel in disguise—a disguise so perfect they are unknown to anyone except to God. The only proof of their camouflage, the fruits that emanate from their new lives in Christ. No one knows which new Christian began truly pagan and which began a hidden member of the missing tribes of Israel if that matters. Perhaps no one will ever know. They have all been combined, and both have been made equal in the eyes of God who has restructured this entire division into just two groups. Because of Jesus, the two 'Houses' of Israel can now be seen only in terms of Christians and Jews. While the Christians have since divided themselves into seven churches (a metaphoric number), just how the various tribes of Israel will ultimately end up relating to one another in heaven remains one of the great mysteries of scripture.(Rv.7:4-15). The Book of Revelation shows the name of these tribes as "gates" leading to a foundation structured on the twelve Apostles (Rev. 21:12-14). That is also the reality of a structure that is obvious. One thing, though, is clear. The relationship between the 12 tribes of Israel and the existence of so many different Christian churches is a strong message to us from God. It tells us that we need to be open-minded about those who worship Jesus differently than we do. Since God's salvation is

based on a template of twelve different tribes, the existence of many different churches is only natural.

The relationship between the 12 tribes of Israel and the pagans can be seen in the prophecy of John. The Book of Revelation has divided the 'saved' into two groups (Rv.7:2-17). The first group, the "144,000" (Rv.7:4), lists the members saved from each of the twelve tribes. The second group of saved (the pagans) is so vast that John cannot even count it (Rv.7:9). It is important to remember that all numbers given in scripture are symbolic figures. The real numbers are always sealed behind a veil of metaphors. The remnant of just one of these tribes, the Jews, for instance, lists vastly more than 12,000 even now. Nine million Jews alone were massacred by Adolph Hitler. The Jewish population of modern Israel measures in the scores of millions, and is small relative to Jews that still live scattered throughout the nations. Adding in all the Jews of the past and those still destined to be born gives us a figure of immense proportions. It is a figure of such size that the '12,000' saved number listed in the Book of Revelation would involve a salvation ratio so microscopic (less than 1 saved out of every 50,000 Jews) that it would seem to contradict the promise of Christ. That is less than one person out of a town. The 'Way' is narrow, but not that narrow. So we have to see these salvation figures concerning the twelve tribes of Israel as symbolic. Vastly more than 144,000 are involved, but the true number remains a secret. The second group of 'saved' in John's revelation are the pagans who converted to Jesus when they heard His word preached to them. These are the 'foreigners' who have been "grafted on". *"After that I saw a huge number, impossible to count, of people from every nation, race, tribe and language; they were standing in front of the throne and in front of the Lamb, dressed in white robes and holding palms in their hands."* (Rv.7:9). In heaven, all will be united in the one Jesus Christ, since all have had to go through the great persecution together (Rv.7:14-17).

God has extended His offer to everyone. To tribes and pagans alike. Scripture has made it clear that not only does God intend to bring back the lost tribes from the north, but that even Gentiles will be allowed to join them as equals: *"I shall say to a people that was not mine, 'you are my people', and to a nation I never loved, 'I love you'. Instead of being told, 'you are no people of mine', they will now be called the sons of the living God."* (Hos.2:1, Rom.9:25). Speaking for God, the prophet Isaiah echoed this prediction: *"Foreigners who have attached themselves to God to serve him and to love his name...these I will bring to my holy mountain...for my house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples."* (Is.56:3-8). He also wrote, *"I am coming to gather the nations of every language."* (Is.66:18). These

statements clearly show that the salvation of God was meant, not just for the twelve tribes of the House of Israel, but for the entire world. Isaiah went on to say that the message of the Lord would go out to all the nations, even to the distant islands across the sea, so that people who had never even heard of the God of Israel would have His love preached in their hearing (Is.66:19). With the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus, the world has witnessed all these prophecies come true. God had purposely scattered the House of Israel throughout the world so that His offer of reconciliation and peace could be made to all people everywhere—not just so that the missing tribes could be saved, but so that all people on earth might be saved. The 'chosen people' are those who accept the offer—pagan or otherwise. Every pagan who chooses to repent from sin is grafted onto the 'branch' made possible by the birth into the tribe of Judah of the Son of God. The lost tribes of Israel are indistinguishable within this Christian composition. In Christianity there are no Ephraimites, Danites, Manassites or Asherites. Just Christians. Only one tribe remains separated from this unity. And this, only so that the others could be saved. At the end, once all the other tribes and the pagans have been rescued, even that last separated tribe is destined to be combined in the oneness of Christianity, making the entire House of Israel a single people in Jesus Christ. When that happens, both houses of Israel—both Christians and Jews—will be united, because in Christ there are no divisions—just one people.

8

Seventy Years in Babylon

"I, Daniel, was perusing the scriptures, counting over the number of years—as revealed by God to the prophet Jeremiah—that were to pass before the successive devastations of Jerusalem would come to an end, namely seventy years." Dn.9:2

Captivity and escape to freedom are the two central themes around which all the symbolism of scripture revolves. In the Old Testament the captivity was Egypt and the exodus was the journey Moses led the Israelites on across Sinai to the "Promised Land". In the New Testament the captivity is Babylon and the exodus is called 'the ingathering'. Because they are metaphors, 'Egypt' and the 'Exodus' stand as code words in Bible prophecy. Their true meaning was captivity to wickedness and the divine escape from this bondage provided by God. For this reason, they are early templates of the concept of 'Babylon' and our Christian pilgrimage away from this city of sin. Moses and the prophets gave ample warning to the Hebrew tribes that the captivity of Egypt was only a forewarning of what lay in the future if the people of Israel refused to structure their lives in the righteous ways of God. *"Take your wrong-doing out of my sight. Cease to do evil. Learn to do good, search for justice, help the oppressed, be just to the orphan, plead for the widow. If you are willing to obey, you shall eat the good things of the earth. But if you persist in rebellion, the sword of the invader will eat you instead. The mouth of God has spoken."* (Is.1:16-20). Failing to build their lives in God's mandatory holy behavior, the people of Israel found themselves surrounded by prophets who were predicting a new and greater exile. *"To Babylon you must go, and there you will be rescued; there God will ransom you out of the power of your enemies."* (Hos.4:10). The coming captivity, these seers announced, would take the House of Israel out of the Promised Land and carry them away in chains to a scattered incarceration that would stretch across the pagan North to the ends of the world—encompassing a great wilderness area called 'Babylon'—where they would have to stay for 70 years. It would be a long captivity, Jeremiah warned; they would have to build houses and settle down. When Nebuchadnezzar sacked and burned Jerusalem and carried the Jews to his own Babylon, all these prophecies seemed to suddenly crystallize. But the

dispersion scripture decreed was much larger than anything envisioned by Nebuchadnezzar.

Israel's 'Babylonian' exile has its roots in the great but militarily passive civil war which divided the Jews from the other ten tribes just after the death of Solomon. The exile began when those 10 Israeli tribes were conquered and carried away by Assyria to the land of the North, 200 years before the Jews were taken by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon. This early exile forms the roots of what is now known as "the Diaspora". Scripture tells us that it cannot officially end until the Prince of Persia comes at the world's end and announces its conclusion. The period set aside by God to encompass these "devastations of Jerusalem" is symbolically described in prophecy as "seventy years" (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10; Dan. 9:2). Within that seventy years, Daniel describes a period he symbolically calls "seventy weeks of years" which defines the era of Christianity on earth (Dan. 9:24-27). Until the time Mary gave birth as prophesied, God abandoned these exiles (Hos. 5:15). But we can see from the Book of Daniel that the appearance of Jesus initiated the mechanism for their return, a spiritual journey that is the only true release from this 70-year captivity. As the only Son of God, His footsteps mark the single survivable route through Babylon's wilderness. All other paths, Christ said, lead to death.

While he was being held captive in the Babylonian court, the prophet Daniel poured over Jeremiah's prophecies trying to determine just when the 70-year captivity would come to an end. Daniel realized that he was a part of this great biblical incarceration, but he had no way of knowing his true position with respect to it. He thought it had begun just a few decades earlier and that its end was close at hand. He petitioned the Lord for greater understanding. While he was praying on Jeremiah's words, an angel of God appeared to him and explained the answers to his question. It was not an answer Daniel could really fathom at the time, because the words God instructed Daniel to write were not about the Jewish captivity at the banks of the Euphrates—it described the true end of the 70 years—the events of the last days. Tying this period to Armageddon, the angel let Daniel know that the 70-years would not have its conclusion until the world, itself, ended. This explanation proved the short captivity of the Jews in which Daniel was involved and concerned about was only a foreshadow of something much greater. We can understand this far better now in light of the historic sequence that has since followed these events. History has shown us an exile lasting for scores of centuries. It is a captivity that involves not just foreign nations, but also sin. And throughout this entire period, the only freedom from this exile has come from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Those who commit themselves to Christ and 'leave Babylon' by dying to their past lives, end their 70-year captivity to sin by following the righteous path of

Jesus to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus termed Babylon's seventy-year reign over the people of God, the 'age of the pagans' (Lk.21:24). This tells us that the term 'Babylon' is actually a cryptogram for the entire pagan world. And the way it is used, it is a term that seems to encompass not only secularism, but every religion foreign to Christ as well. The 70-years are greatly metaphoric because the House of Israel has been plagued by elements of this captivity for almost 3000 years. Ever since the days of Pharaoh, the holy city has been trampled down by an unceasing succession of foreign armies. The prophets have catalogued for this period, eight major persecutions of the people of God, all of them engineered, according to the Book of Revelation, by seven "heads" of a dragon called the "Beast". The most important of these "heads" as far as we are concerned are the last three because they encompass the era of the Christian Church. Two of these have already come and gone and the last is yet to come. In fact, the circumstances of its appearance are beginning now.

Although Jeremiah assigned the name 'Babylon' to these persecuting nations, another code word for the country perpetuating this oppression was first heralded by Isaiah hundreds of years earlier under the pseudonym: 'Imperial Tyre' (Is.23:15-18). Historically, 'Tyre' was the capitol of Phoenicia—a city on the Mediterranean seacoast just north of Galilee; but Isaiah's use of this name is prophecy, not history. Therefore, in his case it is a pseudonym; and in the context that it appears in this passage of scripture, it seems certain to be a code word for a specific aspect of Babylon. This is mentioned here because Isaiah's title is reminiscent of 'Imperial Rome'—the nation that brought all these visions to a focus at the time of Christ. Rome, in fact, turned out actually to be the sixth of the eight nations involved in the Babylonian persecutions and exile. The difference between the names assigned by these two prophets to a seemingly identical subject is important, because where Jeremiah's predictions concern the entire pagan world (a Babylon encompassing every nation on earth), Isaiah's prophecies with respect to Tyre seem to be specifically directed toward the Roman empire itself—pointing first to the pagan Rome of Caesar's time (Is.23:1-14), and next, to the Italian Christian nation into which it evolved (Is.23:17). The common denominator which ties Isaiah's Tyre and Jeremiah's Babylon together is the 'seventy years'. This is the code term that tells us that these diverse prophecies are related. The fact that Isaiah's prophecy speaks to us about the end of the 70 years (Is.23:15) reveals that it revolves around Christian conversion and escape from captivity. As we have seen, the Bible has shown us that the 70-year captivity comes to an end wherever there is conversion into Christ. This is how we know Isaiah is talking to us about the two natures of the Roman government. In other words, on one side, pagan Rome and on the other, a Rome converted to Christ.

The 70 years are not just metaphoric. They have a finite literal basis as well, because underlying them is the measure of a human lifetime (Ps.90:10). The seventy years defines the average life-span of a human being on earth. It is written in the Psalms, "*The length of our days is seventy years—or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away.*" (Ps.90:10). In this quotation, scripture ties the 70 years to the life of our physical body. Thus the same measure that describes our own tenure on the planet is also used to define Israel's captivity to Babylon. Earth and flesh, then, are two aspects of the same captivity. And both are passing away, because flesh and blood, Paul said, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The fact that these diverse entities share a common number is not accidental. The Holy Spirit has fashioned this symmetry on purpose because both relate to the same captivity. Babylon is this world. The captivity is our existence here—our stay in the physical world. The seventy years describes the spiritual time limit that God has given the people of Babylon (captives and citizens alike) to convert into the righteousness of Jesus Christ. And seventy symbolic years have been given to the planet as well. At the end of our own seventy years (i.e., when we physically die), we are individually finished with respect to God's offer; and when the planet dies, the offer itself will be exhausted. In Church's offer of communion, God has structured a divine food that keeps this planet from dying, and until the day that food is taken away, Christ's offer will remain in effect.

The tribes of Israel had to suffer the exile so that God could extend His offer of forgiveness to every person on the planet (and to make us understand our incarceration here). We are all born into the captivity of Babylon and each of us must remain a prisoner in this foreign society until the day we make our escape by following Jesus Christ—who is the only path that leads back to God's Jerusalem. The kingdom of heaven is not on this planet, so we cannot enter it during our life in the flesh. But we must begin the journey here by allowing the word of God to take dominion over our heart. The only way to reach God's Jerusalem is through baptism and spiritual conversion (Acts 2:38). We must leave sin behind and live according to the directives of God—turning our lives over to the commandments taught by Jesus Christ. Until we do that we have to remain captive to Babylon—plying out the seventy years of our existence here under the dominion of forces which try persistently to separate us from the compassionate and loving ways commanded by God. Reinforcing metaphor by circumstance, God has handed the tribes of Israel over to the pagan world, scattering them to its farthest ends. As a part of this trampling of the House of Israel, the city of Jerusalem in Palestine has spent most of the last 2700 years in ruins and under foreign rule. *"This Is how*

the word of God was fulfilled that he spoke through Jeremiah...until seventy years have gone by..." (2 Chron.36:21).

God, then, has created a single captivity with dual themes. And it exists on two levels. One, as we have seen, applies to each of us personally, and the other applies to the world in general. The first relates to our body and soul, and the other to the planet with all its cities and nations and rulers. For the world in general the age of the pagans cannot end until Christ returns in glory, but in our own individual lives there is a process which brings paganism to an end much sooner and that process has been at work in the world since the day of the original Pentecost almost 2000 years ago. Babylon began to dissolve the moment Jesus was first preached. Every conversion into Christ terminates a part of the 70-year exile. While we tend to view Babylon only in terms of its world role, our escape from captivity always occurs on the smaller personal level of individual salvation—a process virtually always completed within the framework of the seventy years prescribed by scripture. Paul showed that our physical body dies as far as God is concerned the moment we are baptised. This is obviously the mechanism of our escape. Paul said that as soon as we are born into Jesus Christ, we die to our physical body by joining Jesus in his own death. This action, in terminating the reign of our mortal body over our souls, ends the seventy years. Thus it terminates the reign of Babylon in our lives. That ends the exile individually—a process that happens one by one (person by person).

The global end (Armageddon), however, is the end which captures the most attention. Not just because it heralds the moment of the entry of God's 'chosen people' into the kingdom of heaven, but also because of the gripping and fiery spectacle predicted to precede that procession. The world's fiery climax will trumpet the return of Christ to this earth, bringing with Him the Last Judgment and the dramatic opening of the gates of the third heaven. The gates of this new kingdom cannot be opened until Jesus returns in glory: *"Only when the seventy years granted to Babylon are over, will I visit you and fulfill my promise in your favor by bringing you back to this place."* (Jer.29:10). Because the 70-year captivity applies both to the flesh and to the life of the world, Babylon can be seen in universal terms as well. Our sinful body was born into a world that has persisted in unrighteous behavior since the beginning of man. Jesus ended this wicked history when He appeared in Galilee. Seeing the captivity in these terms pushes the age of Babylon back to the dawn of human history—back to the banks of the Euphrates where the people of Babel first gathered into civilized units and began to build their tower. In this sense, 'Babylon' can be seen as a code word for earth itself, while 'Egypt' (the *'furnace of iron'*—Dt.4:20), the precursor of

Babylon, can be viewed as another code which points back to the sun and the planets of iron that were produced in its solar birth, and to the immense fireball that earlier spawned all the galaxies of the universe. These symbolism speak to us in metaphore of a captivity within physical creation out of which the galaxy and its sun, like Moses, has brought our bodies temporarily to life, but which, also like Moses, cannot sustain that life for very long.

While he was on the island of Patmos, John was shown in a vision that the age of the pagans (the seventy years of pagan dominion over Jerusalem) would be divided into three eras (Rv.19:11-20:15). Hundreds of years earlier, the angel who appeared to Daniel announced the same kind of division ("*seven weeks, sixty-two weeks and one week*") (Dn.9:24-27). The angel used the term 'weeks' of years (i.e., seventy years multiplied seven times). Adding this divine multiplier (7) implied multiple lifetimes, showing that the angel's explanation had its focus on the ultimate seventy years—i.e., on the global end of the world. Not only that, the term 'weeks' of years (as we have shown above) qualified the answer, showing that it was not the entire 70-year captivity, that was being discussed, but a facet of it, i.e., the time of its end. That is the question Daniel wanted answered. The angel focused the period on the reign of Christ, the time involved in our release from this captivity. The angel divided the 70 weeks of years into three eras. All three relate to the world's rule of violence and Christianity's relationship with that violence. And they apply to us today because we are still living in one of the times they describe, at the end of the 2nd and very close to the inception of the 3rd. Gabriel divided the seventy year pagan reign over Jerusalem into two wars separated by a time of relative peace during which the ruins of Jerusalem would be rebuilt. There would be two very harsh battles between pagans and Christians, one at the beginning of Christianity and the other at the end of the faith; and sandwiched between them, a long period of much milder hostility—a period the angel termed, 'the time of trouble'. True to this pattern, the Christian era began with lions and slaughter; then it passed into a long period of relative peace during which Church leaders took dominion over the earth. At the world's conclusion the Christian era will once again be subjected to intense violence, coming to an end under the boot of the beast. The three parts, then, can be seen in the events of our own time. We live today just before the dawn of the second war. This means that we are in the very last minutes of Daniel's sixty-ninth week. In other words, it has been sixty-nine weeks of years since Pentecost, and we have about one week of years to go in the sequence of Daniel's prophecies. All these numbers, the 'weeks of years', of course, are symbolic. They are not meant to be interpreted literally. In fact, the entire book of Daniel has remained hidden since the day of its writing behind an

impenetrable veil by the will of God (Dan. 12:4). Its opening now tells us that the end is near.

The three divisions Gabriel outlined for Daniel match identically the vision seen by John on Patmos which showed the last days consisting of two battles and between them, a period of Gospel rule we call 'the millenium' (because it was scheduled to last for a thousand years). These thousand years relate to the imprisonment of Satan, the essential mechanism that allowed Christianity to rise up and rule the earth during Daniel's "time of trouble"—a Church rule which has made possible the rebuilding of the ruins of Jerusalem over the last 2000 years (Rev.20:1-3). The first of Christianity's three parts, according to John, is the first war (the first battle of the end)—Daniel's 'seven weeks'. The 'thousand years' which John predicted would follow this first war is termed the 'sixty two weeks' in Daniel's prophecy; and then the third part, the time of Satan's release from the Abyss, which John describes as the second war—one week. So we have two different prophets in the company of angels, separated from each other by hundreds of years, and both describing the very same event in two different ways. In John's vision, it is the final week (the second war) that we are now approaching. There is ample evidence surrounding us that Satan's chains have already been removed and he is actively at work in the world once more, mobilizing, as scripture promised, all the nations for war (Rev. 20:7-8).

One thing is clear in the revelation Gabriel gave to Daniel: the tribulation (Daniel's seventieth and last week) is shorter by far than was the first war that launched the sequence (the first conflict lasted seven weeks). This suggests that the Wrath will not last nearly as long as the Christian persecutions which initiated the reign of the Church on earth. This is hopeful because those initial persecutions encompassed a span of at least 300 years. Daniel's prophecies approach the captivity only from the point of view of its termination—beginning with the handwriting on the wall which appeared just a few hours before Babylon's sudden and catastrophic end at the hands of the kings of the East. John's visions are the same as Daniel's, but his time-frame is different. He tells us that the '62 weeks' will last a thousand years. Unlike Daniel, John gives no indication of the length of the two wars bordering the thousand years, but he does describe each war's key events. For instance, of the first war he wrote, *"Then I saw the beast, with all the kings of the earth and their armies, gathered together to fight the rider and his army. But the beast was taken prisoner, together with the false prophet...All the rest were killed by the sword of the rider, which came out of his mouth"* (Rev.19:19-20). It is clear in John's prophecy that the first battle of the end encompasses the violence and opposition of the Jews and Romans to the message preached

by Jesus. The establishment of Christianity in the world was far from easy. For over three hundred years—the years following the crucifixion of Jesus—thousands of Christian believers were crucified or fed to the lions. But, as John saw in his vision, the word of God was a sword that overcame this opposition. The Holy Spirit defeated God's enemies, bringing the first war to an end—and victory to the people of God. Satan was taken prisoner, removed from the earth and locked into the Abyss: *"Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in his hand and an enormous chain. He overpowered the dragon, that primeval serpent which is the devil and Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and shut the entrance and sealed it over him, to make sure he would not deceive the nations again until the thousand years had passed. At the end of that time he must be released, but only for a short while."* (Rev.20:1-3, 2 Thes.2:6-7).

When God had Michael lock Satan in the Abyss, it brought the Christian world to a time of relative peace—a peace, which although troubled, allowed the Gospel of Jesus to be preached across the entire world without the fierce power and opposition of the dragon to thwart it. This action initiated the 'sixty-two weeks'—John's era of a 'thousand years'. This period encompasses the reign of the Gospel on earth, and Satan's incarceration was vital in creating it. During this era of Christian rule, many of the most powerful kings of the earth promoted and encouraged the preaching of God's message to the populations of the world, making these days a time of shining light for all the people. During its troubled term, the ruined 'squares and ramparts' of Jerusalem have been steadily "restored and rebuilt" in 'living stones' (person by person) through the actions of the humble who believed what was preached to them (Dn.9:25, 1 Peter 2:5). Although many people today in their new-found obsession with equanimity for pagan rights would not view the Christian rule of the past in such enlightened and glorified terms, the era fulfilled the will of God. While the world views itself on its own terms—God has a different perspective. As far as God is concerned the planet exists only to make Jesus known to the people. His is a search for the lost people of God, not an attempt to force the nations into righteousness. In the absence of Christian proclamation and conversion, the world will end because its purpose for existence will end. This is the key to everything. The world should have ended as soon as Christ issued His condemnation of it, but only His sacrifice on the cross brought to it a moratorium from extinction. If that treaty of peace is rejected, the stay of execution will be rescinded and the sentence will be carried out without further delay—not by God, but by man himself. The stockpile of hydrogen bombs, the runaway violence and the war machinery held in readiness.

The wickedness of men has spawned all these things and God is letting us know that the same wickedness, when Christian conversion ends, will end the world with it.

The rule of Christ on earth followed the decrees of three Roman emperors: Constantine, Theodosius and Galerius, in the A.D. 300's—decrees which have created on earth an alliance between Christian faith and world-ruling government that has lasted up until our own time, (although dissolving almost entirely over the last 50 years). That dissolution proves that Daniel's '62 weeks' (John's 'thousand years') have probably come to an end. That drastic change now relates to the Revolt, described by Paul (2 Thess. 2:3), but for almost 2000 years most of the dominant ruling powers of this world also carried the banner of Christ. That is why, during the reign of Jesus, the people of the western world over the last 1700 years have witnessed their own leaders bowing down in homage to the Lord, and usually commanding that every person in their respective kingdoms do likewise. The result of this global commitment to Jesus has produced a time of strength for the Church of Jesus Christ on earth—a time of strength described by Daniel as 'the power of the holy people'. This world victory of Christ was clearly prophesied in advance: *"See now, your king comes to you; he is victorious, he is triumphant, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will proclaim peace for the nations. His empire shall stretch from sea to sea, from the River to the ends of the earth."* (Zc.9:9-10).

Even though the time for the rebuilding of Jerusalem has been defined by the prophets, the numbers they have given us are essentially symbolic. The seventy years and the sixty-two weeks are not chronological descriptions. Neither is the 'thousand years' (Joshua 10:13). As far as the actual calendar time of these events is concerned, Jesus said that no one on earth, not even himself, knew the times that God had set for these things to be accomplished. Certainly if Jesus did not know the times, then no one on earth can presume to know them either. In fact, Jesus told His disciples that no person on earth shall ever know the dates and times of the end. He said, *"It is not for you to know times or dates that the Father has decided by His own authority..."* (Acts 1:7). This is a scriptural edict—a divine decree. Therefore anyone who says he knows any date is mistaken; and it proves again that the days and times and dates specified in scripture exist only in metaphors. God's time-line is open ended because God always structures mercy for repentance. Like His warning to Nineveh. Hearing the testimony of Jonah, the people of Nineveh repented and so the terrible things that were destined for Nineveh did not happen. The same is true for each of us, and for the nations, and even for the world itself. Repentance stretches out the time of mercy; but lack of repentance hastens the time of wrath.

PART 3

RECONCILIATION

"I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. To the north I will say, 'Give them up' and to the south, 'Do not hold them'. Bring back my sons from far away, my daughters from the end of the earth, all those who bear my name, whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, whom I have made."

Isaiah 43:5-7

9

Return From the North

"I mean to gather them from all the countries where I have driven them...I will bring them back to this place and make them live in safety. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them a different heart and different behavior..."

Jr.32:37-40

When God's call finally came, petitioning the exiles to return home, it was sounded first to the ears of only one tribe, the Jews. Not even realizing that they were in Babylon, this part of the House of Israel ignored the Lord's offer. Finding His invitation rejected, God then forwarded it to the lost members of all the missing tribes of Israel hidden among the citizens of the North. Forecasting this event, God spoke to Jeremiah and said, *"Jeremiah, what do you see?" "I see a branch of the Watchful Tree" he answered. Then God said, "Well seen! I too watch over my word to see it fulfilled."* A second time the word of God was spoken to Jeremiah, asking, *"What do you see?" "I see a cooking pot on the boil," he answered "with its contents tilting from the North."* Then God said: *"The North is where disaster is boiling over for all who live in this land; since I am going to summon all the kingdoms of the North—it is God who speaks. They are going to come, and each will set his throne in front of the gates of Jerusalem."* (Jer.1:11-15). Jeremiah's shout to the hidden tribes of the North, summoning them out of their exile in Babylon, is the prophetic template for Paul's evangelism of the pagan world in the spread of Christ's message across the earth. The call to Christ initiated the reconstruction of the holy city of Jerusalem in heaven—a call that immediately began the dissolution of the Bible's prophetic '70-year captivity'. As soon as that call was issued, Jacob's tribes no longer had to serve aliens, but were accountable only to God and to the Davidic king Jesus which God had raised up for them (Jer.30:8-9). *"The city shall be rebuilt on its ruins, the citadel restored on its site."* (Jer.30:18). *"Their prince will be one of their own, their ruler come from their own people. I will let him come freely into my presence and he can come close to me..."* (Jer.30:21). The scattering of the House of Israel was made for a rescue—a rescue that Moses could not accomplish. In order to dramatize this essential fact, God forbid Moses to enter the Promised Land after he had led

the Israelites in their long journey out of Egypt. Moses, the maker of templates, here had to make his own as well. When the Holy Spirit blocked Moses from crossing the Jordan river into Palestine with his people, it was so that God could show the world that Moses and the old covenant had no power to take anyone into heaven—into the true Promised Land. At Meribah's waters, Moses had vented a brief moment of arrogance. In his exasperation, he implied that he, personally, was the guide that would lead the House of Israel into the Promised Land of Palestine. But neither he, nor his Law had that kind of power. God, alone, was leading those tribes out of Egypt. This fact had to be highlighted in the Law to show what this journey was leading to—that the true exodus from captivity would be above ministers and above church law. It would be based entirely in Jesus Christ. God allegorized this when He told Moses at the waters of Meribah, *"Because you did not believe that I, myself, could proclaim my holiness in the eyes of the sons of Israel, you shall not lead this assembly into the land I am giving them."* (Num.20:12). The reference, of course, is prophecy because it relates to the future. It speaks of the Jewish rejection of the idea that God could come in person and proclaim His own holiness to eyewitnesses in Israel. The Law of Moses refused Jesus when He appeared, and in that rejection lost its authority to lead. Because he was serving God in biblical metaphor, Moses had to live out the whole metaphor. And it was a metaphor, because while Moses may not have been allowed to touch the soil of Palestine, he had no trouble being chosen for the kingdom of God in heaven. We know for certain that this is true because when the transfiguration of Jesus occurred on Mt. Tabor, Moses was there with him—proof that he had been resurrected (Mt.17:3). So the injunction was brief. An interesting aside here is that while Moses was resurrected, David was not permitted that honor. Peter, speaking on the day of Pentecost, told those assembled before him, *"Brothers, no one can deny that the patriarch David himself is dead and buried: his tomb is still with us...for David himself never went up to heaven..."* (Acts 2:29-34). While David was rejected, Moses was chosen. In that choice, he was granted entrance to the true Promised Land. The land that he was not permitted to enter was merely an allegorical country that God had formed to display His holiness before men.

The rescue God initiated cannot be accomplished by any man-made theology. Jesus did it himself. God has redeemed us in person outside of the Law of Moses. This is what God was preparing the world to see when He chastised Moses at the waters of Meribah. God has called every shepherd to account by taking all the sheep from them and putting Himself alone at the head of the flock. Ezekiel said that God would do this because the shepherds were serving themselves instead of the people they led. *"Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them, 'Shepherds, the Lord God says*

this: Trouble for the shepherds of Israel who feed themselves! Shepherds ought to feed their flock, yet you have fed on milk, you have dressed yourselves in wool, you have sacrificed the fattest sheep, but failed to feed the flock. You have failed to make weak sheep strong, or to care for the sick ones, or bandage the wounded ones. You have failed to bring back strays or look for the lost. On the contrary, you have ruled them cruelly and violently. Therefore I am calling the shepherds to account. I am going to take my flock back from them and I shall not allow them to feed my flock. In this way the shepherds will stop feeding themselves. I shall rescue my sheep from their mouths. I am going to look after my flock myself and keep all of it in view. I shall rescue them from wherever they have been scattered during the mist and darkness. I shall bring them out of the countries where they are; I shall gather them together from foreign countries and bring them back to their own land. I myself will show them where to rest. I shall look for the lost one, bring back the stray, bandage the wounded and make the weak strong. I shall be a true shepherd to them." (Ez.34). It was this call in the faith of Jesus Christ that returned the 10 missing tribes of Israel to God and made them the underlying framework of the Christian Church. They have all returned to Jerusalem in fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy, and there they have erected their thrones in front of the city's gates (Jer.1:15).

As the scattering predicted by Moses was nearing completion, the one tribe remaining in Jerusalem (the Jews) settled into sole possession of the covenant of Moses. When this last tribe returned briefly from its own exile—a 70 year slavery in the land of Babylon—they set out to restructure the covenant according to their own tastes. Ezra, the leader who had been chosen to spearhead this return, defined three concepts which now underpin all Jewish theology. These were, the 'chosen race', the 'Law' and the 'Temple'. Ezra's thoughts on these three ideas changed Hebrew theology, transforming it from its 12-tribe roots into the one-tribe Jewish religion we are familiar with today. The idea of the 'chosen race' was simple. The other tribes had disappeared leaving only the Jews to reclaim the land of Palestine. For this reason, they saw themselves as the sole heirs to the covenant. It is this misconception, more than any other, that has really defined the separation between the two Houses of Israel. As we have already seen, the Jews were not God's favorites at all—they were not sole heirs—they were simply the last tribe to be exiled. To counter such errors, and correct them in scripture, God sent, first the prophets, and finally, Jesus Himself. Paul has discussed in great detail Ezra's obsession with the Law, and Jeremiah was equally definitive as far as Temple obsession was concerned (Jer.7). Ezekiel attacked the idea that God loved the Jews best: *"Son of man, the citizens of Jerusalem (the Jews) are telling the rest of the House of Israel, that since they (the other tribes) were sent away from God, that it is to them*

(the Jews) that the land has been given as their domain. Say therefore, The Lord says this: 'Yes, I have sent them (the other tribes) far away among the nations and I have dispersed them to foreign countries...but I will gather them together from among the peoples, I will bring them all back from the countries where they have been scattered and I will give them the land of Israel.' (Ez.11:14-21). With their minds set on Ezra's ideas, the Jewish leaders ignored this prophecy. The idea of a 'chosen race' appealed to their sense of religious separation, an appeal they refused to part with. So the return had to come in the form of a spiritual invasion from the North (Jer.5:15-17). The Jews saw themselves as God's special race—a race created in the genes of divine favor—and therefore, as a people more special to God than any other on earth. In this reasoning they saw themselves as separate from all other people, including even the other eleven tribes. They viewed any attempt at reconciliation a contamination of their religious purity. But God had decreed that a reunion would take place. And so it will.

The Jewish religion in the first century had become very material. Growing far away from spiritual concepts like 'love of neighbor' and 'duty to the poor', it had even left behind the Ten Commandments. Instead, it became absorbed in genes and sacrifices. Those with the right chromosomes belonged to the chosen race of God and those who lacked these special genes were called 'gentiles' and were considered subordinate. This kind of thinking put them at odds with the prophets whose messages were all about God's rescue of the lost tribes. Because they had forgotten what Sinai was all about, the prophets had to remind the Jews that the covenant of Moses was temporary and that God intended to dismiss it at the appropriate time and replace it with a new one (Jer. 31:31-34)—one that would favor the exiles over the Jews: *"Look how they have rejected the word of God! So what use is their wisdom to them? 'So I will give their wives to other men, their fields to new masters, for all, least no less than greatest, all are out for dishonest gain; prophet no less than priest, all practice fraud."* (Jer.8:9-10). Bringing substance to this prophecy, Jesus told his stunned audience that God intended to lease the vineyard to new tenants. *"I tell you, then, that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit."* (Mt.21:43). Jesus threw out genes and sacrifices, and replaced these concepts with God's spiritual values based on universal love. This is why Jeremiah was told by God to *"face the North"* and broadcast his prophecies away from the Jews and out toward the lost tribes instead (Jer.3:11-13).

"I will bring you all back from the countries where you have been scattered and I will give you the land of Israel. They will come and will purge it of all the horrors and the filthy

practices. I will give them a single heart and I will put a new spirit in them...then they shall be my people and I will be their God." (Ez.11:17-21). We can see in Ezekiel's prophecy that the 'return from the North' was to be spiritual—not genetic. It would feature a return to righteous ethic. People living in sin were called to renounce their past lives and try to be good, using the commandments of Jesus as the guidepost to their new behavior. The lost tribes of Israel, then, were lost only in sin. Those who renounced this corruption in the name of Christ's righteousness were found by God and brought home. Hidden in a widely scattered dispersion among the nations of the North, God's 'lost' tribes waited for the spiritual call which would release them from their concealed captivity and make them once more visible in the world. This spiritual call, known in scripture as the 'ingathering' (Ez.37:21), is the exodus of the New Covenant—an exodus not from a specific location like Egypt, but from a metaphoric 'Babylon'—because God has recovered these lost tribes spiritually, not racially (Gal.3:27-29). Preparing the way for this flight out of Babylon, God told Jeremiah, *"So go and shout these words towards the North: 'Come back, disloyal Israel—it is God who speaks—I shall frown on you no more, since I am merciful...Repent."* (Jer.3:12). The scattered people to whom these words were addressed constituted all the nations, according to Jeremiah, that were destined to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the ruins of Zion in accordance with the new covenant. Everything in the Old Testament was pointing to the appearance of the Messiah—to the appearance of Jesus Christ—the 'David' of prophecy (Ez.34:23-25)—and to the changing of the covenants. Because of this, what these prophecies actually describe is the birth and growth of Christianity in its spread across the world. As we have seen, the ruins that had to be rebuilt were caused by sin and so they could only be rebuilt by a change in behavior—a change made manifest through conversion from sin into the righteousness of Jesus. There was no 'master race', but there was a master behavior. Jeremiah was calling these lost tribes of Israel to re-establish righteousness in the world through holy living in the faith of Jesus Christ. What he was not doing was calling them to rebuild a physical nation in Palestine. This became more and more obvious as history unfolded—a history which saw the city of Jerusalem in Palestine continue to lie in ruins, dominated not by the Christian Church, but by Arab Muslims instead. Jeremiah's words pointed, not to a physical invasion of Judah, but to a 'spiritual invasion' of Judaism's authority—an assault which would see the scattered tribes once hidden in the north take dominion over God's vineyard.

Complicating this picture, the Bible has decreed that because of sin, another group of nations arising from the north is also prophesied to come against Jerusalem. *"Look, I am going to make Jerusalem an intoxicating cup to all the surrounding peoples...When that day*

comes, I mean to make Jerusalem a stone to be lifted by all the peoples; all who try to lift it will hurt themselves severely." (Zc.12:2-3). These are the nations of Armageddon. This interweaving of Christian nations returning from a lost exile in the north with foreign nations at the end basically chasing them there is a type of dualism in scripture which, although very common, makes the Old Testament prophecies seem confusing when superficially read. Adding to that confusion, many times the verses describe both events simultaneously—the same way the Christian word 'Parousia' can mean either the appearance of the beast at the end of time or the 'Second Coming' of Jesus Christ. The early Christians, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, used a single word because both occurrences were two parts of the same event. This is a classic example of scripture's admonition that *"all the works of God go in pairs by opposites."* (Sir. 33:14-15). It is the same with Jeremiah. God instructed Jeremiah to announce to the Jews, *"I am bringing you disaster from the North, an immense calamity. The lion is up from his thicket, the destroyer of nations is on his way, he has come from his home to reduce your land to a desert..."* (Jer.4:6-7). *"Give warning of it,, announce it in Judah, proclaim it to Jerusalem: 'Enemies are coming from a distant country, shouting their war cry against the towns of Judah; they surround Jerusalem like watchmen round a field because she has apostatised from me—it is God who speaks'."* (Jer.4:16-17). These words of scripture involve both pairs and opposites. Steeped in wickedness, Judah is destined to be assaulted on two fronts, one spiritual and represented by the transformation of the covenants, and the other physical and represented by the hostile nations of the world. These latter attacks represent the seven 'successive devastations' of Jerusalem by paganism predicted by scripture (Dn.9:2). *"The whole land shall be devastated and reduced to a desert, while they will stay in slavery among the nations for seventy years (But when the seventy years are over, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation for the wrong they have done; and I will punish the land of Babylon too, and make it a desert forever."* (Jer.25:11-13). Participating in this terminal punishment of Babylon by God, Jerusalem will endure one final assault (its eighth)—the gathering of the nations at the end of time. *"The Lord will gather all the nations to Jerusalem for battle."* (Zech.14:2). In our time, the prophecies concerning the 'seventy years' have been fulfilled almost completely. On one side have come the victorious 'new tenants' of Christ's Covenant—the 'lost' tribes of Israel hidden in the seven churches of Christianity. They have erected their tents around Jerusalem's gates. At the same time, foreign invaders to the north of Judea have come down and laid siege to the land and the people. First the Romans, and later three fierce and war-minded armies spurred to action by Mohammed. Through the eyes of history, we have been able to watch these events occur simultaneously. In two massive assaults, the Roman army completely devastated Judah and took most of the Jews in Palestine into foreign exile. Jews

were banished from the city of Jerusalem— forbidden even to visit the city as pilgrims. Burning Herod's temple to the ground, the Romans replaced Jewish and Christian worship sites with pagan altars. On the site of Calvary and the tomb of Jesus they built a temple honoring Jupiter, Juno and Venus; and on the rock of Abraham—the site of the Jewish temple, they erected a sanctuary to Zeus and Hadrian (the latter signifying emperor worship). The Romans also desecrated the cave at Bethlehem with a grove in honor of Adonis. Although expected, none of this precipitated Armageddon. Instead, as the Roman empire converted into the Christian faith, the pagan altars disappeared and in their place rose altars for the worship of Jesus Christ. The spiritual invasion from the North and its physical counterpart had merged into the will of God. Daniel has shown that there is a fourth kingdom of Persia still to come (Dan. 11:2; 7:7-8), one that will bring Armageddon, so this process is not yet at an end.

About 280 years after Jesus was crucified, Constantine's mother, a devout follower of Jesus, got approval from her son, the emperor of Rome, to turn the city of Jerusalem into a holy Christian shrine. Making many pilgrimages to the city, she filled it with churches. Among these were the Church of the Last Supper and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. There were no Jews in Jerusalem to protest these Christian actions because they had been banished from the city 200 years earlier in the aftermath of their disastrous defeat at the hands of the Roman army. There were no Muslims there at the time either, since Mohammed, himself, would not be born for another 300 years. And that is about the length of time the Christian 'peace' which settled over Jerusalem lasted—about 3 centuries. Then came the east wind. Capturing the temple mount and drying up the land in fulfillment of prophecy (2 Chron.7:20-22), this eastern blast came in the searing heat of the Muslim empire about 1400 years ago. As it blew across the Middle East, it brought an end to the advance of Christianity throughout much of this area. In the aftermath of this east wind, while the camps set up in Jerusalem by Constantine's mother survived, most of the population of the city were encouraged by their captors to follow the ways of Mohammed. And the sacred Jewish Temple Mount—the rock of Abraham—went with them. This catastrophic loss, unrecovered to this day, fulfilled the prediction of Jesus, *"So be it! Your house will be left to you desolate..."* (Mt.23:38). Long ago Moses first announced this coming desolation when he predicted that after all the tribes of Israel had been cast out of the Promised Land, it was destined to lay in quiet ruins for a long, long time—as a witness to the world of its emptiness. *"I will scattter you among the nations. I will unsheathe the sword against you to make your land a waste and your towns a ruin. Then the land will observe its sabbaths indeed, lying desolate there, while you are in the land of your enemies."* (Lev.26:33-34).

This is exactly what happened. Shattered to pieces, and left in ruins soon after Jesus died, the land and its capitol city ultimately fell into the hands of Muslim invaders who have continued to hold Jerusalem in their grasp almost to the present day. *"Zion will become ploughland, Jerusalem a heap of rubble, and the mountain of the temple a wooded height."* (Micah 3:12). Although Michael is destined on the last day to make a triumphant entry into this city, the Jerusalem of Palestine is never going to return to its past glory. The devastations of Jerusalem which are destined to continue right up until just before the Return of Christ will see to that. In the end, the city we see today in Palestine will disappear with the earth in the blast of the final judgment. The true Jerusalem of God is in a kingdom far away, not of this earth, said Jesus. Our journey in Christ, then, is not to any city on this planet.

While the Muslim presence in Jerusalem has dominated that city for 14 centuries, a strong Christian presence has been felt there as well. Sandwiched in the middle of all of Jerusalem's troubles, the churches of Christianity have encouraged many to follow Christ's peace in the Holy Land. For the most part, this has been a quiet peace humbly practiced for centuries in poor villages in the visage of the Gospel. *"Then indeed the land will rest and observe its sabbaths. And as it lies desolate it will rest..."* (Lv.26:34-35). So despite the fact that the kings of the east long ago subjugated Jerusalem and took possession of the rock of Abraham, Christian churches continue to dot the Judean landscape, and a faithful segment of the population there quietly follow the Christian faith. For this reason, the gathering of the nations against the Jerusalem of Palestine can still be seen both in terms of its enemies and its liberators. The victory of the people of the north over an unrepentant Judah is evident in both. On one side, all the churches of Christ proclaiming the spiritual victory of Jesus from the camps (churches) that they have set up around Jerusalem, and on the other, the nations of this world gathering to try to destroy the people of God. It is this kind of dualism that makes the prophecies of scripture often appear so confusing, but it simply confirms the nature of a world divided into two parts by the sword of God's word. On one side is the gathering of the nations in the faith of Christ and on the other, the gathering of nations who have rejected that faith. The city of Jerusalem is to be the focal point of both assemblies.

While the foreign nations are destined in the end to chase the last Christian refuges to the Jerusalem of Palestine, the people of God have all taken a different route. Jesus has led them to His spiritual kingdom that is not of this earth. So all these prophecies have a true focus that is entirely spiritual. The armies of God's salvation are all the spiritual nations and kingdoms of the north that have returned to proclaim Christ's victory by setting up their

thrones in front of the spiritual gates of Jerusalem. These are the 'nations' who have rallied themselves to the defense of Christ, and now form the spiritual nations of Jeremiah's prophecy. To the Jews this horde of churches descending on Jerusalem from the north appears to be an immense calamity (Jer.4:6) because it demonstrates that God has leased the vineyard to new tenants (Mt.21:43). It means Shiloh all over again (Jer.7:11-15). Only this time the change involves the Jews, not the Ephraimites, and because it passes the sceptre to all the missing tribes, it is much more sweeping. These invasions show that God has changed the covenants. He has fulfilled the scriptures, doing exactly what He predicted (Jer.31:31-34). Even so, it is not the Jews who have been vanquished in this assault, it is wickedness. In changing the guard from Moses to Christ, God has saved all His people, Jew and pagan alike. *"...have the Jews fallen forever, or have they just stumbled? Obviously they have not fallen forever: their fall, though, has saved the pagans in a way the Jews may now well emulate. Think of the extent to which the world, the pagan world, has benefited from their fall and defection—then think how much more it will benefit from the conversion of them all."* (Romans 11:11-12).

Jesus, the king of the Jews, was sold to Babylon for 30 pieces of silver. And it was because of this sale that He was able to rescue His people from Babylon. His story follows closely the allegory of Joseph in the Old Testament, showing that Joseph's life had been a prophecy of Christ from the beginning. Sold by his brothers into Egyptian slavery, Joseph came to the attention of the Egyptian Pharaoh who put him in charge of Egypt's food supply—a storehouse which, through his skill, he was able to make plentiful during a terrible world famine. The rest of the House of Israel would have perished in this famine had they not gone down to Egypt where they were forgiven by Joseph and given the food that saved their lives. This story is an obvious allegory pointing us to Jesus and to the food supply of God: communion and the Word of Christ. In the same way that Pharaoh had placed Joseph in charge of all food in Egypt, the emperor of Babylon (Constantine and the emperors following him) put Jesus in charge of Rome's 'food supply'—the spiritual food of God that imparts eternal life. Rome decreed that this food of Christ be distributed to the world it ruled, guaranteeing that edict by making Christianity the state religion of the empire. That is why the whole spiritual House of Israel had to go to Babylon—because they had all become heirs to the allegory of Joseph. With the decrees of Constantine and Theodosius, the food of God was publicly and preferentially offered in Babylon—to anyone who wanted it. It was Constantine in 313 A.D. who legalized Christianity in the Roman empire, becoming himself a Christian; and Theodosius 78 years later (in 391 A.D.) who, by royal decree, made the Christian religion mandatory as the belief system for the civilized world, which he then ruled.

As a part of this decree, the Roman emperor officially banned paganism and its temples and practices throughout all the lands that Rome controlled. The House of Israel was forced by God to leave Palestine, then, because of the spiritual famine created in the city of Jerusalem by its rejection of Jesus Christ. This is why the Holy Spirit, long before, had Micah decree that the entire rescue of the House of Israel must take place in Babylon. *"Writhe, cry out daughter of Zion, for now you have to leave the city and live in the open country. To Babylon you must go and there you will be rescued; There God will ransom you out of the power of your enemies."* (Micah 4:10). For this reason, the only people who can bring the light of God back into the cities of Palestine have to come from Babylon, returning out of exile with the truth of Christ. Today, the land of Palestine is filled with the camps of these refugees—churches which have come from all over the world to broadcast the message of Jesus in Jerusalem. Those messages are muted somewhat today because of Jewish rules, but they continue to be broadcast. Even so, despite the return of all the messengers who have brought Christ's Gospel back from Babylon, those who rule Jerusalem have persistently refused to acknowledge His truth, and will continue to do so until the time the coded message is broadcast (Mat. 23:39).

As we have seen, Jerusalem's restoration in our time has not brought this city into the obedience of Christ. The increasing resentment of its Muslim and Jewish citizens to the Gospel of Jesus Christ confirms that the Jerusalem of Palestine still remains unrepentant and unconverted despite all the disasters it has experienced. Jeremiah foresaw this when he said that the restoration of Jerusalem to Jewish control in the last days would not be a sign of the city's repentance in the Lord. Isaiah agreed (Is. 22:8-12). The prophecies of its restoration are all pointing to something else—to Judgment. God is making Jerusalem a magnet for the nations in preparation for a great trial which is destined to be held high in the sky above Jerusalem on the earth's final day. Jerusalem's ongoing rebellion is why scripture shows that the city is destined in the end to be destroyed in the same fire that is to consume the world. *"Raise the wail and lamentation for the mountains, the dirge for the desert pastures, for they have been burnt: no one passes there, the sound of flocks is heard no more. I mean to make Jerusalem a heap of ruins, a jackals' lair, and the town of Judah an uninhabited wasteland. Who is wise enough to understand this? Who has been charged by God's own mouth to tell why the land lies in ruins, burnt like the desert where no one passes?"* (Jer.9:9-11). *"Yes, thus speaks God, 'The whole land shall be laid waste, I will make an end of it once and for all; at which the earth will go into mourning, and the heavens above grow dark. For I have spoken and will not change my mind, I have decided and will not go back on it'"* (Jer.4:27-28). Just ahead of this final devastation, those who thought that the entire

inheritance was theirs alone will be rescued last of all. At that point, the return of Israel from the territory of the 'North' (from the place called 'Babylon') will be completed in far-away skies where the new Jerusalem of heaven is to reside forever in peace and tranquility.

10

The Peace Treaty

"Listen; the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem; he carried away the king and the princes, and took them to where he lives in Babylon. He took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him...so that the kingdom would remain modest and without ambition and so maintain his treaty faithfully."

Ez.17:12-14

The reign of the Church was made possible by a treaty of peace structured between God and this world—a treaty sealed in the blood of Christ. When Jesus went to the cross in our name, his action initiated a formal treaty of peace between the world and God—a treaty designed to give life to the world by holding back the wrath long enough for those who want to escape, to do so in safety. The treaty does two things. First, it offers eternal life to anyone who desires it, and second, it holds back the vengeance of the last days. In both of these actions the treaty has lengthened the term of life. Delaying the wrath, it has offered the world a short period of reprieve from disaster—a reprieve which has given each of us time to escape the catastrophe of the Law's decree. The crucifixion of Jesus, then, can be seen in two ways. Traditionally, as the mechanism creating a new everlasting contract to be manifested in heaven between God and those who accept His Son as their savior, and second, as a temporary reprieve for this world from the ultimate consequences of sin. Because it has a dual purpose, this treaty has two distinct parts. We can see in the elements of the Law that each of these two parts has its own priesthood and its own form of worship. One is spiritual and the other physical (liturgical)—and each are structured in one of the two natures of Jesus—true man and true God. One aspect of Christ's treaty is manifested in the physical ministry of the church, and the other in ourselves—in the spiritual ministry we carry out inside our own hearts. Both perpetuate the treaty in their own way. This may all sound very theological and to a large degree it is because it relates to a treaty of peace between God and this world which is very legal—a treaty which offers life through baptism because Jesus went to a physical cross in our name. Just as the life of the world is tied up in this agreement, so is its death. This is why the liturgical elements of the treaty (especially the perpetual sacrifice) play such an important role in Daniel's prophecies about the last days. If

the treaty is rejected, its offer will be withdrawn—an event Daniel darkly foresees for our future. This will terminate the power that holds back the Wrath and allow sin to bring the world to the End that Jesus predicted for it. By examining the liturgical elements of Christ's offer of peace to the world the hidden meaning behind Daniel's description's of what is to come can be better understood. The symbol of Christ's treaty is the cross, and while our liturgical acceptance of the cross is baptism, the sacrifice that makes it all possible is perpetuated by holy communion. Because it perpetuates the offer of the cross to the world, communion perpetuates the treaty. That is why it is evident in Daniel's words that when the Rebel of the last days decides to attack the altar of the communion sacrifice, he will at the same time terminate God's offer of peace to the world. Pulling down the cross, he will erect in its place above the altar something that has power only to bring death. For those unable to understand the liturgical mysteries, the words of Daniel still remain an enigma—one that seems somehow Jewish. But Daniel's words relate to Jesus, not Moses. Christ's treaty is offered, not from Jerusalem, but from Babylon. *"Writhe, cry out daughter of Zion...for now you have to leave the city and live in the open country. To Babylon you must go and there you will be rescued; There God will ransom you out of the power of your enemies."* (Micah 4:10). Our rescue can only take place in the wilderness of Babylon. This means that it can only take place outside the covenant and community of Moses. God has created the path that leads to heaven in the wild countries that lie outside of Jerusalem. *"No need to recall the past, no need to think about what was done before. See, I am doing a new deed, even now it comes to light; can you not see it? Yes, I am making a road in the wilderness, paths in the wilds. The wild beasts will honor me...because I am putting water in the wilderness (rivers in the wild) to give my chosen people drink. The people I have formed for myself will sing my praises."* (Is.43:18-21).

Heralding this foreign distribution of salvation, Ezekiel prophesied that the king of Babylon would come down to Jerusalem and carry away the king of the Jews, together with all of the leading princes, and take them to where he lived in Babylon (Ez.17:12-14). This prophecy came true when, in 598 B.C., the new young Jewish king, Jehoiachin, who had reigned for only 3 months was exiled with his mother to Babylon. But this prophecy saw far beyond Jehoiachin and his queen mother. *"All Judah has been deported, deported wholesale."* (Jer.13:19). Since, as we have already seen, the final dispersion of the people of God to Babylon occurred just after the crucifixion of Christ, the king of the Jews in Ezekiel's prophecy had to be Jesus, crowned only moments earlier by Pontius Pilate. It was Herod (an Idumaen Arab who had no Jewish blood in him at all) who was king over the Jews when Jesus first appeared. Herod's appointment as 'king of the Jews' came, not from

his genetic lineage, but from Rome—by imperial decree. This showed that a decree by Roman authorities was more important in determining the monarchy of Judea in the first century than either family background or genetic lineage. That is why Pilate's action with respect to Jesus was so important. Jesus became a member of the Jewish royal family in the same way that Herod did. The same kind of Roman authority that gave Herod his royal appointment over the Jews ordered the inscription, *'This is the King of the Jews'* written on top of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified (Jn.19:19). Instinctively realizing what this meant, the Jewish leaders ran to Pilate and begged him to change the inscription to read that this was Jesus' opinion rather than an imperial decree, but Pilate refused to change it. God locked on, and it was done.

As king of the Jews, Jesus had full authority, both in heaven and on earth to enter into the treaty between God and Babylon in the name of the House of Israel. The treaty bound the Israelites into the servitude of their worldly captors—a servitude in which Paul said, *"We have to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions."* (Tit.2:11-12). This is a servitude which has lasted now for almost 2000 years and has involved all 12 tribes of Israel: *"Look, the king of Babylon came to Jerusalem...he took a member of the royal family and made a treaty with him...so that the kingdom would remain modest and without ambition and so maintain his treaty faithfully."* (Ez.17:12-14). In ratifying this treaty—an action taken by Constantine when he came to the throne—the king of Babylon *"pardoned the king of the Jews and released him from prison"* thereby completing the prophecy. This royal Roman 'pardon' is the essence of the Edict of Milan. *"He treated him kindly and allotted him a seat above those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. And his upkeep was permanently insured by the king of Babylon for the rest of his life, day after day until his dying day."* (Jer.52:31-34). For Babylon's part, the treaty which binds the people of God into its perpetual captivity offers a temporary reprieve from death. For the Lord's part, however, the treaty exists solely for the purpose of the reconciliation of mankind with God—a reconciliation that dates back to a separation which occurred at the time of the Garden of Eden. Jesus went to the cross to offer his body in atonement for the sentence of death that Satan imposed on each of us when he corrupted Adam and Eve.

Because the dispersion of God's people into Babylon is such an essential feature in the prophecies—hints of it stemming all the way back to Moses—it is clear that sin was leading us to this second exile from the beginning. Sinfulness could not be cured by the Mosaic covenant. For this reason, the rescue of the Lord's people from this world could only come through the direct and personal involvement of God Himself in the process. Man

alone had no power to effect divine redemption. *"But man could never redeem himself or pay his ransom to God: it costs so much to redeem his life, it is beyond him; how then could he live on forever and never see the Pit—?"* (Ps.49:7-9). The Law of Moses had decreed that redemption was essential for the forgiveness of sin, yet it also decreed that such redemption was beyond the means of mortal priests to accomplish. The Law and the Prophets made it clear that no sacrificial animal on earth in its defective mortality was perfect enough to satisfy the terms of the Hebrew covenant in such a way that it could cleanse the human race of sin. This is why God sent us Jesus Christ—His own perfect Son. *"We thought of him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed."* (Is.53:4-5). When Jesus went to the cross on our behalf, it was more than one man (Jesus) making atonement for the sins of another (Adam). Jesus on the cross was God on the cross. This was attested to by the Law. *"The rite of atonement must be performed by the priest who has been anointed and installed to officiate in place of his father."* (Lv.16:32). This means that when Jesus became the atonement sacrifice demanded by the Law, he took the cross as God, in God's place. In this perfection, Christ's sacrifice initiated a treaty of peace between mankind and God. *"When that day comes I will make a treaty on her behalf with the wild animals..."* (Hos.2:20). The wild animals in this prophecy, of course, represent the pagan kings of Babylon. In a wider sense, however, when we are born into Babylon's captivity we are *all* born into some aspect of this 'wildness'. On earth God has imprisoned our souls in the bodies of wild animals, and the war that burns within us when we are baptized in His name is the conflict that rages inside our hearts once the Holy Spirit enters us and attempts to throw the wildness of Babylon out of us. *"I will break bow, sword and battle in the country, and make her sleep secure."* (Hos.2:20).

In His treaty of peace, God has offered salvation and reconciliation from the exile in return for mankind's repentance and conversion. *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand"* (Mt.4:17). The Bible says that Jesus preached *'a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.'* (Mt.4:17). Scripture shows that repentance is the mechanism that activates the power of the cross, proving that contrition is an essential aspect of the covenant. *"At last I admitted to you that I had sinned; no longer concealing my guilt, I said, 'I will go to the Lord and confess my fault'. And you God, you have forgiven the wrong I did, have pardoned my sin."* (Ps.32:5). Jesus did not change the basic rules specified for cleansing in the old covenant (1 Kings 8:30-51). Confession and repentance are still essential elements of redemption (Mk.1:4-5), but these elements work now only because Jesus initiated a sacrifice

that could give them meaning. The reign of the Gospel in the world is the period of time that God has structured for people to repent of their sins and be forgiven in Jesus' name. And it all works because of the treaty. Since scripture teaches that there is no forgiveness outside of Jesus (Jn.3:36), the reign of Christ in this world is the only time that divine forgiveness is possible. It is only possible while the treaty remains in effect. Because Daniel's words apply to a time when the treaty itself will be violated, his book describes the way in which the world will finally turn God's offer down and thereby open the floodgates to all the unfortunate things this treaty has blocked.

As we showed earlier, a fundamental purpose of God's treaty is to hold back the tribulations of the last days. These terrors constitute the wrath of the Law—a wrath which is described throughout the scriptures and which now threatens to put an end to the world we know. Essentially, this wrath is a precursor to Armageddon and all the events which are associated with it. Jesus confirmed the condemnation of this world by the Law because of sin, but with his death on the cross, he was able to hold back the execution of that sentence for a time and thus offer a moratorium to the decree in order to give the people a way to escape its sentence. This moratorium constitutes a stay of execution—a stay Jesus had to die on the cross in order to initiate. The world continues to live today only because the stay is in place. *"Creation is maintained by your rulings."* (Ps. 119:91). As long as the terms of the treaty are maintained, human life can continue on earth. If the treaty is transgressed, the stay of execution will be reversed and the earth will come to an end in the blaze of fire decreed. This correlates with the words of Daniel which stipulate that the final end will come as a result of the 'abomination of desolation' erected by the beast in the name of the world and placed in the cathedral of God in place of the treaty of peace—an abomination which cancels the offer of Christ's treaty and voids its protective shield.

In order to understand this, we need to examine the elements of this treaty in detail. We have already seen that the Church has established a type of sacrifice on earth which manifests and perpetuates Christ's treaty of peace in liturgical terms. This is the offering of communion by the Church to the world. It is an offer of reconciliation made freely to everyone in the world who wants to come and join in the feast offered by God. While the feast of heaven is the Gospel Jesus preached, communion symbolizes this meal liturgically. Christ's sacrifice on the cross was authorized by God Himself, and the perpetuation of the memory of His sacrifice is structured by the Church according to Christ's own directives at the Last Supper (1 Cor.11:23-34). Thus we have two elements closely related and both a part of the peace treaty. Violation of either one can precipitate disaster. Paul proved this

when he showed that the feast of communion has a special kind of power all its own—a power to kill or physically make sick anyone who does not treat this meal with proper respect (1 Cor.11:28-32). As Pharaoh discovered at the time of Moses, anything that tries to stand in the way of God's feast will come against the full wrath of heaven. To show this more clearly, we will briefly explore the liturgy that surrounds communion itself. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Hebrew Law constructed by Moses was a template upon which all the rules governing the relationship between God and man were structured. God gave Moses full authority to make the template. This is why Jesus kept the rules and words of the Old Testament so carefully. Yet the Mosaic liturgy was a copy—not the finished product. Moses had created the Law as a *model* of what God had shown him on the holy mountain. Therefore the Law of Moses was a reflection of God's truth, not perfection itself. We see Jesus as having fulfilled the Law metaphorically, because he kept these scriptures according to God's design and not according to the popular interpretation of the Sanhedrin. But in fact, the actual metaphor was Moses. The Law of Moses was the model, and Jesus was the reality behind of that model. All the animal sacrifices and bloodletting for atonement in the Hebrew Law related to the single sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. God did not want those animals killed. *"When I brought your ancestors out of the land of Egypt, I said nothing to them, gave them no orders about sacrifice. These were my orders: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you shall be my people. Follow right to the end the way that I mark out for you, and you will prosper."* (Jer.7:22-23). According to the prophets, the Israelites sacrificed no animals at all during their entire forty year journey across Sinai during the life of Moses: *"Did you bring me sacrifice and oblation in the wilderness for all those forty years, House of Israel?"* (Amos 5:25). They couldn't. They had no animals to sacrifice. The desert had no grazing land and food was so scarce they had to depend on God to send manna down from heaven in order for them to eat. It was the priest's interpretation of Moses' vision on the holy mountain that would later lead to the great ritual of animal sacrifices in the Jewish temple. What Moses saw, but did not comprehend, was Jesus crucified. The sin offering in Moses' Law pointed directly to God's peace treaty with the world that would later be made manifest through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. This is why when Jesus, as the high priest of the atonement chosen by God, offered himself as the ultimate sin-offering, he brought the world a treaty of peace in God's name (Hos.2:20). By its terms, his death on the cross takes sin away for all who believe in him and are baptized in his offer.

Communion perpetuates the offer and keeps the treaty alive. It also structures the model for Daniel's 'perpetual sacrifice', allowing the ministers of the church to make a

perpetual offering of the crucified flesh of Jesus to the people of the world on a regular basis. In Greek and Latin churches, whose combined membership constitutes more than 2/3rd of the Christian Body on earth, this offering is conducted continuously. In these churches communion is celebrated several times a day in every time zone, so that at any hour of the day or night, it is continuously being offered at some place on earth. And it is this fact that makes its offering truly *perpetual*. Because this aspect of the treaty is legal, it must be recapitulated in a legal way. The perpetual offering of communion in the churches fulfills that necessity. Christ's offering epitomizes those found in the Law of Moses where the whole meaning of temple worship was the sacrifice of food to God. In the Mosaic offerings, the animals were made holy through consecration on the altar by the priest and then offered up to God in sacrifice. This sacred conversion of animals to holy food was the entire function of the Jewish temple. But God changed the Lamb. Every one of these ancient Jewish sacrifices was re-focused into one single feast in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Instead of mankind sacrificing food to God, God sacrificed Himself for us in the person of Jesus, and offered us His body and blood as the holy food of heaven. In this way, Jesus reversed the temple offering. Instead of us offering food to God, God offered food to us. That food is God's Gospel. All the sacrifices in the Hebrew liturgy (collectively called the feast of Moses) were only metaphors of the one true feast that God had prepared for the world from the beginning. In its spiritual form (word) it gives us eternal life, but in its physical form this meal perpetuates the peace treaty that now exists between the world and God.

That is why an understanding of this Christian mystery is so essential in order to comprehend the processes which are soon going to occur—processes directly related to the blasphemy of this feast (Dn.9:27). And it goes even deeper than that. The fire of the last days is itself, in fact, a legal response structured in the Law of Moses. The directives of the Law of Moses specify that the liturgical 'sin-offering' has to be eaten, or it has to be consumed by fire. *"It is because it had not been eaten that the sin-offering was burnt up."* (Lv.10:16-17). The sin-offering is the body of the crucified Christ. This is the perpetual sacrifice—the sacrifice offered in Church in the form of communion. The final fire of the end-time, then, will be a part of the Law. It will come in response to the desecration of the altar of communion. The divine purpose of the fire from heaven at the end of the Wrath will be to burn up the uneaten (rejected) sin-offering in accordance with the specifications of the Law. Communion and the treaty it perpetuates is international. Every nation on earth belongs to God, not just Judah. *"No nation is excluded from God's ownership."* (Ps.82:8). The offer of communion is an offer made by God to the whole world, a fact which shows

that all the nations of the earth are bound by the terms of Christ's treaty of peace, not just the House of Israel; that is why the entire planet must suffer the penalty of the treaty's rejection.

Because Jesus stood in place of God when he was crucified (Lev.16:32), the spiritual body he gave us to eat was not just his own body, but God's. This is the essential meaning behind communion—God's bread of life is God's own flesh. Because Jesus came to us in two natures—true man and true God—this bread exists in two forms. As true man, one form of this bread is physical and represents Christ's crucified flesh (the sin-offering). This is the part of Jesus that is offered in liturgical communion. As true God, the other part of the bread of Jesus is spiritual and exists as the Gospel he preached (the peace-offering). "*My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work.*" (Jn.4:34). This is the part of Jesus we take into us when we obey His word. God gave us not one, but two foods in Jesus Christ. In both natures he is God, but one nature is for the life of this world while the other is for life in heaven. In His crucified body we die to sin and in His spiritual body we are born into an eternal life of peace. Scripture tells us that God is word. This means that the Gospel (spiritual communion) is an even greater meal than the Eucharist (liturgical communion). In fact, the Gospel is the whole meaning of the Eucharist. The fact that communion is offered in two forms (as bread and wine) confirms the dual nature of God's holy meal.

In the Law of Moses there were two priesthods. One for the inner chamber of the temple and the other for its outer chamber. The Holy Spirit inspired the formation of these two priesthods so that they could point to the twin offerings of the holy food of Jesus Christ—two priesthods to consecrate the two natures of the food Jesus offered us. One form of this sacrificial food of God is consecrated by the ministers in church when they offer us the bread and wine of communion; and the other is consecrated by ourselves when we live the Gospel. Thus Christianity holds again to the Mosaic template. The highest priesthood is internal and encompasses us all (1 Peter 2:9), while the lower priesthood is liturgical and can be seen in the services of the various churches. Together, these two foods constitute the complete feast of heaven. The bread and wine of communion perpetuates the treaty and protects the world from the wrath, while the consecration of the Gospel into our daily lives, is the spiritual food that builds our invisible bodies in heaven.

The sacrifice of Jesus, then, is manifested in a different way by each of the two priesthods. The lower priesthood—the ministers and priests of the law—offer communion in church, while the rest of us—the higher priesthood—process the words of Jesus into

eternal life by hearing and obeying the Gospel. The outer chamber of the temple is the physical church, but its inner chamber (the Holy of Holies) can only exist inside the people themselves—in the hearts of those with faith. The high priesthood, therefore, can only exist inside each person who has faith in Christ. We have two ministries here, and two foods. The Jews had two priesthoods, but they only had one food. We now know that the food the Jewish high priests had was the lower food. It was the food of the outer chamber. The food of the inner chamber did not arrive until Jesus brought it. And when He did, he transformed the liturgy. He conferred the higher priesthood on those who transubstantiated His Gospel into action in their lives—sending the Holy of Holies into the hearts of every believer. This is the priesthood of Peter and it is the fulfillment of the priesthood of Aaron.

In the book of Hebrews it is written that *"no one has the right to go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing because none of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these regulations can possibly bring any worshipper to perfection in his inner self; they are rules about the outward life, connected with foods and drinks and washing at various times, intended to be in force only until it should be time to reform them."* (Heb.9:8-10). Christ has clearly shown us that the church service, despite its overt holiness, saves no one. It can show the way to salvation; it can offer a reprieve, but it cannot save. It is only our own personal relationship with Jesus and his word which determines our salvation. When Moses set up the priesthood, its specific function was to transform food from one substance into another. This is also why God has made us a part of His royal priesthood—so that we are able to transform the holy food of heaven (the Gospel) into new eternal bodies so that we can live in heaven. This is a transubstance of body. The spiritual food we eat transforms itself within us in a way identical to the transubstance of the food of communion in the outer chamber which goes from bread and wine to the body and blood of Jesus. But in our case (in the inner chamber of our soul) it is transubstantiated through faith into our new body in Christ. God's food for this purpose is the Gospel, which when we obey it, transforms us from mortal existence into eternal existence. Flesh and blood cannot live in heaven. So this transformation is essential. But it is a worship service that can only take place inside ourselves. God has made each of us a part of His royal priesthood just for this purpose—so that we can transubstantiate the Gospel into spiritual flesh by living our lives in its directives. That is why the Holy Spirit had divine food occupy such a prominent position in the Mosaic liturgy and that is also why it was recapitulated in Christianity by Jesus at the Last Supper (Lk.22:19-20).

How does all this relate to the end of the world? The world lives because this feast is being offered and accepted, and the world will continue to live as long as it continues to be offered and accepted. This is the liturgical side of the Testimony (the Gospel). Spiritually, adherence to the tenants of the Testimony are equally as important: *"The Levites are to pitch their tents around the tabernacle of the Testimony. In this way the wrath will be kept from falling on the whole community of the sons of Israel."* (Nm.1:53). In Hebrew law, the Levites were the administrator's of the lower priesthood. They were responsible for the physical artifacts of the temple and saw to the temple's upkeep, but they could not offer the food of the sacrifice or enter the Holy of Holies. In Christianity, this lower priesthood constitutes the ministers and priests of the Church. The Testimony' is the Gospel and its 'tabernacle' is the Bible. The tents pitched around it are the churches of Christianity formed during Babylon's conversion to Jesus. As long as the churches remain faithful to Christ's word and as long as the world allows communion to be offered, the treaty—God's reprieve—will stay in place and the world will continue to be allowed to exist: The treaty it represents, holds back the final judgment, and thus allows the world time to repent and come to the Gospel which imparts eternal life. The continuation of a living planet is structured in liturgical communion because this is the part of the treaty that is legal according to world terms. Liturgy means Law. The Law cannot save us (we are saved by the word of God), but Law does hold back the wrath from the world through the terms of the treaty. That is because the treaty itself is legal and so is the wrath it holds back. Christ's death on the cross was a legal act. As such, it takes away our sins *legally*. It is a legal treaty of peace between God and Babylon. Therefore, as long as it remains in place, it blocks the legal sentence of the wrath. And it remains in place through the actions of the ministers who offer Christ's crucified body in the church services and the people who accept that offer and continue to believe in Christ's truth.

When Moses, speaking for God, warned Pharaoh to *'let my people go, so that they may keep a feast in the wilderness in honor of me'* (Ex.5:1-2), it was a warning to all the kings of this world that the feast of God cannot be transgressed. The plagues that came against him and his nation when Pharaoh tried to block this feast from taking place are proof of this. Transgression of the feast will void the treaty and bring the world to destruction. When pharaoh refused to let God's people leave to have their feast (Ex.5:1-2), God sent a series of plagues against him until he changed his mind. When his own son became a victim of the plagues that followed his refusal, Pharaoh relented, allowing Moses to lead the Israelites off to have the feast that God had prepared for them (Ex.12:31-34). At the end of the exodus, however, the spirit of Satan entered Pharaoh's heart and he changed his mind,

and set off to attack the rear column of the departing Israelites. Because of this, God caused the waters of the sea to crash down on him and his army, destroying them all. Pharaoh's change of heart was made known to us by the Holy Spirit in order to bring to light what is destined to come in the future. It will happen again—the same way at the end of time when the Great Rebel copies the attack of Pharaoh by gathering the kings of the earth against the rearguard of those being ingathered by Christ from the dispersion to Babylon. The king of Babylon, who for the last 2000 years has helped facilitate the exodus of Christians by commanding Christian belief in his empire, will change his mind at the end. Instead, like Pharaoh, he will gather his armies together and make war on the Church. By attacking both the offering of communion and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Rebel and his forces will place themselves directly between the people and the feast of God, thereby duplicating the action of Pharaoh. But instead of being met by the crashing waters of the Red Sea, these armies will come under the full intensity of God's wrath of fire (Rev.20:9).

This brings us to the significance of Daniel's prophecy. According to Daniel, the wrath of the End is intimately related to the transgression of the liturgical sacrifice—to the desecration of the communion offering—a liturgy he called the 'perpetual sacrifice'. Quoting Daniel, Jesus said that when Antiochus put iniquity on the sacrifice in Jerusalem by installing the desolating sacrilege above the altar in the temple, he initiated an allegory of the end times so momentous that it has no parallel in scripture. *"So when you see the disastrous abomination, of which the prophet Daniel spoke, set up in the Holy Place, then those in Judea must escape to the mountains...for then there will be great distress such as, until now, since the world began, there never has been, nor ever will be again."* (Mt.24:15-22). When the beast who is the focus of this allegory appears and puts his iniquity on God's sacrifice it will bring the harvest to an abrupt end and precipitate the horrifying apocalypse because it will break the treaty of peace Christ made with the world of Babylon at Calvary Hill. Isaiah wrote: *"The earth is defiled under its inhabitants' feet, for they have transgressed the law, violated the precept, broken the everlasting covenant. So a curse consumes the earth and its inhabitants suffer the penalty, that is why the inhabitants of the earth are burnt up and few men are left."* (Is.24:5-6). The Church's offering of communion to the people and the wrath it holds back are intimately related to one another. Paul confirmed this when he wrote, *"Everyone is to recollect himself before eating this bread and drinking this cup; because a person who eats and drinks without recognizing the Body is eating and drinking his own condemnation. In fact that is why many of you are weak and ill and some of you have died."* (1 Cor.11:28-31). Because the priest who stands at the center of the perpetuation of this sacrifice is the pivotal figure in the legal (liturgical) offer to the world of Christ's treaty of

peace, he stands as the divinely placed figurehead of God's rule over Babylon. His forced removal by assassination (foreseen by Lucia of Fatima) will manifest the coming of the Prince of Persia and herald the unthinkable sacrilege that desolates the Church and dooms the world in fulfillment of the scriptures. It is this very killing that Paul warned would unmask scripture's "madman" and make him visible to the world (2 thes. 3:7)

About three-quarters of the world's Christians believe that during the prayers of the communion liturgy, the bread and wine become the real body and blood of the crucified Christ. This includes Greeks, Coptics, Catholics, and Anglicans. Most Protestants disagree and, see communion in a different way. They believe that the bread and wine remains bread and wine and merely represents the body and blood of Jesus in a symbolic way. This division has created great hostility within the Church. But the argument it poses skirts the real issue. That issue is salvation, and salvation itself is not at stake here. That is because no one can be saved by anything that goes into the mouth, just as no one can be lost by such a food. *"Can you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes through the stomach and is discharged into the sewer?"* (Mt.15:17). While communion in church is critical as far as world survival is concerned—the type of communion that saves us personally is a food of the heart—the righteous behavior commanded by the Gospel. This is a food we can only eat in a spiritual way—through repentance and conversion into the words and ways of Jesus Christ. As far as the physical food of church is concerned (the bread and wine of communion), it can be transformed any way we want it to be. Jesus said that whatever we ask God for in prayer, we will receive if we have sufficient faith. He did not exclude Christian prayers regarding communion from this decree. *"I tell you most solemnly, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven."* (Mt.18:19). 'Anything at all' he said. Prayer alone, then, has the power to make the Eucharist the real body and blood of Jesus Christ—especially when so many Christians are praying together at the same time for it to be so. Likewise, those who believe that their communion is just a symbol will be similarly rewarded. By the power of the Holy Spirit the faith of both will make it for each just as they believe. Therefore this issue does not stand between anyone and God. Both sides will go to heaven the same because we are saved by faith and not by law. Because neither food has the power to impart eternal life without the spiritual ingestion of the Gospel (Lk.13:26-27), the issue does not warrant the hatred it has engendered—as a result of which, neither side can sit down and break the bread of Christ together. The fighting simply proves again that Paul was right when He said that we live by Law and not by faith. This is not to say that there is no substance to the controversy however. The very fact that the beast at the end will have the power to bring about the Apocalypse simply by putting iniquity on

this sacrifice demonstrates the tremendous substance behind this feast. And it shows that there is far more to communion than symbolism. The life of the whole world is tied to it.

11

The Bread of Life

*"My food is to do the will of the one who sent me,
and to complete his work." Jn.4:34*

Jesus told His disciples that He is the bread of life. The revelations of science have since shown us the deep symbolic ramifications of this statement. Comparing himself to sunlight, Jesus introduced us to the fact that food and sunlight are two parts of the same substance. But unlike sunlight, the food of which is temporary and transient, the light Jesus gives comes, not from the solar system or universe, but directly from heaven and produces a food which makes us eternal. The food of the solar system and universe produces only a brief and quickly passing life by comparison. Shown in scripture to be both light and bread, the Holy Spirit has created and combined these two metaphors to show us the true nature of the power that God sent to Galilee 20 centuries ago. Viewing this revelation in light of the discoveries of science, we can only stand in awe at the depth of its symbolism. Bread for the body comes from grain, which, in the fields, takes the photons of light that radiate down from the sun, converting and storing this sunlight as kernels of energy—tiny power plants that are the bedrock of our food chain. Bread on earth, then, is a vast store of solar energy, which, when eaten, pours its life-giving power into the body of those who consume it. Without food, i.e., without this store of solar energy, we could not exist on earth. We could not grow or mature. We could not even have survived the womb to be born. It is the same with the bread God has offered us. Without being reborn into the spiritual food Jesus brought to the earth, we could not grow or live in God's new kingdom. The food for that kingdom is different than the food of this planet. It comes from a different kind of light. The kernels of life-giving grain that are produced from God's light are the commandments of the Gospel. That is why Jesus brought these commandments to us. The entire Bible, from the earliest days of Moses, is based on the appearance of the one who would do this. Giving us this food, Jesus said that He had given us "more than enough". Jesus is the Sonlight of heaven. His divine light pouring from the throne of God has created a new spiritual body for our soul. When it is taken into our bodies and assimilated (converting our mind and soul to

His will) it creates and brings to maturity a new heavenly life that begins growing within us. Jesus told His apostles, *"I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* (John 6:32-33). Jesus' commandments are God's spiritual kernels of life-giving energy. When we eat these kernels of heavenly life by obeying them, they provide a power of eternal life that makes our spiritual bodies live and grow, enabling God to transform us into His new kingdom—the new environment that He has created for us in heaven. He told us, *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst...All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away...Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day."* (John 6:34-40). The light of the nations is the food of heaven. And that food manifests itself in the obedience of God's will.

Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world; anyone who follows me will not be walking in the dark; he will have the light of life."* (John 8:12). In Him is the light of heaven. Like sunlight which sends its meal of energy into the chain of physical life, Jesus glorified pours eternal life down from heaven into our soul. From our study of science in grade school, we know that the sun is a large celestial body in our solar system that God has glorified there, setting it on fire as a star. The energy of its burning is the source of all life in the system. It sends that energy out in streams of light that cascade onto the planet. Bombarding the earth with its energy it stirs the waters and raises up the dust of the earth to a life that can contemplate its own existence. Yet the sun is merely a part of the darkness of Satan's world. God has glorified a piece of that darkness and caused it to imitate His own life-giving properties in the physical realm so that we can see and understand the higher reality it echoes. And He inspired His servants to write about all of this long before science ever discovered the scientific properties their words described. Bread, light and water—these are the essential ingredients of physical being, and all three are deeply intertwined in the words of the Gospel. Jesus is the bread of life, the water of life and the light of the world. The Bible's description allows us to understand that in addition to the light of the sun which creates the kernels of energy on earth hidden in grains like wheat which can be processed into bread, there is a stronger and more powerful light of heaven which our eyes are also unable to see. And that Sonlight of heaven has created a spiritual bread, already kneaded, processed and fully baked. We don't have to grind its kernels or throw away any chaff, it comes to us

as ready to eat as a fast food. And unlike the grains that come from physical sunlight, God's light has produced an eternal food whose life-giving properties never end.

God sent Jesus here for just one purpose—that mankind might eat His body and drink His blood, and, in so doing absorb enough spiritual energy to live forever. *"As I, who am sent by the living Father, myself draw life from the Father, so whoever eats me will draw life from me. This is the bread come down from heaven; not like the bread our ancestors ate: they are dead, but anyone who eats this bread will live forever."* (Jn.6:32-58). It has often been pointed out that when this food of God first appeared on earth in Bethlehem (the name means "house of bread", Jesus was placed in a food trough—in a manger—a place symbolic of His purpose. The symbolism of Christ as a holy food has endured throughout the ages in the communion sacrifice which is offered by almost every Christian church in memory of His death for our salvation. All of this symbolism points to the Bread of Life, the Gospel Jesus preached, the fruit of His holy life, which, when it enters our body through our mind, has power to change our way of life and set us to work building a new life—and through it, a new body structured in the image of God. The feast of heaven is Jesus Christ. His meal comes to us in the Bible. Like bread in a case in a bakery, it rests in the four books of the Gospel. Not everything in the Bible is the Gospel of life, of course. When we look at the thickness of the two Testaments we can quickly see that most of the Bible is composed of the Old Testament whose Torah (Law) is primarily the words of Moses. Jesus said, *"I tell you solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven..."* (Jn.6:32). *"I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that a man may eat it and not die. I am the living bread which has come down from heaven. Anyone who eats this bread will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, for the life of the world."* (Jn.6:48-51). This is why we celebrate communion. It is God's plan that we remember these words Jesus spoke and understand the powerful symbolism that surrounds them.

Paul said, *"Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh, that is not how we know him now."* (2 Cor.5:16). We know Jesus now by what He said—i.e., by word. We know Him now by the Gospel He preached. When we read His words in the New Testament, we see Him and we see God. On the holy mountain in Sinai, God explained this to Moses, who repeated it to the House of Israel: *"Then God spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words but saw no shape, there was only a voice. And God revealed his covenant to you and commanded you to observe it..."* (Dt.4:12-13). And therein lies the

essential mystery of God's food. The food of heaven is the Gospel of God which Jesus preached and commanded us to obey (Jn.4:34). This is why Moses told the people not to make any graven images of God. *"Since you saw no shape on that day at Horeb when God spoke to you from the midst of the fire, see that you do not act perversely, making yourselves a carved image in the shape of anything at all."* (Dt.4:15-16). God's image is the Gospel Jesus preached. It is in the Bible, but it is not the whole Bible (John 5:39-40). So He cannot be imaged as the Bible. God cannot be imaged as a temple. He cannot be imaged as a crucifix. He cannot be imaged as a stone. He cannot be imaged as a wall. All of these have strong correlations to God, but God is different than the physical symbols that surround Him. However, God can be imaged in words; and He can be imaged when those words are put into practice. That is the whole meaning of Jesus Christ and the spiritual nature of His Gospel. *"True worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth"* (Jn.4:23-24). Jesus led us beyond a material interpretation of God's feast: *"It is the spirit that gives life,"* he said, *"the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."* (Jn.6:63). That is the meal which puts God's mind into our own.

The Old Covenant is passing away (Heb.8:13). For this reason, there are many teachings in the Bible that cannot give eternal life. Jesus told the Pharisees that the bread of Moses was ineffective and could not give them what they were searching for. Instead, Jesus brought us to a Bread that was His alone: *"You search the scriptures thinking that in them is eternal life; now these same scriptures testify to me, and yet you refuse to come to me for life!"* (Jn.5:39). In other words, there is no eternal life in the scriptures except for the words that Jesus, himself, spoke personally. This not only defines the bread of life, it is the meaning of the narrow road. Jesus said, *"What you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."* This decree has infinite power to make absolute the words scripture has bound in His name, and gives certainty to His promise that anyone who obeys his word will never die (Jn.8:51). Jesus' words have a power beyond anything known to man—the power to impart eternal life. There are a great many Christian churches on earth. When one of them binds a certain tradition as an infallible teaching of God and the others do not, who is correct? Was Jesus talking about the bound words of the New Testament, or was He giving a vast license to all the decrees of all the churches formed in His name? It is an interesting question, but wisdom would seem to support only the scriptures. We can be certain of one thing. Those words of binding power apply for certain to the words of Christ's Gospel—to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. In

those four Gospels is more than enough divine food to accomplish the salvation of God that Jesus has promised to those who put its tenets into practice in their lives (Matt.16:27).

Christ's presence in the Bible has added something greater to the scriptures than it ever possessed before He came. He imparted something far greater than inspiration. The Gospel spoken by Jesus (the red letters of the New Testament) is a food that can actually impart eternal life. For this reason, the Gospel is greater than the Bible. It does not eliminate the Church or the Bible or the Eucharist, but it imparts something higher than those others—it imparts the life of heaven. Therefore, nothing else on earth can be considered more sacred or have greater authority. Just the opposite. Christ's Gospel is above everything because scripture tells us that it is the only thing in this world that can survive the flames surrounding Armageddon. That is why we must wrap our soul securely in it. The Old Testament, the books of the apostles, the churches, our bodies of flesh and all the theologies must remain behind when the earth is abandoned. John said that "God is word"; and it is this word (his Gospel) that Jesus has "passed on to us." (Jn.17:14) as the bread of heaven. *"He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard...since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words..."* (Jn.3:31-33). That is why Jesus was so insistent with us that we attach ourselves firmly to the Gospel He preached. *"The word itself that I have spoken will be his judge on the last day. For what I have spoken does not come from myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak was commanded by the Father who sent me, and I know that his commands mean eternal life. And therefore what the Father has told me is what I speak."* (Jn.12:47-50).

PART 3

THE MARK OF THE CROSS

"Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of the filth practised in it." Ez. 9:4

12

A Baptism of Repentance

"...and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins."
Mark 1:4-5

It is written in the scriptures that God's covenant must be marked on the flesh of our body. *"My Covenant shall be marked on your bodies as a Covenant in perpetuity."* (Gen.17:13). This is a tenant of the Law, and we have seen by the action of the Holy Spirit that its directive applies even to Christians. Not by the knife of circumcision as was the case in the old covenant, but by a sprinkling of water in baptism. John told those who came to him, *"I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am...and he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* (Matt.3:11). From that day to this, baptism has been the introductory seal applied to all who gain entrance into the Christian community. Paul taught that the water of this ritual touches us in Christ's death, bringing His death into our flesh. In this respect it mimics the Mosaic Law's essential rule regarding atonement—that the cleansing of God requires a cutting away of the flesh. Influenced by Jewish scholars (who focus on bodily cleansing) many Christian educators have proposed that Christ's ritual of baptism by water stems from the lustral purifications practiced by members of the Essene cult. This proposal, wrong to the core, shows the immense paucity of understanding Bible scholars often have for the genius of God. The Essene ritual was all about bodily purification—a Jewish obsession in the first century. Because the winds blew dust and sand around every day, and because members of this sect were perpetually coming into contact with unclean people in the market places and streets of their towns and cities, the cleansings had to be repeated constantly. Jesus, on the other hand, had no concern for the flesh. He had no concern for bodily cleansing. What Jesus offered was the purification of the soul through forgiveness. One time for all time. Male and female alike. The Christian rite of baptism has nothing to do with bodily purification; instead, it has superseded the Jewish initiation ritual of circumcision—the cutting off of the flesh required by the covenant. It was the will of God that membership in Christ extend far beyond an

infant male Jewish community. With baptism, God extended that membership to the whole world—to males, females, babies and the aged alike—instantly and without bloodshed. The Holy Spirit equalized the planetary community and forever destroyed the scalpel that locked so much of the society out of salvation's membership. God kept the Law, marking the covenant on the flesh. And He extended that mark to all flesh, not just Jewish male flesh.

While the first stipulation of the Law requires a mark on our physical bodies, a second directive of the Law concerning atonement is that God's forgiveness requires our repentance. This second condition is spiritual. *"If they sin against you—for there is no man who does not sin—and you are angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they are led away captive to a land far or near, if in that land of their exile they come to themselves and repent, and in the country of their captivity they entreat you saying, 'We have sinned, we have acted perversely and wickedly', and if they turn again to you with all their heart and soul in the country of their captivity...and pray, turning towards the land you gave their ancestors, towards the city you have chosen, and toward the Temple...hear their prayer and their entreaty, uphold their cause, and forgive your people the sins they have committed against you."* (2 Chron.36-39). This was Solomon's entreaty to God when he dedicated the Hebrew temple. That very night God appeared to Solomon and answered his plea. *"...if my people who bear my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my presence and turn from their wicked ways, I myself will hear from heaven and forgive their sins and restore their land."* (2 Chron.7:14). From that day on (from the moment Solomon dedicated the temple) confession of sins and repentance became essential elements of the Hebrew religion. Inherent in Solomon's words is a prophecy of the destruction of the Promised Land, the captivity of the House of Israel in Babylon, and the mechanics of the rescue which would reverse all this. Jesus, when He came to facilitate that rescue, did not do away with the elements of Solomon's petition to God. He kept the template of this petition, but He redefined the meaning of the "land", the "city" and the "Temple". The land of promise, Jesus said, was the kingdom of heaven. The city of Jerusalem was the holy city hidden within that kingdom, and the Temple, John revealed, were Jesus and God themselves (Rev.21:22). The rescue does not involve a physical journey around the world. It is a spiritual conversion from wickedness into the righteousness of God—a journey that must begin on Solomon's terms—in the humility of contrition and repentance. That conversion is manifested by the entrance of the Holy Spirit into a person, and is called 'being born-again' (John 3:1-8). Always occurring in the astonishment of the discovery that Jesus is God, it comes webbed in repentance and the vow to obey God. It is the second of the three baptisms in Christ revealed by the Gospel (Mt.3:11). The Holy Spirit does not need a sacrament (a law) to enter into us.

The entrance of the Spirit is completely spiritual and occurs entirely through faith. In some people the indwelling Spirit causes them to speak in tongues, but usually the presence of the Spirit is much more subtle. We can always be certain that the Holy Spirit is inside us if we are trying to follow Jesus' teachings, because the essential function of the Spirit is to lead us in His footsteps.

By his sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has offered atonement to every person on earth for sin. It is an atonement that frees us from the Law as soon as we **legally declare** our intent to follow Christ. That legal proclamation is a baptism of repentance which seals our declaration in the blood of Christ. The Law itself has defined the format our legal declaration must take. That is why God instituted these two conditions in the structure of His new covenant, i.e., that is why Jesus preached 'a baptism of repentance'. We must accept the blood He shed for us in the same way that it was given—physically. Baptism is that legal acceptance—it is the covenant physically marked on our bodies in accordance with the rules of scripture. That is why the new covenant is marked on our flesh (Gen.17:13) with the water of baptism (1 Peter 3:21), under conditions of deep repentance (Ps.32:5; Chron.7:14). These are the only two conditions the template of Moses has placed between us and our reunion with God through Jesus Christ. One spiritual, the other legal. Our soul, then, is purified by the vow, but it is set free from the Law by the water. When the mark of the cross touches our bodies with water and physically anoints us in God's new covenant, at that moment, Paul said, His death becomes our own, **legally**. It is legal because the mark is administered through the Law—by the priests and ministers of church theology (Remember, in Christ every Christian on earth has been made a high priest in a lineage beginning with Peter, and stemming from the highest priest of all, Jesus Christ —Heb. 3:1-6). Legally separating us from the Law, baptism is the last act of the Law on us. It is the only booth we must stop at on our way out of the prison of Satan because it provides the lawful seal that legally unchains us from the Law's power. This is why Paul said, *"Through the Law I am dead to the Law, so that now I can live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me."* (Gal.2:19). The water itself does not cleanse us. It is not for cleansing that we are touched by water, it is the legal stamp that takes us out of legal. It is a public mark signifying our affirmation that we have repented in the name of Christ Jesus. It is because of our deep repentance that God has purified us. Cleansing in God is spiritual, not physical. So while it is in faith and spirit that we come to the life Jesus offered, it is in the flesh that we lose our bondage to the Law.

In other words, two actions are occurring simultaneously—the physical loss of our fleshly body and the spiritual acquisition of another. We give up this body by being baptised and gain a new one through faith and repentance. The water that touches our body is invisibly cloaked in the blood of Christ. When we are touched in it, His death becomes our own. This is how God made us participants in Christ's crucifixion. Paul said that God allowed Jesus to be taken out of the city when He was crucified in order that we might know that His sacrifice was taking us out of the penalty and terms of the Law. His leaving sinful Jerusalem, then, and being transported out to Calvary Hill was metaphoric. By marking us through the Law, God has freed us from bondage to this sinful world and made a way for us to leave it legally, so that, in leaving, we do not have to be fugitives from the law. *"Go away, go away, leave that place, touch nothing unclean. Get out of her, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord. But you are not to hurry away, you are not to leave like fugitives. No the Lord will go in front of you, and the God of Israel will be your rear-guard."* (Is.52:11-12).

Since the earliest days of man's creation, humankind has been fascinated and obsessed with blood sacrifice to God. Even the Aztecs and Inca's in the new world, outside of contact with the peoples across the ocean conducted these bloody rituals. There is something innate in man to drive him so universally to this kind of worship. And it is in keeping with this universal desire that God has instrumented His merciful formula for atonement. God addressed this need in the very beginning, with Abraham. He led Abraham to the rock of Mt. Moriah with his son, Issac in tow and put it in Abraham's mind to lift a blade against the boy as a sacrifice. Abraham, full of faith, complied. But God stopped him. Human sacrifice will not be a part of Hebrew worship. Instead, said God, I have supplied a substitute. Above Abraham's head there was a ram entangled in the brush. Moses incorporated this event into His Law, and thereafter, for the guardian of the Law, the substitute became all the helpless animals of later Hebrew sacrifice. But God was not thinking of animals when He appeared to Abraham. He was referencing His own Son. His Son was to be the substitute. The being about to be sacrificed was ourselves. We are born on this planet under the penalty of the Law and therefore under a sentence of death. So we are like Issac, about to be struck by the knife of God's Law because Satan has contaminated us with his fatal sin. But God has stopped the knife. He provided a substitute in the form of His own Son, Jesus Christ, who went to the cross in our place. He died there so that we do not have to. And so we have been redeemed by a blood sacrifice.

This answers two of the deepest mysteries in the Christian covenant. Why did a God of pure and infinite love purposely cause His Son to be the subject of intense torture and a violent death on a cross; and why, when everything that Jesus taught about the love of God being spiritual, do we have to come into that love through a physical and legal action marked on our human flesh? The major reason lies in God's ordination that the Law of Moses be kept in precise terms until its entire purpose is achieved (Mt.5:17-19). Because God in His infinite goodness is perfectly obedient to the Law, Jesus could overcome the Law only by completing it. That is why He followed the Mosaic template so closely. And because He has tempered the Law with mercy, He has made the Law not only perfect but ultimately righteous as well. What He completed in baptism was the Law's demand that the covenant be marked on our flesh: *"My Covenant shall be marked on your bodies as a Covenant in perpetuity."* (Gen.17:13). . . What else He completed was humanity's innate obsession for blood sacrifice. He reordered that obsession by addressing it directly.

All humanity is born into the captivity of sin and for this reason stands condemned to death by the dictates of God's Law. Jesus set us free from the bondage of this Law. Yet he did it in a very legal way—in a way that did not violate the Mosaic code. That is what the crucifixion is—it is a legal payment made in our name. And baptism by water is our own legal public vow to accept His payment as our own. The water in baptism duplicates the nails and blood of the cross by physically touching our bodies in Christ's sacrifice. In His power and authority God could have said that the rules of Moses were too violent, and swept away the decree of the Law. But God is ultimate justice. It is judges among men that bend the rules and show partiality to close friends. God does not bend the rules for anyone. If He did, His justice would not be perfect. And as far as the violence itself is concerned, it's very viciousness deeply underscores the intense contrast between good and evil. Wickedness is not innocuous or benign. Unless counteracted by Jesus, sin kills everyone it touches. So that we might see the reality of this truth, God has constructed both a creation and a salvation to reflect it. In that reality, the wicked strike out continuously at the people who love God and His peace, but their deadly thrusts have no impact on the life that lies within the flesh of those they try to harm. Instead, they kill themselves, because this world is a test, and anyone who chooses to pursue violence, strikes only themselves, failing the exam. We were all born in this world condemned to eternal death because of Satan. Our choice in this life is one of finding a way out of this hell's destiny, not of being thrown into it. Jesus came to offer us redemption from a sentence already decreed. He brought us a way of escape from a sentence already passed. Because of Satan every person on earth is going to die—everyone who refuses to accept God's only path away from that fatal verdict. When Christ appeared, all

mankind sat on death row awaiting the execution of the Law's decree. He came to us as the governor's Son, in His hand a pardon from the sentence and freedom from the prison. Those who choose to follow the Way of Life specified by Jesus receive pardon from the Law's decree and are transported by faith out of death's prison into reconciliation with God, bypassing the preordained execution. Everyone who rejects Christ's divine offer and chooses to follow Babylon's way of life, remains attached to the fatal destiny of the place where they were born. They remain locked in Satan's bondage and doomed to share in Satan's destiny. So the only offer is life. Jesus brought us a chance to escape—a chance to live forever.

Jesus did not want to go to the cross. So that we would understand this, he asked God to remove the 'cup' of the cross from him if it were at all possible. God did not; therefore it wasn't. God was showing us that the Law was so powerful and binding that even He could not spare His Son and still rescue us from the penalty it imposed. Because God had given His oath of authority to Moses, He was bound by the rules that were set down by Moses. That made everything that Jesus did legal even by this world's standards. Jesus told his disciples that the things he did were done so that the Law and the Prophets would be fulfilled. He said, *"scripture cannot be rejected"* (Jn.10:35). By keeping scripture on purpose, Jesus made the prophecies self-fulfilling, showing that he was not completing prophecy, but obeying the Law. On the surface it seemed like prophecy because who in the world was inspired enough to sift through a sealed scripture, written in terms so academic and secret their meanings eluded even Judaism's finest scholars, and not only decipher it, but understand it so completely that He could fulfill its terms? *"Who predicted this from the beginning so we might know it, who foretold it long ago so we might say, 'It is right'? No one predicted it, no, no one proclaimed it, no, no one heard you speak. I had said in Zion beforehand, 'Here they come!' I had sent a bearer of good news to Jerusalem. I looked, but there was no one, there was not a single counsellor among them who, if I asked, could give an answer. Taken altogether they are nothing; their works are nothingness, their images wind and emptiness (Is.41:25-29). "Speak up, present your case, consult with each other. Who foretold this and revealed it in the past? Am I not the Lord? There is no other god besides me, a God of integrity and a savior; there is none apart from me. Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God unrivalled."* (Is. 45:21-22)

"...So will the crowds be astonished at him, and kings stand speechless before him; for they shall see something never told and witness something never heard before: 'Who could believe what we have heard, and to whom has the power of God been revealed?'

"Like a sapling he grew up in front of us, like a root in arid ground. Without beauty, without majesty (we saw him), no looks to attract our eyes...he was despised and we took no account of him. And yet ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as someone punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed." (Is.53:1-5). If God had Jesus go to these lengths to see that the words of the Old Testament were precisely fulfilled, there can be no doubt at all the lengths to which He will go to see that all the words of the New Testament will be kept as well. Jesus kept scripture because it was the law, and as such it was binding on both man and God. And by keeping it, He led us out of it. That is how we gained our freedom. If the Law was so powerful that Jesus had to die on the cross because of it, then it stands to reason that we will remain completely bound in it if we do not accept the baptism of water that Jesus offered us as our only way out of it. It was not enough for Jesus simply go to the cross in spirit, and it is not enough for us to be baptised only in spirit. His death was physical and it has to touch us physically in order for our chains of bondage to be broken.

Jesus had himself baptised as an example for us to follow even though John said that He did not need it (Mt.3:13). Jesus did not need baptism because he had no sin in Him. *"Now you know that he appeared in order to abolish sin, and that in him there is no sin..."* (1 John 3:5). So that he could show us how completely locked into the Law we are if we refuse to be baptised, Jesus said that the pharisees blocked the salvation that God had in mind for them by refusing to receive John's anointing: *"All the people who heard him, and the tax collectors too, acknowledged God's plan by accepting baptism from John; but by refusing baptism from him the Pharisees and the lawyers thwarted what God had in mind for them."* (Luke 7:29-30). This passage of scripture says that they **thwarted** God's purpose for them by refusing to be baptised. The meaning is uncontestable. The Gospel shows that it is God's intention to offer salvation as a free gift to anyone who wants it, even to people like the Pharisees, but in order for them to receive that salvation, they have to accept it legally not just spiritually. Until we have been baptised with water we cannot say that Jesus died for us personally.

Baptism does not assure us of salvation, but it imparts a grace around us that keeps us safe from spiritual harm, allowing us both freedom and time to make the journey Jesus marked out for us. Just as the Israelites had to follow Moses through the wilderness of Sinai on a long journey towards the 'Promised Land', so do we have to follow the path that Jesus provided for us in the form of his words. This journey, because it constantly pits us against

the teachings and behavior of an unholy world that is hostile to the commandments of the Gospel is called a walk through fire. It, too is called baptism, and is the third in the divine series of baptisms required to bring us to salvation. The first, that of water, imparts a grace of time—allowing us to grow into God's will by progress. It provides us a 'time of mercy' to make the journey through our baptism of fire. Under Hebrew law there was no grace of time. Every stumble condemned the one who fell to death. In Christ, however, progress itself is perfection. *"Only the man who makes progress, as the blameless do, can be my servant."* (Ps.101:2,6). The time of God's grace is extended through repentance, but cut short by apostasy. Therefore, God's grace is made variable by our own actions. *"But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruits...yes, even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire."* (Luke 3:8-9).

Some teach that Jesus took us out of the Law because it is evil. That is completely wrong. Paul said that it is we, ourselves who are evil, not the Law. Paul preached this teaching because he knew that the Law came from the authority of God. *"The Law is sacred, and what it commands is sacred and just and good."* (Rom.7:11). The problem, Paul observed, is that we are not good. We are filled with the spirit of sin—an unholy spirit that comes from Satan. This is why John wrote that we are all sinners (Jn.1:8-10). Because of sin's presence within us, we react to the Law in hostile terms. We become obsessed with doing the very things we have been commanded not to do. We are incensed whenever we are told, 'no'—that very directive creating within us an urge to sin. Our rebelliousness drives that urge into obsession. This is why, because of our sinful nature, the Law has made it easier for Satan to kill us. *"Does that mean that something good has killed me? Of course not. But sin, to show itself in its true colors, has used that good thing (the Law) to kill me; so thanks to the commandment, sin is able to exercise all of its sinful power."* (Rom.7:12-13). Because we are weak and stumble all along the journey, we stand condemned by the Law throughout our entire life. This is why it became so essential for Jesus to set us free from the Law and its power of condemnation in order to rescue us. Baptism cuts the chains and allows us to make the journey out of Satan's prison without fear—because with it comes the robe of Grace that protects us from every fall as long as we get back on God's road. *"Though the virtuous man falls seven times, he stands up again."* (Pr.24:16).

Anyone who wants to come to Jesus must be baptised in His name for the forgiveness of their sins. This is the message John the Baptist proclaimed from the beginning (Mt.3:11). So did Peter and Paul. *"You must repent," Peter answered "and every*

one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..." (Acts 2:38). Even Jesus, himself, said so. *"Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5). Because there is an incident in the Bible where salvation occurred outside of baptism, some have questioned this need. When Christ was crucified, one of the thieves who was on the cross next to him asked Jesus if he could go into heaven with him when he died. Jesus agreed. Since the thief had apparently not been baptised in Christ's name before his crucifixion, some have argued that this proves that baptism with water is not essential to salvation. There is something we need to remember here. According to Paul, baptism with water is our share of Jesus' crucifixion. It is the way we share in His death. The thief shared in Christ's actual crucifixion, right next to him at the very same moment. He shared in Jesus' death in a very real way. Second, there was no Holy Spirit on earth yet when this event occurred. *"As scripture says: from his breast shall flow fountains of living water. He was speaking of the Spirit which those who believed in him were to receive; for there was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified."* (Jn.7:38-39). The Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, 52 days after the crucifixion. Therefore, the thief was in a different venue than the rest of us. He was never baptised with the Holy Spirit—which is our share in Jesus' new life; and as we all know, essential to salvation under the new covenant. This means that the thief came to God in the same way that Moses and Abraham and John the Baptist did; through faith, but under the old standards. His situation is unique as far as Christians today are concerned.

Without repentance and conversion, baptism cannot save us. Yet without baptism, there can be no salvation at all: *"Unless a man is born through water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5). *"You must repent,"* Peter told them, *"and every one of you must be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins..."* (Acts 2:38). This is a New Testament commandment. Peter issued this binding directive because Jesus did not steal us from the Law; he took us out of it legally, by a legal act. In some Christian circles it is commonly taught that there is no law; that Christ did away with it completely when he nailed it on the cross with himself. Thus, many Christians believe that there should be no discussion or mention of the Law at all because they see any such mention as an anachronism. But the Law ceases to exist only for those who have been baptised. We have seen that Jesus did not take away the sins of everyone—only of those who believed in Him and were willing to accept His death as their own. For all the others, their sin remains. If this were not so, there would be no reason to preach repentance in His name. His action would have crucified the need for repentance and preaching altogether—meaning that everyone on earth today would be sinless. This, of course, is not true. The world is still

filled with sin and it is only those who have been baptised in the name of Jesus who have broken with sin. Jesus and a baptism of repentance are preached today because so many people still remain under the influence and penalty of the Law. Far from being gone, the Law is still very much a part of this world. Baptism is the only action by which the Law can be taken away. By legally separating us from the kingdom of this world, baptism in Christ actually takes away our citizenship in it. In its place we have been offered citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. There is no dual citizenship. We cannot be citizens of both the kingdom of heaven and this world at the same time. Once baptised, we are stripped of carnal citizenship and become foreigners to this world, existing in it as ambassadors for Jesus with all the rights and privileges of that office including diplomatic immunity from the Law. God expects us to obey the rules of this world while we are in it, but we are no longer tied to the world court. Spiritually, the world court is ruled by the Law of Moses and it is this law that condemns everyone in the world to death (most of them, because they are considered Gentiles (pagans), and therefore outside of the Law's mercy). Those inside the Law are condemned because they cannot keep its terms: *"Did not Moses give you the Law? And yet not one of you keeps the Law!"* (Jn.7:19). Anyone who has not been baptised falls under the rules and dominion of the world court and is fully subject to all the penalties specified by the Law of Moses. The same is true of those who fall from grace. This judiciary is not a court of men. It is ruled, instead, by angels and its composition consists of all the penalties in the Old Testament. It brings plagues, famine, earthquakes and all the assorted disasters specified by the Law. It is not God's judgment—God's judgment comes later. It is a reaction to sin built right into the mechanics of creation.

At the time of Paul, the law was measured by circumcision because it was this procedure which brought the Jewish male into the covenant of the Law. Because baptism does the reverse, taking us out of the Law, the two represent polar opposites of the same process. Both circumcision and baptism represent a 'cutting off of the flesh' for purification: *"In him you have been circumcised, with a circumcision not performed by human hand, but by the complete stripping of your body of flesh. This is circumcision according to Christ. You have been buried with him, when you were baptised; and by baptism, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead."* (Col.2:13). The Law existed even before God authorized Moses to make it known to us. We know that because death and suffering were already going on in this world before Moses was born. As we have seen before, Moses did not invent the Law, he was simply authorized by God to explain it. Moses gave the Law to the world by divine authority, but Moses was a man; he was not God and his words did not come from heaven. *"I tell you*

most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the desert and they are dead; but this is the bread that comes down from heaven so that a man may eat it and not die." (John 6:32-51). Even though God gave the words of Moses divine authority, the words he spoke were not God's own words. They are, however, the words that govern this world and that are bringing this world to an end because of wickedness. The words of Moses form an irrevocable template for disaster in the face of sin. While the words of Moses describe harsh punishment for sin, the words of Jesus offer reconciliation and peace because Jesus came to save us from the Law and all of its rigorous penalties. Since we live in a world that is essentially unbaptised, most of the people of this world are still bound to the Law that condemns them. The only way to escape this law is baptism in God's offer of reconciliation in the name of Jesus. Because two-thirds of the world's people are unbaptised, most of the world still stands condemned by the Law. God has offered baptism as a way to save all these people from eternal death.

Coming with the water is an invisible spiritual cloak that guards against the Avenger of Death. For this reason, it can be argued that baptism should be administered as early as possible. Who is this great spiritual Destroyer? This potent figure in scripture is the very reason why all churches in the beginning baptised babies so universally and so quickly after birth. His presence was referenced most vividly in an Old Testament declaration by Ezekiel (Ez.9:1-11) who foresaw seven spiritual figures representing the decision of Christ. One of these was a spiritual 'man in white' who went about the countrysides of the world and marked crosses on everyone who confessed themselves for the Lord. Following this 'man in white' were another set of angels -- the six Avengers of Death who destroyed all who were not marked on their foreheads with a cross in the Blood of the Lamb. This prophecy hearkened back to the Israelites in Egypt who marked the doorstops of their houses in Egypt with the blood of the paschal lamb so that the Avenger sent by God would pass over their homes when he came to destroy all the first-born in Egypt. All of this, of course, was a foretelling of Christ and the baptism in His name which would divide the world -- separating the people of God from the people of Satan. Up until this century, all churches baptised babies on account of this prophecy; especially because Ezekiel's pronouncement warned that the order of annihilation applied even to children (Ez.9:5-6). While it is entirely conceivable that God can save someone who is unbaptised, to willfully not be baptised despite all the cautions in the New Testament that baptism is essential to salvation, blatantly puts God to the test. It is like jumping off a building to prove that God will protect you. To ignore the

commandments of Jesus and the apostles simply to prove a personal theological ideology is deliberate rebellion against God. Refusing to be baptised, or to put off being baptised in the face of these commands, is purposeful disobedience of the scriptures.

At the time of Christ, baptism was offered immediately and freely to anyone who asked for it. Although he reprimanded the Pharisees for their sins, John the Baptist did not refuse to baptise anyone who came to him at the Jordan river. He would have baptised the Pharisees, too, if they had desired it. In Acts 2:41, Peter and the apostles baptised over three thousand people in a single day. There were no waiting periods and no age restrictions. Not at first. The restrictions came with theology. As theologians tried to wrestle with the meaning of baptism and their understanding of its implications (since it is a legal act), liturgical restrictions began to increase. Today, all sorts of rules apply, and infant baptisms are sometimes rejected completely. When he was speaking about the Great Flood (when God saved only 8 people on earth by water), Peter said, *"That water is a type of the baptism which saves you now, and which is not the washing off of physical dirt but a pledge made to God from a good conscience..."* (1 Peter 3:20-21). In the case of babies, this pledge is affirmed by the guardians of that child, usually the parents. It is like a loan of grace given to the child through the co-signature of the parents. But there comes a time when each person must consecrate the pledge on their own. They are made free of the bondage of the Law immediately by the water, but when they reach the age of reason they must confirm their baptism by faith so that the Holy Spirit can come into them. This event, sacramentally, is called confirmation and involves an anointment with oil, or a laying on of hands before the witness of the church. In those churches that have renounced the sacrament of confirmation, infant baptism is generally frowned upon, but that leaves the child in its infancy unprotected from the prowling of the Avenger. For almost 2000 years all Christian churches have been baptising babies. Practically none of these baptisms was ever repeated during the child's lifetime. Since virtually all of Christianity has received their baptism in the Lord in this way, it stands to reason that infant baptism is effective and fully meets the criteria of God. If the baptism of babies were not sufficient to satisfy the demands of the Law, virtually all of Christianity would have been lost to God on a technicality of theology. God came to save, not to destroy. He did not go to all the trouble of spending billions of years to create an environment for our salvation, and when it was ready, sending His Son to die on the cross, just to axe it all on a legal technicality. The fundamental question, therefore, is not whether babies should be baptised, but whether or not baptism itself is essential to salvation.

There are so many references to the demand for the water of baptism in the scriptures that there can be no doubt of its necessity. Jesus not only described it as essential, he had himself baptised by water to prove it. He wanted baptism to go to everybody. That is why God did not restrict the power to baptise by placing it in the hands of a special elite group. He made it easy. Every baptised Christian on earth has the same power to baptise another into the faith of Christ as does the highest official of the largest Christian church. The essence of the Law in Jerusalem was the temple. By its authority, the temple had authority over the seat of Moses and thus had absolute dominion over the Law. Jesus referred to himself as the temple when he said, *"Tear this temple down and in three days I will rebuild it."* John revealed that Jesus was greater than the temple: *"In the spirit I saw Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven...I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple..."* (Rev.21:10, 22). Jesus said, *"I tell you solemnly once again, if two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them."* (Mt.18:19-20). The presence of Jesus gives every group formed in his name, authority over the Law on earth; and because Jesus is greater than the temple in Jerusalem (Mt.12:6), those who are formed in His name actually have more authority over the Law than did the priests of the Sanhedrin who governed the temple in the land of Palestine. Once baptised, each person becomes, in himself, the temple of God because Jesus and God now dwell within that person's soul and body. *"Didn't you realize that you were God's temple and that the Spirit of God was living within you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple."* (1 Cor.3:16-17). The power derived from this restructuring of the temple gave faith full authority over the Law. That is why Christian leaders were able to restructure it according to the directives of Christ. And that is why every Christian can perform legal baptisms in the name of Jesus Christ. Possessing the temple inside them, those who gather in His name have more power than the Sanhedrin. Our power to control the Law through faith is not for the purpose of making Jesus a slave to our own theology, but to pass the crucifixion of Jesus into the flesh of the world through baptism. It gives us the means to set up churches and legally baptise the world in Christ's death so that the mercy of Jesus can be spread to every person on earth. When the disciples tried to stop a man who was not one of their own group from working miracles in Jesus' name, Jesus told them, *"You must not stop him...Anyone who is not against us is for us."* (Mk.9:38-40).

That which is legal only satisfies the Law. It is not a tacit guarantee of holiness as far as God is concerned. In the Book of Revelation, all seven of the churches that the Holy

Spirit sent messages to were legal, but they were not all equally holy. Jesus taught that what God wanted from us was obedience to His words. Therefore, while it is true that we are no longer subject to the Law as far as salvation is concerned, we are obliged to keep the Law and obey the traditions set down by the ministers of the church so that righteousness is served. Jesus said, "The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do; since they do not practice what they preach." (Mt.23:1-3). Jesus has called us into obedience, both to his commandments and to our church. In the early church, as Christianity was growing and the people were beginning to learn that there were indeed wolves disguised as rams among the faithful, a debate arose about the role of baptism in such cases. What if a scoundrel, disguised as a minister were to baptise a person? How could the Holy Spirit go into a person at the direction of a dissolute sinner? Influenced by the Holy Spirit, they decided that it is the faith of the believer that makes the sacrament work, not the faith of the one who is performing the baptism. While the minister of the Law is doing his part, simultaneous with that, the angels of God are administering an invisible cross on the soul of the baptised person, and it is that mark which gives grace. While there have been many honest and holy ministers in Christ, the Law has a long history of reprobates administering it as well; so God has created a sacrament which has neutralized their impact. Not only can good theology not save us, bad theology can't hurt us if we live obediently in the words of Jesus. Our faith protects us. Jeremiah said that in our time, the least would know God as much as the greatest (Jer.31:34). In other words, because of the Gospel, the most illiterate Christian on earth knows as much about God as the most brilliant professor at the best Christian university. Knowledge of God comes from the Holy Spirit, not from an education, and salvation comes from Jesus Christ, not from this or that church. No church can offer eternal life. The churches offer Jesus and it is Jesus alone that imparts eternal life into those who do His will. When Paul said that Jesus has taken us outside of the Law with him, that is what he means. A Mormon or Samaritan who puts the words of Jesus into practice is as acceptable to God as a Lutheran or Catholic or Fundamentalist or Baptist who does the same. God has used the church to promote baptism on earth and to bring us to the four Gospels of the New Testament for salvation. If we are baptised and live our lives in the faith of Jesus we will be saved.

Baptism is not a gift of the church, it is a gift of God. Jesus died on the cross so that all men on earth could be baptised in his death and thus separated from the penalty of the Law. This is why few Christian churches require converts from other Christian churches to be re-baptised. Most of them recognize that every baptism in Jesus Christ is an authority

greater than the church in which that baptism has taken place. While Many people think that baptism is a legal initiation into a particular church, i.e., baptised Catholic or Seventh Day Adventist or Baptist, etc., it is just the opposite. Baptism doesn't bring us into theology, it takes us out of theology. Paul was very upset when the churches started to fragment into theological clusters. "Has Christ been parceled out?" he asked. Today, of course, there are tens of thousands of such assemblies, many of them claiming to be the only church on earth that Jesus really loves. They are wrong because baptism does not parcel us out as tradition has done with the churches. Baptism gathers us into one invisible Body of Christ. It is baptism that makes us all one Church. The fact that it is made complete by faith in Jesus Christ is signified by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. While infants receive the Holy Spirit after they have received the water of baptism, some people receive the Holy Spirit before they have been baptised. An example of this occurred at the time of Peter: *"While Peter was still speaking the Holy Spirit came down on all the listeners. Jewish believers who had accompanied Peter were all astonished that the gift of the Holy Spirit would be poured out on the pagans too, since they could hear them speaking strange languages and proclaiming the greatness of God. Peter himself then said, 'Could anyone refuse the water of baptism to these people, now that they have received the Holy Spirit just as much as we have?' He then gave orders for them to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ."* (Acts 10:44-48). What this shows is that the three baptisms of Jesus do not always come together at exactly the same time. When Peter later went to Jerusalem and was asked about this situation he said, *"I had scarcely begun to speak when the Holy Spirit came down on them in the same way as it came on us at the beginning, and I remembered that the Lord had said, 'John baptised with water, but you will be baptised with the Holy Spirit'. I realized then that God was giving them the identical thing he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ..."* (Acts 11:15-17). A person can be baptised in fire and the Spirit before they receive the water, as with those who have lived in Christ long before being formally baptised, or by the water before they receive the Spirit, as in the case of infants who are baptised in the Lord at the beginning of their lives. In both cases, the need for baptism is accomplished the same. The baptism of the one who waited until the end of his life is no greater than that of the baby who received the water in the very first weeks of life. Whenever the water is received, it satisfies the Law's demand by marking us with Christ's crucifixion, and for this reason, it does not ever have to be repeated.

Everyone must understand that what Jesus brought was the chance to live forever. We are not talking religion here. We are speaking about never having to die. No one ever offered that before He came. No one has convincingly offered it since. Jesus said that while

the burden of His offer was light and easy to carry, the road itself was narrow and had to be very carefully followed. Baptism is the key that unlocks the gate to this road. While it is entirely conceivable that God can save someone who is unbaptised, to willfully not be baptised despite all the cautions in the New Testament that baptism is essential to salvation, blatantly puts God to the test. It is like jumping off a building to prove that God will save you. To ignore the commandments of Jesus and the apostles simply to prove a personal theological ideology is deliberate rebellion against God. Refusing to be baptised, or to put off being baptised in the face of these commands, is purposeful disobedience of the scriptures. *"God says this: Put yourselves on the ways of long ago; enquire about the ancient paths: which was the good way? Take it then, and you shall find rest. Instead they have said, 'We will not take it'. I posted look-outs on their behalf: Listen to the sound of the trumpet! But they answered, 'We will not listen'. Then hear, you nations, and know, assembly, what I will do to them. Hear, earth! I am bringing a disaster on this people: it is the fruit of their apostasy, since they have not listened to my words and, as far as my Law, they have rejected that."* (Jer.6:16-19). The people that Jeremiah was referring to were not atheists, they were following their own intuition about God. Through self-interest, they were trying to conform God to their own personal theological bias, and it is this bias that their ministers were teaching the people to follow. The most important lesson Jesus taught the world was that he, alone, was the source of salvation. Our faith must be in Him alone. We cannot trust our own intuition and we cannot trust our religious leaders. How many times do we read about spiritual leaders who have misguided those who follow them? The Jews could not trust the priests or scribes or pharisees. Because they chose to follow the teaching of their Rabbi's and reject the commandments of Jesus, the Jews did exactly what the rebels of the House of Israel did when they mutinied against God in the passage out of Egypt across the Sinai at the time of Moses. Through willful rebellion, they blocked God's plan for them. To appease them in their defiance, Aaron, the High Priest (Moses' brother) built them a false idol in the form of a golden calf. This shows clearly that we must listen to God and do precisely what He says, no matter who tells us otherwise—even an official of the Church. Aaron was the High Priest. He was the image of the Hebrew church. His golden calf symbolized the theological structure that opposed the Christ whom God had sent to save Israel. This shows us that we must always be on guard against religious leaders who try to compromise the teaching of Jesus in order to appease the will of the people. Our personal theological ideas, and those of others, cannot be our guide. It is Jesus we must listen to. We must do exactly what He commanded. Jeremiah said, *"The priests teach whatever they please and my people love it, but when the end comes, then what will you do?"* (Jer.5:31). God will hold each of us personally responsible for our own behavior with

respect to Jesus Christ. If we defy Christ, we will not be able to fall back on our ministers and churches or on our own intuition and say that, because we were falsely led, that we are innocent. Jesus proved this when he said, "*Call no man on earth 'teacher' because you have only one Teacher: the Christ.*" (Mt.23:10). Because Jesus said that baptism is essential to salvation, and because the apostles repeated this admonition emphatically, no theological argument to the contrary can have any meaning.

13

The Kingdom of Heaven

"Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. But my kingdom is not of this kind." (Jn.18:36)

The kingdom of God is not in this world. It is being built a great distance away in a spiritual place Paul has called 'the third heaven'. There, a brilliant new spiritual Jerusalem is being formed by God to replace the sinful city now bustling in Palestine. Jesus said that a "great gulf" (Lk.16:26) exists between us and this heaven—a chasm so vast, not even the angels can cross it. To get into God's kingdom we must be born again. This means that we have to duplicate our entrance into life, but in another location and in another kind of body—a body, Jesus said, that is in the same substance as the angels (Mt.23:30). In our rebirth in Christ, the moment of conception occurs when we take the Holy Spirit into our soul (Jn.3:5-8). When God brought us into being on this planet, He did so by bringing us into birth in an entity we call 'flesh and blood'. But flesh and blood, Paul said, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Flesh is temporary and always dies. When Jesus told his disciples that they had to be reborn into a second life in order to see the kingdom of God (Jn.3:3-8), he brought to light the true meaning of the concept of the 'first-born' which fills so many pages in the Old Testament. In order to understand Jerusalem's new character under Christ, we need to examine closely the laws and prophecies of the Old Testament. Life in this world duplicates, by imagery, the life of the 'first-born', a vital theme in Hebrew law. Flesh and blood is the first-born creation, and the new eternal body that is to encase our soul in heaven through faith in Christ comes to life in our second birth. The symbolism surrounding these two births and lives is structured in the template of Moses. What these two different conception processes show is that all mankind must enter the kingdom of God through divine specifications rooted in Moses' decree of redemption. The Law says that every 'first-born' must be redeemed (Ex.13:11-15). God brought all of human society into unity with this legal decree by interpreting it in Christ's crucifixion. From the cross Jesus offered every person on earth reconciliation with God through conversion, redeeming all who had faith in Him through the forgiveness of their sins. The former redemption offered by Moses was not strong enough

to overcome the power of sin. Based on outward rules, it was too superficial to overcome the strength of Satan. Scripture is clear, the sacrifice necessary to accomplish true redemption is too great for human beings to make on their own: *"But man could never redeem himself or pay his ransom to God: it costs so much to redeem his life, it is beyond him; how then could he live on forever and never see the Pit..."* (Ps.49:7-9). The ransom, the Bible said, had to be Divine. *"It was neither messenger nor angel but his Presence that saved them. In his love and pity he redeemed them himself..."* (Is.63:9). God had Jesus institute a sacrifice in accordance with the Law of Moses that had superhuman power to redeem us from sin and death—a sacrifice far greater than human flesh could possibly accomplish on its own. *"His peace can ransom me from the war being waged on me."* (Ps.55:18). In order to keep the Law and save us at the same time, God gave us the sacrifice of His Son (See Isaiah 53). As the only Son of God—a celestial Presence sent down to earth from heaven—Jesus was the only man ever born on earth without sin and therefore he was the only person perfect enough to fulfill the requirements dictated by the Law. In His equality with God, Jesus elevated the Law to a level where it could actually work. He did not destroy the Law, He made it perfect. Moses, in the Book of Exodus, described the legal principles in the 'death of the first-born' that God would use as a basis for His everlasting redemption in Christ: *"When God brings you to the land of the Canaanites and gives it to you as he promised, you are to make over to God all that first issues from the womb... Of your sons, every first-born of men must be redeemed. And when your son asks you in days to come, "What does this mean?" you will tell him, "By sheer power God brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. When Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, God killed all first-born in the land of Egypt, of man and of beast alike...for this I sacrifice to God every male that first issues from the womb, and redeem every first-born of my sons."* (Ex.13:11-15). What is being dictated here is a law concerning the redemption of 'first-born sons'. The law does not tell us who the first-born sons are; God alone has the power to do that. God has determined that since we all live on earth in the flesh and blood of this first creation, each of us, male and female alike are subject to this law. Therefore, we all have to be redeemed in accordance with its directives.

The terms 'male' and 'sons' in this quotation are, of course, metaphoric. They apply to all mankind—to men and women alike. We can see exactly the same kind of symbolism in our own constitution which states that *"all men are created equal"*. Such directives are understood by all to be metaphoric and not exclude women. At the heart of Moses' decree concerning this redemption (Ex.13:11-15) lies the fundamental reason why Jesus had to die on the cross. When God gave Moses authority to bind a divine law on the people of Israel,

He made it binding on Himself as well. Because of this, the Old Testament became a template for the new. Jesus could not just come and institute a new law by His own authority, sweeping the old away as if it never existed. That would have put Christ outside the law. Instead, He came in perfect obedience to the old, fulfilling its directives and building the new covenant within the framework decreed by Moses. That is why to understand Christ we must first understand Moses. The divine rescue of Jesus has all of its roots in the architecture of the Torah. By describing the spiritual cities of Babylon and Jerusalem in the image of women and wives, scripture has bound them to the Law in this format. Both cities are always portrayed in feminine terms. The Holy Spirit has followed this format as well for reasons we shall show below. In the Book of Esther (in allegory) the Jerusalem of this world is referred to as the first wife of the king. Esther's prophecy follows that of Isaiah which sees the Jerusalem in Palestine as 'a daughter of Babylon', not the holy city of God that will come later (Is.48:1-2). The book's name for this first wife was 'Vashti', and in the metaphors of scripture, she stood for the first creation—bound to God by the vow of the first covenant. For refusing to attend a great feast offered by the king, Vashti, the first wife, was replaced by a new bride, Esther, who is now symbolically understood as the new kingdom, the heavenly bride Jerusalem created in the everlasting covenant of Christ. Vashti stood for the Jerusalem of this world, God's unfaithful city.

Using these two women in the Book of Esther as a base, the Holy Spirit has locked the two Jerusalem's (physical Jerusalem and spiritual Jerusalem) and their respective covenants into the Law's directives concerning nuptial vows (Num.30). *"Every vow or oath that is binding on the wife may be endorsed or annulled by the husband...but if he annuls them longer than a day after he learnt of them, then he must bear the burden of the wife's fault."* (Num.30:14-16). This decree in the Law allowed Jesus, the bridegroom of the new Jerusalem, to annul the first covenant and its penalty—but to do so, he had to bear the burden of the penalty which sin had bound on the first wife. He could do this because the Law allowed Him to stand in his Father's place: *"The rite of atonement must be performed by the priest who has been anointed and installed to officiate in place of his father."* (Lv.16:32). Jesus' Father was God. Anointed by the Father, Jesus was installed by Him into a priesthood of divinity which the Old Testament calls 'Melchizedek' (Ps.110:4). It outranked the priesthood of Aaron, giving Jesus full authority over the Rite of Atonement and everything that followed. Standing in for His Father, in obedience to the Law, He bore the sinful 'wife's fault' in his own body. In this way the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross at Calvary fulfilled the directives of Mosaic Law, allowing God to rescue us entirely within its own terms.

Captured in this creation is the sinful Jerusalem, the first wife of God. In Christ's rescue of her, her own sinful nature is to be left behind (a shell in Palestine) as she is transformed into the wife of the Son—the holy city in heaven. Each of us become a part of her when we take God's Spirit into us through the redemption Jesus offered us. Our first birth was into this world, the creation which fell into sin, and our rebirth is into the divine creation above. God's whole purpose in Christ is to rescue us from death. This is something no one else has power to do. Doomed by the Law's decree, everything in the universe dies—even the stars and their galaxies; in fact, even the universe itself. But Jesus has intervened on our behalf, bringing the promise of life after death, and with that promise, nullifying the inevitable penalty of the Law. Because of Jesus, eternal life is really possible and no one ever has to die. But everyone has to leave sin. Jesus revealed that Satan, not God, is the true prince of this world, and under his influence Satan has led mankind into a state of sin which has separated all people from God. So that we might understand this concept—so that we can see the world as it really is (i.e., as the doomed, sin-dominated prison of Satan), God has scattered us all across its surface. He is showing us that each one of us are prisoners held captive in a life completely opposed to the kingdom of God—in a place where we now stand condemned to death as a result of evil. This prison is the place the Bible calls 'Babylon'. The biblical dispersion to Babylon and our imprisonment in this world are symbolically identical. That is why when we are born into this world of iron. We find ourselves here locked behind iron bars in Satan's possession and awaiting execution under the terms of divine wrath—a wrath that began with the great flood at the time of Noah.

Just as that sentence began to be carried out, however, instead of destroying us, God sent a rescue. That rescue started with Noah and led to Abraham and then to Moses who prepared the people for Jesus. When all was in readiness, Jesus came to lead those who would listen to him to the safety God had prepared for those who love Him. He did not appear in theological chains, but instead, released us from all the restrictions and penalties imposed on us by the Law. Because He had come in the perfection of the Law He became its master and so was able to restate it in terms acceptable to God. In this way, He showed that He was the purpose of the Law from the beginning. He was the Messiah structured into the Law by the compromise at Sinai—the 'One' that Moses had warned the Israelites they were bound to listen to under penalty of disaster (Dt.18:19). Rejected by Judaism He released the remaining tribes from the rules of the Torah and in the process, allowed His salvation to encompass the entire world so that it could reach all mankind. Rescuing us from this world which is steeped in wickedness, God has created a new world. It exists in an entirely new

universe, absolutely perfect and without sin of any kind. Those who choose to follow Jesus Christ will be led by the Holy Spirit to this new paradise. *"All that the Father gives to me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I shall not turn him away...Yes, it is my Father's will that whoever sees the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and that I shall raise him up on the last day."* (Jn.6:37-40). And because of what he did, offering his own life in atonement, God has made Jesus the ruler of the new creation. *"The Father loves the Son and has entrusted everything to him."* (Jn.3:15). Because he laid down his own life to bring us this warning and offer of salvation, God has rewarded Jesus by sharing with him His own title. In this action, God has conferred absolute authority on Jesus Christ. *"Thus, as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to anyone he chooses; for the Father judges no one; he has entrusted all judgement to the Son, so that all may honor the Son as they honor the Father."* (Jn.5:22-23). That is why we call Jesus Master and Lord.

What this means is that God has made Jesus our King. Together with God and the Holy Spirit, He will rule over us in the new kingdom (Rev. 21:22). The Trinity will form its entire government. *"I have conferred the crown on a hero, and promoted one chosen from my people. I have selected my servant David and anointed him with my holy oil; my hand will be constantly with him."* (Ps.89:19-20). Before Jesus ascended to God he had not yet been glorified (Jn.7:39, Jn.20:17). This is why Paul said, *"Even if we did once know Christ in the flesh, that is not how we know him now."* (2 Cor.5:16). Once he had been glorified, Jesus ascended to a position as high or higher than any he had ever held before. He became King and God—his authority acknowledged by God to be absolute. *"Then angrily God addresses them, in a rage he strikes them with panic, 'This is my king, installed by me on Zion, my holy mountain'. Let me proclaim God's decree: he has told me, 'You are my son, today I have become your father. Ask and I will give you the nations for your heritage, the ends of the earth for your domain. With iron scepter you will break them, shatter them like potter's ware.'" (Ps.2:5-9).* The word 'God' is not a name, it is a title—it means 'King above all Kings', and represents absolute rule and authority over all creation. Christ's kingship, already made manifest by his glorification, will be officially revealed at the coronation which unites him with the kingdom of the third heaven. It is this coronation that Daniel saw in his vision of the future. *"I gazed into the visions of the night. And I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants."* (Dn.7:13-14). In that spectacular event—an event vividly foreseen by Daniel—Jesus, the only Son of God, is to become our own God—

King of his own kingdom—a rule he will share with the Father and the Spirit. *"This is my king, installed by me on Zion, my holy mountain"* (Ps.2:6).

When Daniel speaks of Christ's coronation (Dn.7:14), his reference describes the wedding of Jesus to the new creation which God has created for him to rule—the kingdom which Paul told us stands in the third, or highest, heaven (2 Cor.12:2). The marriage feast of the Lamb in scripture relates to this coronation. It is the wedding between Jesus and the new creation which God has made for Him—a creation in which God has made Jesus co-ruler with Himself and the Holy Spirit. *"The bride of Christ is the New Jerusalem—the great city of the kingdom of heaven. And I seemed to hear the voices of a huge crowd answering, 'Alleluia! The reign of the Lord our God Almighty has begun; let us be glad and joyful and give praise to God, because this is the time for the marriage of the Lamb. His bride is ready, and she has been able to dress herself in dazzling white linen, because her linen is made of the good deeds of the saints'."* (Rv.19:5-8). This world is just a stepping stone to that creation. Scripture calls it a 'threshing-stone' which Jesus Christ, himself, formed in order to separate and rescue the captive children of Israel from Satan's grasp—a process that requires threshing—much in the same way that wheat is separated on a threshing-stone from the chaff that surrounds it. The symbolism behind this is continuous in the Bible. David, for instance, purchased the holy rock on which the temple used to sit from Arunah the Jebusite who had been using it as a threshing stone. The Muslims now control that rock in Jerusalem and have built their own temple on the site—the Dome of the Rock. According to Jewish Law, Mosaic sacrifices can only take place on that rock and that is why these sacrifices have not been renewed. This former threshing stone, moreover, has always been considered by Jews and Christians to be the site where Abraham almost sacrificed his son, Issac, to God, long before Arunah or David were born. The theme of threshing, so closely related to the harvest of God's people is a favorite of the prophets. References to it salt and pepper all of the scriptures.

Our own world will soon pass away. It lives under a sentence of death because of the sin which inhabits it, but God's new kingdom will be eternal. Making a covenant with Jesus, God has given him this word: *"I have founded your dynasty to last forever, I have built you a throne to outlast all time."* (Ps.89:3-4). This kingdom has no equal in our world. Therefore, we cannot see it on earth. It exists in people, but not in structures. That is why Jesus said, *"The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, 'Look here! Look there!' For, you must know, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Lk.17:20-21). Our only view of it comes from prophecy: *One of the angels*

came to speak to me, and said, 'Come here and I will show you the bride that the Lamb has married'. In the spirit, he took me to the top of an enormous high mountain, and showed me Jerusalem, the holy city, coming down from God out of heaven. It had all the radiant glory of God and glittered like some precious jewel of crystal-clear diamond. The walls of it were of a great height, and had twelve gates; at each of the twelve gates there was an angel, and over the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel...The city walls stood on twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb... The wall was built of diamond and the city of pure gold, like polished glass... I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple, and the city did not need the sun or the moon for light, since it was lit by the radiant glory of God and the Lamb was a lighted torch for it. The pagan nations will live by its light and the kings of the earth will bring it their treasures. The gates of it will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there—and the nations will come, bringing their treasure and their wealth. Nothing unclean may come into it: no one who does what is loathsome or false, but only those who are listed in the Lamb's book of life... The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in its place in the city; his servants will worship him, they will see him face to face, and his name will be written on their foreheads." (Rv.21:9-22:15).

14

The Royal Priesthood

*"He was in the world that had its being through him
and the world did not know him." (Jn.1:10)*

John's declaration has enormous significance, but his extraordinary quote is such an enigma that few in Christianity have ever tried to explore its implications. It is certainly obvious that Jesus shared immense power with God in heaven long before he submitted himself to the lower status of a mortal human being. And the Bible shows that he resumed this stately position soon after his crucifixion and resurrection. *"Now, Father, it is time for you to glorify me with that glory I had with you before the world ever came into being."* (Jn.17:5). An even greater glory is to be His as well. As we saw in the last chapter, God has determined that Jesus is to be crowned King of the third (2 Cor.112:2) and highest Heaven. That coronation, celebrated even now in prophecy, will accompany the day of Judgment at the world's End (Dn.7:9-14). After Satan corrupted the world (a world which scripture calls Eden), God annihilated it in a flood and Jesus was brought in to remake it for a rescue (Jn.1:10). That remake is the Babylon we know, the threshing-stone upon which all mankind is now being tested by wickedness and violence. This threshing is vital to the harvest. Violence and wickedness are the feet of the pagans, and the children who are being trampled by them constitute the vintage of God. In the end, unrighteousness will rise to such a pitch the trampling will reverse, becoming God's own, with Babylon being consumed irrevocably, first in the flames of its own hand followed or joined by the hailstones of God. Even though Jesus himself fashioned our planet's character and substance, he did so only to prepare it so that it would present his sacrifice in terms so perfect that God's plan could be carried out exactly as He intended it to be. Coming here to rescue us, Jesus lowered himself to the status of a man. Although He appeared in this world the peasant son of a poor carpenter, born in a manger, the food troth of a cattle stall, Jesus was God's only Son—the first person in the royal family of God, and the king-elect of the new creation—a kingdom so vast that our own universe is dwarfed by it in comparison. In the lineage of the royal family of God, Jesus was different than His brothers and sisters. From the instant of His creation, He was born to the throne. We can see the same principal in our monarchies on earth in the

first-born sons of kings before they ascend to the throne.. They are princes—very special princes of course, but not yet kings. Because He was not yet king, during His stay on earth Jesus was known as the Prince of Peace. In the new creation He will be the King of Peace. And here there is a difference between God's world and our own. To God there is no past, present or future. All are one to Him. Therefore, what God intends to do, He has already done (Rv.21:6, Ps.22:31). If God intends to crown Jesus King, then his Kingship extends from the beginning of the past to the ends of the future, because God exists outside of time.

Even so, there is going to be a single event very soon that will fulfill every word in the prophetic sequence. Scripture refers to that event as a grand coronation—the wedding feast of the bridegroom of the new covenant. It is important to note that when Jesus walked on earth the Trinity had not yet been formed: *"There was no Spirit as yet because Jesus had not yet been glorified."* (Jn.7:39). Unglorified, and dwelling in flesh, Jesus could say, *"Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone."* (Mt.19:17). Nothing short of divine celestial coronation could alter that statement. The Bible testifies that the Holy Spirit appeared on earth 52 days after Jesus was crucified. At some point in the sequence of those 52 days, then, the Trinity had been formed. It was not an event anyone on earth saw; we see only its results. In the glorification which occurred at that time, Jesus was brought back to heaven to share *"that glory which I had with the Father, before the world was ever made."* (Jn.17:5). That glory, while it returned Jesus to the highest realm of royalty, did not, of itself, make Him King. Until the coronation, Jesus remains King-elect. His royal kingdom, even now still closed, is being readied for habitation in the highest heaven. His coronation will mark His marriage to that new kingdom, and it will confirm our prophecy of the existence of the Trinity -- a Godhead in three parts. By elevating us to the status of brotherhood with himself, Jesus made it possible for humanity to share in his equality with God. While His action sanctified us and made us royal, it did not deify us. Kingship and royalty are not the same. While all kings are royal, most royals never become kings. We can see that with royal families on earth. In these mortal institutions there can be many princes and princesses—brothers and sisters to the king. But there can only be one king. Thus a royal family can be quite large, but the lineage of the king always remains small and unique within that family. In heaven, divinity is a title which God has reserved for Jesus and the Holy Spirit alone. We are allowed to share in that divinity because the Holy Spirit dwells within each of us, but that does not give us the power to rule. As we saw in the last chapter, the word God is not a name, it is a title. It means King of Kings and implies absolute authority. The prophecy of the Trinity, which the Holy Spirit has encouraged almost all Christians to believe, elevates Jesus to the same level as God, sharing with Him everything

the Father has. Since the coronation of Jesus has not yet occurred, the Trinity is prophecy. In fact, until the Second Coming, everything we think or believe about Him or read in the Bible remains prophecy. We believe today only through faith, not by proven fact. This process is essential to our salvation. For it is only by faith that anyone can be saved. The Second Coming is the confirmation of all Christian prophecy. The coronation that is to be the climax of that event will trumpet God's official proof to all creation that our witnessing was true—that Jesus absolutely is the Lord and master of this universe as well as His own. On Him God has set His seal. Even now He is wrapped in the elegant robes of a celestial royalty that is infinitely superior to anything we know, and He has invited us to join Him in that glory as brothers and sisters. His offer is open to everyone, and is, He said, easier for the poor to accept than the rich. But the reward of acceptance makes all wealth and earthly power pale to insignificance by comparison. Simple compliance brings eternal life. In His train, death disappears and never returns. Royalty and eternal life—that is what Jesus has offered to each one of us as He prepares to mount His shared throne with God and the Holy Spirit as the reigning power of creation's vast and spectacular new kingdom.

When God allowed us to join Jesus as brothers and sisters, He made us a part of heaven's Royal Family, but He did not make us gods. We can see that easily by examining the priesthood of Christ, and studying how it differs from our own. Scripture explains that the priesthood of Jesus Christ is of a lineage called Melchizedek. *"Royal dignity was yours from the day you were born, on the holy mountains, royal from the womb, from the dawn of your earliest days. God has sworn an oath which he never will retract, 'You are a priest of the order of Melchizedek, and forever.'" (Psalm 110:3-4).* Our priesthood, however, extends from Peter (Is.22:21; Mat.16:17-19; Zech. 3:7). We can see the difference between these two priesthoods in the schematic of the Hebrew Law. While *"...there was...a covenant with David...a royal succession from father to one son exclusively...the succession of Aaron passes to all his descendants."* (Sir.45:25). As most of us are aware, King David was a metaphoric counterpart of Jesus Christ. Aaron, on the other hand, as the high priest of the old covenant, prefigured Peter, the high priest of the new covenant. David, Moses and Aaron were Old Testament persons to whom God assigned the task of prefiguring individuals in the New Testament to which their own lives and activities attested. The Old Testament is the schematic on which the New is based. This implies that the eternal priesthood of the royal family in heaven exists in two parts—one for the ruling divinity and another for all royals under that ruling divinity. Christ's divinity will last forever. It will never change. Nor will our relationship to it. As we have already seen, in the Old Testament schematic, the priesthood of Aaron was itself further divided into two parts, one high, the

other low. We can see this same division repeated in Christianity through Peter. Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ belongs to the high priesthood so that they can offer on the holiest of all altars (the naos within our soul) the highest sacrifices Jesus has made acceptable to God. The lower priesthood, as we shown in another chapter, is fulfilled in the ministers whose task it is to care for the services and upkeep of the churches. Obviously, most members of the low priesthood carry both high and low priesthoods simultaneously, so that they can make offerings on both altars—man's and God's—at the appropriate times. When the day comes for all those God has chosen to enter the kingdom of heaven, the lower priesthood—the priesthood of ministry—will be left behind because its need will have been fulfilled. It only exists for the sake of the earth. When the earth disappears, there will be no need for it anymore. And when it disappears it will be replaced by the Royal Priesthood of the Trinity. At that moment, the cosmic coronation Daniel foresaw will take place in fact and will bear dramatic witness before awestruck eyes that the sovereignty of Jesus is transcendent over all creation and that His promises are true and His reign will most assuredly last forever.

PART 5

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

"On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples, nations and languages became his servants. His sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed." Daniel 7:14

15

The Seven Churches

"The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp-stands are the seven churches themselves." Rev.1:20

The number seven in the Bible is the symbolic reference to perfection. It also stands for entireness and completion. When John addressed the Book of Revelation to the "Seven Churches in Asia" (Rv.1:4), he barely veiled a metaphore that aimed his work, not just to a group of congregations in a nation we now call 'Turkey' (See Map 9 in the Appendix), but to the entire world community of churches—every church that was ever formed in the name of Jesus Christ. At the time of John's writing, Rome was fiercely battling the growing Christian presence in its empire. That is why the book John wrote is so wildly symbolic. It was designed to communicate the key events in the coming victory of the Christian religion on earth to converts and believers without antagonizing the pagan Roman government which was highly sensitive and easily inflamed. The letter was addressed to seven cities, but its contents were meant for the entire Church community of the world. That this letter was designed from the beginning to have a world-wide audience was confirmed immediately—just a few sentences later—when John explained his vision. As he was standing by the seashore on the island of Patmos, an apparition appeared before his eyes bringing the glorified image of Christ into view. In the Lord's right hand were seven stars—and seven golden lampstands surrounded Him. Jesus told John that the seven stars were the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands that surrounded His image were the seven churches themselves (Rv.1:20). The heavenly structures (the stars and the lampstands) are universal, therefore the seven churches that they represent are clearly universal as well. So in the vision we are presented the concept of a universal Church made up of many diverse and scattered individual churches whose true number represents the completeness and perfection of the Christian community on earth. That the number seven would reference the entire Christian Body is confirmed in the Old Testament, especially in the Book of Proverbs, where these seven churches are termed the 'seven pillars' of the House of God: *"Wisdom has built*

herself a house, she has erected her seven pillars, she has slaughtered her beasts, prepared her wine, she has laid her table...Who is ignorant? Let him step this way...Come, eat my bread, drink the wine I have prepared! Leave your folly and you will live, walk in the ways of perception." (Prov.9:1-6). 'Wisdom' is the Old Testament designation for the Holy Spirit. Her 'house' is the kingdom of heaven. The seven pillars she has erected are the seven churches. The beast that has been slaughtered is Babylon and the table laid out is the feast of communion, a preparation for the great wedding feast that will celebrate the marriage of the lamb with the new Jerusalem that God has rebuilt in the heavens.

The same 'Wisdom' that erected these seven pillars, the Bible states, is a river that flows from the throne of God. That river, said Jesus, is the Holy Spirit. It is the 'living water' of God that flows from His breast (John 7:38-39). This same river of Spirit flows through the churches that have been set up in His name. The scriptures are filled with metaphores which describe this holy river and its seven tributaries. The Bible tells us that it rises from the throne of God and of the Lamb and that it flows crystal clear down the middle of the city street in the kingdom of heaven. *"On either side of the river were the trees of life..."* (Ez.47:7; Rev.22:1). Branching into seven streams, God's river and its tributaries are filled to overflowing with the power of sanctification. *"There is a river whose streams refresh the city of God, and it sanctifies the dwelling of the Most High."* (Ps.46:4). Called 'the river of life' (Rv.22:1), it passes into this world in the form of the Holy Spirit bringing peace to all who are washed in its waters. *"Now toward her I send peace, flowing like a river."* (Is.66:12). Although God's water is spiritual, we can see images of this river on earth in the waters of baptism, a washing which brings Christ's Holy Spirit into our hearts. For this reason, the water of God can be seen to flow through the churches which offer Jesus to the world. These churches are not a refuge for the perfect. They are hospitals for the spiritually sick. They offer to all who come into them, the life-giving waters that flow from God's throne. In order that all the churches share equally the Lord's fountain, God has divided His river into what the Bible calls 'seven streams'. *"And God will...stretch out his hand over the River, and divide it into seven streams, for men to cross dry-shod, to make a pathway for the remnant of his people..."* (Is.11:15). The Holy Spirit flows throughout the entire Church community. Seven streams for seven churches. The Spirit of God had to branch out this way because the captive people of Israel were so widely scattered. Isaiah's words show that the river of divine water which flows from the breast of Christ (Jn.7:38) has been divided into enough branches to reach all parts of the dispersion—the number 'seven' the metaphoric representation of the totality and perfection of its distribution. As a result, these 'seven holy springs' of God now bathe the seven continents of the world.

These streams mirror the churches through which they flow, creating all the holy lighthouses that shine the message of Christ's salvation toward God's people who are lost and held captive in Babylon.

The importance of water to life on earth has been verified by science. God, knowing all this long before science was born, has structured both creations (the new and the old) on water. This creation of Babylon, for instance, is a product of the 'lower sea'. Interestingly, science acting independently has discovered that life actually began on earth in the ocean. It is a physical metaphor of God's creation blueprint. John's Book of Revelation shows us that this water will pass away forever. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; the first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea."* (Rev.21:1). The creation of the kingdom of God which replaces the lower sea is the river which flows from the throne of God and which we know as the Holy Spirit. Bringing down to earth the waters that lay above the vault (in the Book of Genesis), Jesus has been able to transport us from one creation to the other. He has changed the 'water' which surrounds our soul. This exchange, of course, can not be accomplished until our souls have been purified through baptism and repentance. This is why Jesus preached so insistently "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4) The Holy Spirit cannot dwell in a body that is in debt to sin. We must be marked in the cross of Christ—the cross on which our sins were taken away.

Concealing the lost tribes of Israel in a spiritual captivity rather than in one genetic, God has been able to manifest their reappearance in the world in a way that has defied racial boundaries. Because their identity reflects behavior rather than race, the lost tribes of Israel have reappeared in theological form—as congregations of churches. In heaven there will be no tribes—no churches—just one people in Christ. But on earth, these divisions still exist (Rv.1:4)—divisions now defined by the mechanics of the scattering rather than by nationality: (*'...a man's enemies will be those of his own household'*). With the House of Israel dispersed to the farthest ends of Babylon, the call to return has had to be made in the most distant recesses of the world. When the House of Israel was concentrated in one land, it was easy for a single church to handle the entire flock. After the dispersion however, God's people were everywhere on the planet, speaking thousands of different languages. Stretching from one end of the earth to the other, this dispersion has proved far too widespread for one church or one language alone to make the call to return. *"It is not enough for you to be my servant, to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel; I will make you the light of the nations so that my salvation may reach to the ends of the*

earth. " (Is.49:6). Many churches in many languages were needed. Especially since God's call for return (the preaching of Christ) has been going on now for almost two thousand years. During all these centuries, entire world populations have come and gone scores of times over, showing that God intended to reach far more people than the earth could hold at any one time. *"Look round about you, look, all are assembling, coming to you...your desolate places and your ruins and your devastated country will now be too small for all your inhabitants.* " (Is.49:18). By having His message proclaimed over this long span of years, God has brought His word to a world the size of a *hundred earths*—bringing Christ's message to untold billions of people and to gigantic nations that did not even exist in the world when Jesus was born. *"Once more they will speak in your hearing, those sons you thought were lost, 'This place is too small for me, give me more space to live in'. You will then say in your heart, 'Who has borne me these? I was childless and barren, who has brought these up? I was left all alone, and now, where do all these come from? Thus speaks the Lord God: I beckon to the nations and hoist my signal for the peoples. Kings will be your fosterfathers and queens your nursing mothers. They will fall prostrate before you, faces to the ground, and lick the dust at your feet. You shall then know that I am God; and those who hope in me will not be put to shame."* (Is.49:20-23).

Time, then, has added a vast dimension to the size of Babylon. It has added centuries of unfolding new nations and peoples and thousands of kings and queens to the rolls of those who have fallen on their knees in worship to Jesus over the years. Covering all these different facets of Babylon has necessitated many callers in many different languages and social structures. This has produced Christian churches that number in the thousands. And although some seem to overlap, each church exists because it reaches a part of the world not completely touched by the others. The existence of all these different churches, then, has far less to do with the fact that one is better than the others than with God's need to penetrate much deeper into the scattering than any single church alone can accomplish. God, for instance, could not reach those whose ears were tuned to the Coptic church through Greek preaching, and He could not reach those who were Protestant through the Catholics. But in their combination—in all their *different* combinations—the Holy Spirit has brought everyone who is lost in this world to an identical fountain of salvation (the Gospel of Jesus Christ). So while we see on earth a virtual reality consisting of thousands of different churches, underlying them all is the single, but authentic reality of just one message—Jesus preached.

That is God's secret intention (Rv.10:7). He has used many vessels to carry it, but God has sent a single cup of wine and made all the nations drink it to the dregs (Jer.25:15).

"Take this cup of wine from my hand and make all the nations to whom I send you drink it, let them drink and reel and lose their wits at the sword I am sending among them." (Jer.25:15-16). Jesus told us that he, himself, was this sword: "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother...a man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Mt.10:34-36). Seeing many different cups and thinking many different wines, the nations and their people have all been fooled. "God roars from on high...the sound reaches all the inhabitants of the earth...for God is indicting the nations, arraigning all flesh for judgement; the wicked he abandons to the sword. See! The disaster spreads from nation to nation." (Jer.25:30-32). "It is for judgement that I have come into this world, so that those without sight may see and those with sight turn blind." (Jn.9:39).

The fact that Christ's seven churches do not see themselves as offering the same cup of wine to the world does not change the reality. As we have all seen, many of these churches see only themselves in this plan. Rejecting all the other tribes of God, they view themselves as the sole administrators of God's Gospel on earth. "Here!, Here!", they cry. "No!, No!, Not there!—Over here!" But all such claims are in vain. Jesus said, *"The coming of the kingdom of God does not admit of observation and there will be no one to say, 'Look here! Look there!' For, you must know, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Luke 17:20-21). While truth is Christ alone, every church in His faith has its own function to perform as far as God is concerned. This is true whether *we* understand that function or not. When Jesus told the story about the great supper (Lk.14:16+), he was preparing us to understand the scattered (seven-fold) nature of the Christian Church—describing how so many different churches could come into being from just one Gospel. In his parable, Jesus said that when the invited guests refused to come to the dinner, the master of the house turned to his servant and said, *"Go out into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in here the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame."* When he had finished carrying out the master's instructions, the servant returned and said: *"Sir, your orders have been carried out and there is still room."* Then the master said to his servant, *"Go to the open roads and the hedgerows and force people to come in to make sure my house is full..."* (Lk.14:21-24). Jesus told this story to illustrate the world's relationship with God. The ones who refused the banquet when it was first offered were the Jews. Those who were invited in their place were the people of the world. Jesus has shown us in this parable that God's first search for these people did not fill the banquet hall and so the offer was extended and made even broader: *"Go to the open roads and the hedgerows..."* We see both God's offer and the extension of His offer in all the scattered churches which have become even more scattered

and more diverse as the time has gone by. The Protestant church, for instance, did not even appear on earth until almost 1500 years had elapsed following Christ's crucifixion. Obviously, even after all those centuries had passed, the banquet hall was still not full, so God expanded His search—sending His servants farther out into the community. The explosion of churches which followed the birth of Protestantism has feathered God's Gospel into the minutest cracks of the population, and as these churches are born and grow, they continue to give evidence that *"there is still room"*. Looking at many of them there can be no doubt that some people have even been forced to come in, fulfilling Christ's exact words. It is to make certain, then, that God's house is full that all this diversity exists—a diversity which many Christians tend to think of only in terms of theological heresy.

Because the scattering is so diverse, every church on earth has its own unique theology. Since there are literally thousands of churches, there exist thousands of different theologies. In fact, there are billions, because every person's theology is unique. Like fingerprints, no two are exactly alike. In one way, this is chaos. Yet all these churches and their congregations have only one Jesus who speaks the exact same Gospel in every different church. Theology is chaos because it has to search the scattering, but the Gospel of Jesus unites all who are found. This is what Isaiah meant when he said that God would *"stretch out his hand over the river and divide it into seven streams, for men to cross dry-shod, to make a pathway for the remnant of his people..."* (Is.11:15). The river is the Holy Spirit and the churches are the seven streams through which God's Spirit flows. Isaiah's words show that God is using the chaos of theology to bring us to the unity of the Gospel. The hidden jewel that we are looking for is Jesus and his Gospel—it is not a concealed theological truth that God has hidden away from the world in some obscure and remote church or individual. *"I am God, unrivalled, I have not spoken in secret in some corner of a darkened land. I have not said to Jacob's descendants, 'Seek me in chaos'. I, God speak with directness; I express myself with clarity."* (Is.45:19). Perfect truth exists everywhere the Gospel is preached—it is something that God has put out in the open for everyone—so that truth is no longer the domain of church lawyers. God has brought us to Himself so that our lives are no longer dependent on men. *"Trust no more in man..."* (Is.2:22). *"Human pride will be humbled, the arrogance of men will be brought low. God alone will be exalted..."* (Is.2:17). *"Do not put your trust in men in power, or in any mortal man—he cannot save."* (Ps. 146:3). *"I am going to feed my flock myself."* (Ez.34:10-11). *"He will stand and feed his flock with the power of God...then the remnant of Jacob will...put no hope in men, expect nothing from mankind."* (Micah 5:6-7). Theology makes the call, but the call is not to itself. In every language, we are called to obey Jesus. It is the *preaching* that is important now, not the

individual theologies which drive it. Preaching exposes Christ to the world and when it does, it makes God's offer of salvation visible. The perfection of theology, therefore, is in Jesus preached. And perfection of atonement lies in simple obedience to the Gospel that Christ taught (Jer.31:34). This is how Jesus rescued us from the Law—not by destroying the Law—but by bringing something into it that had a higher worth—something that transcended theology completely. *"Happy the man who cares for the poor and the weak: if disaster strikes, the Lord will come to his help."* (Ps.41:1). When we are baptised in Jesus and follow His Gospel of compassion, all the legal boundaries dissolve. That means the churches exist not for themselves, but to bring everyone who comes into them to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is not the church which rescues us, it is the word of God. Remember, Jesus changed the sacrifice. No longer do the sacrifices inside church carry us to heaven. They never did. It is the sacrifices of mercy and good faith that we make **outside** the church that Jesus has made the doorway into the kingdom. Jesus said that God's commandments are kept only when we are kind, giving and compassionate to our neighbors. The Apostle John said, *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the dark. But anyone who loves his brother is living in the light and need not be afraid of stumbling..."* (1 John 2:9-10). When asked which was the most important commandment of God, Jesus replied *"This is the first: Listen Israel, the Lord our God is the one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: You must love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." The scribe said to him, 'Well spoken, Master; what you have said is true: that he is one and there is no other. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself, this is far more important than any holocaust or sacrifice.' Jesus, seeing how wisely he had spoken, said, 'You are not far from the kingdom of God.'" (Mark 12:28-34)*

We might ask, what constitutes a true church in Christ? The root of this question goes back to the Old Testament. In the Old Testament, the city of Jerusalem ended up the focal point of worship. Yet the power of Jerusalem was never the city itself—its authority was vested in the temple. When John revealed in the Book of Revelation that Jesus and God were the real temple (*"I saw that there was no temple in the city since the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb were themselves the temple."* -Rev.21:22), it meant that whoever carried Jesus and His word in their hearts carried the temple and the Holy of Holies within them as well. Verifying that God's true temple is now within us, Jesus said, *"Wherever two or more are gathered in my name, there I will be also."* Because He is the true temple of God, every person who believes in Jesus brings the true temple into their heart no matter where they are

or which church they might be in. This means that the full authority of Jerusalem and its temple has been scattered across the earth by God along with the people. And it means that whenever two or more people gather together in Christ's name, a *true church* of Jesus Christ is formed by their coming together—with all the authority that had formerly been vested in the Law of Moses—as much and probably more authority than Jerusalem ever had. Anyone who has Christ has the temple, and it is that temple alone which gives absolute authority—in both covenants. Since a legitimate church of Jesus Christ can be formed by two or more people who gather in his name, we can logically ask, 'what constitutes a cult?' This question was addressed in the very first days of Christianity by the Church when it had to deal with a great many heresy's—especially Gnosticism which taught that a person progressed to God through possession of a 'secret knowledge', parceled out on a fee-pay basis by its ministers. This, of course, is very similar to what Scientologists teach today. This heresy (and it was heresy because their theology was diversionary) became so widespread that the early leaders of the Church formulated a legal statement of faith that defined the borders of Christian theology. That statement is called the Apostle's Creed. It is a simple doctrine that was formulated about 100 A.D. This early creed was followed by a manifesto coming out of the Council of Nicea which declared the concept of the Trinity—i.e., that Jesus, God and the Holy Spirit were three persons in a single nature. For 19 centuries these two catechisms remained the definitive determination of the boundaries between a legitimate Christian Church and a cult. All disagreements between the churches revolved around the creed. For instance, when the Eastern Orthodox split away from the Roman Catholic Church one thousand years ago, it was over just a single word in the creed. When Martin Luther formed the Protestant Church, he retained the basic structure of the Apostles' creed. It was not until just before the 20th Century that these two creeds came under serious attack. Starting in the 1840's, churches like the Latter Day Saints, the Salvation Army and the Seventh Day Adventists appeared which no longer accepted the Christian creeds. The latter was born out of the writings of a New England Baptist named William Miller who, upon reading the Book of Daniel, proposed that the end of the world was at hand and announced the then-revolutionary idea that Christ was about to come down to the earth and rule in a 'thousand-year millennium'. He determined the year for the world's 'end' as 1843, which of course, came and went without incident. As our current century began, churches outside the creeds of the early church began to surface in larger numbers. The fundamentalist movement was born out of the 1920 preachings of a Los Angeles evangelist named Aimee Semple McPherson. Her evangelism, and that of Billy Sunday, spawned a great array of non-denominational (non-creed) pentecostal churches like the Assemblies of God, the Christian Disciples of Christ Church, etc. Over the ensuing 70 years, these evangelistic churches have evolved into

hundreds of offshoots—now too many to count. Many of the more modern groups have replaced the Apostles' Creed with a single theological principle—a simple sentence in the Book of Romans—which states that everyone who verbally acknowledges Jesus as their savior and believes in their heart that Christ is the Lord will be saved. There are hundreds of such groups today, but their combined population relative to the orthodox church still remains small. The notable exception is the United States where Baptist theology is dominant.

Some churches teach that a cult is defined by size. But the true definition is cemented in the Gospel. A church is transformed into a cult, not by size, but by its rejection of Christ's Gospel of compassion and humanitarian love for all people. Filled with fear and driven by hatred themselves, cults always teach that God hates most people who call themselves Christian. This puts them at war with the Body—with almost all the other churches. Holding to a selfish (and self-righteous) arrogance, they harbor little love for mankind. This is why we often find them holed up in secretive enclaves hiding out somewhere. They love each other, but they hate everyone else. Ruled by fear and paranoia, cults often stockpile weapons to protect themselves against their many enemies. Where the churches of Jesus Christ always reach out into the world community to help the downtrodden and the poor, cults shun the rest of the world except to broadcast their hate tracts, withdrawing into tightly-knit clusters designed only to help themselves. Cults, then, are diametrically opposed to what the Holy Spirit has spent the last 2000 years building on this earth. Instead, they preach the same message Satan tried for so long to sell to God: that most people who worship God are intrinsically evil (Job 1:9). Up to now, such doctrines of hate and fear regarding worship have not been widely shared. Although a few of these groups are very vocal and have made their views known throughout the world, so far they continue to remain isolated and constitute only small groups of dissidents, forming just a tiny fraction of the world's religious body.

It was to protect the developing Church from the preaching of religious cults that the early disciples of Christ drew up the two creeds in the first place. For as long as these two creeds governed the churches such doctrines of hate and fear regarding worship were easily combated. But now, with a great number of churches being formed outside these creeds, the cults have been able to edge in with them and for this reason, now constitute a growing threat to true worship. We can see this in their abandonment of the cross, the symbol of our freedom from sin. It is only because of the cross that Jesus ascended on purpose in our name, that we have a chance to live forever. Without it, all would be lost. Abandoning the

symbol is the first step in abandoning that knowledge, the essence of our understanding of Christ and the true mechanism of our escape from death.

The Bible teaches that Satan will come to militarize the world, filling it with war (Rev.20:7-8). Since a great many cults are like-minded, they follow Satan's call with the vengeance of a Jihad (holy war). That is why it is important for those who love Jesus and the peace He taught to remain wise enough not to become absorbed in the evil they encourage. Any 'church' that stockpiles guns and weapons, or encourages its members to do so is not of Christ. See Matthew Chapter 5. The same is true of hatred. If we do not love people, we do not love God. That is why Jesus told us that we must pray for our enemies and be kind to those who are still embraced by the chains of Satan. Jesus warned, *"You will know them by their fruits."* (Mt.7:16). And he made it easy. Ministers are witnesses, they are not intermediaries or teachers (Mt.23:8-10). Jesus, alone is the Teacher about God. Salvation does not come from any church or minister or prophet. Salvation comes only from the words of Jesus Christ. It does not come from theology. It does not come from church laws or rules. When Jesus told us to follow him, he was not telling us to follow someone who talks about him or who claims to have inside knowledge of him. Yet sound advice is critical. So despite the fact that Jesus has set us free from the chains of theology, God has made the seven churches of Christianity the central focus of the ingathering. This would seem the ultimate paradox, but it shows, that with God, Law and faith must go together (Mt.5:17-19). That is why we always find Jesus associated with 'creed'—especially with those creeds that come to us from the time of Paul and the Apostles and which guided the early Church.

God showed John the seven churches in the image of seven golden lampstands. His vision ties the design of the scattered churches to the structure of the ancient Hebrew lampstand (the Menorrah) which stood inside the Tabernacle of the Testimony at the time of Moses. In the Old Testament the golden lampstand can be seen as a central component of the Hebrew temple. This lampstand was created according to directions given to Moses by God: *"You are to make a lamp-stand of pure gold...Six branches must extend from the sides of it, three from one side, three from the other (Each) branch is to carry three cups shaped like almond blossoms...The calyx and the branches must be one piece with the lamp-stand, and the whole made from a single piece of pure gold, beaten out...Then you are to make seven lamps of them and set them so that they throw their light towards the front...See that you make them according to the pattern shown you on the mountain."* (Ex.25:31-40). As divine metaphor, the vision is designed to show us that God sees the scattered churches of

Christianity as the essential framework of His entire religion—a framework encompassing every church on earth dedicated to Christ's Gospel. The divine unity of these seven different lamps was made clear when Moses was instructed by the angel of God to design all seven exactly the same down to the smallest detail, and all out of the same piece of gold. It is obvious in Jesus' revelation to John (Rv.1:20), that this seven-pronged Mosaic lampstand (the menorah) was made to prefigure the structure of the ingathered Church. The design of that lampstand was the result of a vision from heaven (Ex.20:32, 37:17+), and though it has been altered today by modern Jews, its structure in biblical times followed the seven-lamp format dictated by God to Moses. Everything in the Old Testament was created for Jesus. We can now see that this even included the lampstand. The Holy Spirit not only ordered the construction of this lampstand He made its construction details an important issue in the Old Testament specifically to highlight the seven churches of the Messiah. That is because these seven churches were to be the mechanism of God's 'lamp of life' on earth. God has always presented Himself to us in the form of important symbolic images like this. In his vision, John witnessed Jesus in the image of a lamb—the Lamb of God in heaven. John said that this Lamb had *"seven horns, and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits which God has sent out all over the world."* (Rv.5:6). The seven eyes correlate with God's instructions that the cups on the lampstand be shaped like almond blossoms. The almond was called the 'watchful tree' because it was the first fruit tree to blossom in the spring (thus it 'watched' for spring's appearance when new life appeared). Since John had earlier described the seven spirits as *"the angels of the seven churches"* (Rv.1:20), his statement here infers that Christ's 'eyes' and 'power' are all brought to a single focus in the seven churches the angels of those seven churches oversee. Each church expands Christ's proclamation deeper into the world, so that the Lord's light can reach into every part of the darkness, allowing the Holy Spirit to search through the murkiest shadows of this world for the lost people of God. In the spread of this preaching, God's Church has not grown haphazardly. The Holy Spirit has built these 'seven' lighthouses of Christian faith precisely the way God instructed. Yet they, themselves are not faultless. John's whole address to this lampstand of churches in the Book of Revelation consists of seven congratulations mixed with stern warnings for improvement.

According to the World Almanac, 57% of Christ's Church on earth is Roman Catholic. About 20% is Protestant, and 18% is Greek. Roughly 4% is Anglican. The final 1% includes all the other denominations. These numbers illustrate a worldwide distribution of Christians formed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. They show us that sturdy and time-tested mechanisms for helping Christians hold onto their faith throughout their entire lives is very important to God. Three-quarters of all Christians on earth are either Greek or

Roman—two churches structured solely on the Perpetual Sacrifice (communion) and filled with religious images and the promotion of structured rules concerning confession of sins and repentance for forgiveness. Binding faith in Christ to strong mechanisms like these in church worship is valuable for many because it helps perpetuate a life-long adherence to the Gospel's teachings while guaranteeing protection from cults—a grave danger for those of weakest faith. Many find that they are able to hold onto Jesus more securely when faith has discipline. The distribution statistics above bear witness to this and show that a great many Christians appreciate this kind of structure in their faith.

By changing the sacrifice, God made us responsible for conducting our own worship. We, ourselves, have to offer the sacrifices that please God—justice, mercy and good faith. No longer can the church make these sacrifices for us. We have to make our own walk in Christ. What we get from the church is encouragement not to stray from that journey. Grace is a variable. It must be held onto for life. This 'holding on' is the essence of Paul's 'race'. Anything that helps us maintain our faith for a lifetime is good and necessary. And that brings us to another revelation preached by Paul. All people come to Christ the same; not through superior knowledge, but only by faith. The classic picture of this faith is expressed in the image of a person kneeling before God. And no special knowledge or magic statement is needed to improve this picture. The Bible assures us that *anyone* who kneels in repentance before Christ receives divine forgiveness. God, who has no favorites, has scattered His offer of salvation across the entire earth. No one who lives in Christ will be turned away from this salvation. The 'smartest' Christians who claim to have achieved a superior understanding of Jesus will have no advantage over those they view as 'simplistic or 'superstitious'. God made it this way so that our faith "*would not depend on human philosophy but only on the power of God.*" (1 Cor.2:5). All our arguments are just foolishness to God. He has built the Church the way He wants it—a way that is completely contrary to our earthly intelligence. The Holy Spirit has given us a Church filled with Catholics, Jews, Protestants, Greeks, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and hundreds of others. A Church put together not by ritual or knowledge or by some kind of secret 'holy intellect', but simply by faith in the salvation of the one Jesus Christ.

Without the churches to support us, we would be at the mercy of Satan and soon lose the war that he is waging against us. These churches are the fortresses which God has provided for our protection against the onslaught of the dominions and powers of the underworld. As the citadels of our faith, they offer us a place of refuge against the secular world. Offering baptism to the world, they keep us safe from the ravages of the Destroyer.

The church as a fortress plays a key role in scriptural prophecy. Daniel said that when the beast attacks the people of God he will house his forces in the sanctuary 'citadel'. It is in this Christian fortress, he prophesied, that they will erect the Abomination of Desolation (Dn.11:31-32). The beast cannot put up his sacrilege in the temple itself, because God has made the temple spiritual. The temple is in the hearts of the people. Only the sanctuary 'citidal' remains as a building.

God has done the same with church government. Previewed in the structure of the lampstand, the seven churches have been built by God in the schematic of the Torah. Hebrew government in the Old Testament was divided into three offices: spiritual, temporal and prophecy. Aaron figured the priesthood and Moses the temporal leader who wore the royal insignia. The prophets structured the third office of Hebrew government. Because it has been built on this template, the same fundamental structure is replicated in the formation and development of the churches of Christianity. Looking at the Apostolic appointments made by Christ, we can see the very same offices. For instance, when Jesus commissioned Peter, He appointed him the 'rock' upon which God would build the Christian Church. This appointment transferred into Peter the sacred image of the temple 'rock', the threshing stone on Mount Moriah upon which Solomon built the Hebrew temple. Solomon's action made that rock in Jerusalem the holiest material entity on the planet as far as the Jews are concerned. That rock, according to Hebrew Law is the only place on earth where God's temple can legally exist. By the power of God, Jesus transferred the sanctifying power of this boulder into Peter. The implication was enormous. Upon Peter, the temple of God could be built and spread across the earth in the hearts of all who came into line with him through baptism. As the first priest in the line of Christ's highest priesthood, Peter's appointment (Mt.16:18-19) secured an office held ready for him by Aaron—the first High Priest in the Hebrew Law. It is a station we all become a part of when we are baptised in Jesus. Paul was selected to head a position which equates to Moses, and therefore, to the Law. It is he who now wears the royal insignia. The station he assumed was termed in the Old Testament: 'Governor of the Sanctuary and Covenant'. It was the office originally held by Moses—a divine appointment which carries with it dominion over the Law. We know that God gave him this office because it was Paul whose theology forms the basic structure of the New Testament, just as it is Moses' theology upon which all the words of the Torah are based. It was his appointment to this office that gave Moses authority to write the Law in the first place. And now we can see in the writings of Paul, that Moses was actually holding the office for his successor in Christ. This change was critical to our developing faith because it allowed Paul authority to legally revise the Law. This office gave him

authority to pen scripture itself—a New Testament that was different from the old. Since Paul's post is theological in nature, Jesus made it subordinate to the office of faith which was the commission of Peter. Because in Christ, faith rules law, Jesus reversed the authority which the Hebrew leaders applied to these two offices. The old covenant had given Moses dominion over Aaron. So while Jesus retained the Old Testament schematic, by reversing the authority of the two offices, He has given faith dominion over theology. By amending the Law of Moses with the theology of Paul, God has brought law and faith together. The Book of Moses with all its rules about killing animals and its obsession with strict regulations rather than kindness was not accountable to God. So Jesus appointed Paul to bring the Law into line with the Gospel. God authorized him to reform Moses' guidelines so that all theology would clearly point to Christ. And we know that this is true because Paul himself has now become the very 'Bible' he reformed. His words are now scripture. As such, they dictate the fundamental principles guiding all churches which are formed around Christ. It is no longer the Torah that rules us, but the New Testament. Yet even that New Testament has been made subservient to the Gospel Jesus preached. So, under Christ, Law is not supreme—it must obey faith. That is the true meaning of Peter's authority over the Christian Church.

With its power to bind or unbind sin, the rule of the seven churches is ironclad (Ps.2:8-12). Many question whether or not the church has the power to forgive sins. Jesus said we *all* have that power, so how could the church not have it? *"Those whose sins you forgive, they will be forgiven, but those you retain, they shall be retained."* (Jn.20:23). This is the law of the iron scepter (Ps. 2:9). As we shall see in the pages ahead, this 'rule of iron' is what the seven churches are all about—it is the 'power of the holy people'—the scepter of the reign of Christ on earth. In sending His Gospel across the globe, Jesus has shown that the *whole world* (not just 12 tribes of Israel) are accountable to the Mosaic decree of sin and death. No longer under the old Mosaic terms, of course, but in terms redefined by Paul in light of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God gave the churches this power of forgiveness so that they would have authority to go out all over the earth and unbind the chains that Satan had imposed on all the people of the world.

Can the Christian theologies defined by men dictate rules to God? We know that everything has been made subservient to the words of Christ. God made Jesus our supreme guide because men were not trustworthy *"Trust no more in man..."* (Is. 2:22). *"Doom for the shepherds who allow the flock of my pasture to be destroyed and scattered...but the remnant of my flock I myself will gather from all the countries where I have dispersed them,*

and I will bring them back...not one shall be lost." (Jer. 23:1-4). This is why He reduced the authority of all the shepherds and rescued us by Himself (John 10:1-21). Jesus alone is the "good shepherd". We can see God's divine demotion of ministerial authority in the scattering of the 'Seat of Moses'—a scattering which has now made that one seat a great auditorium of chairs, most having identical (but subservient) authority under Jesus, since what was once one chair under Moses has now become thousands under Christ. We know that Jesus gave us some freedom from all this theology because we are free now to celebrate Christmas or Easter if we want to, or sing or dance if we wish, or worship on any day of the week we please without fear of God's wrath. Paul spoke to such freedoms in the Book of Romans. He said we are justified now by faith and not by rules of Law. This freedom is also why we can go from one church to another and not lose the salvation Jesus guaranteed us. We are free to choose between church and church. If a Catholic becomes a Methodist, salvation is not affected by the move. Nor vice versa. Jesus defined our obligation to this diverse structure when he said that the ministers all sit in the 'Seat of Moses'—the seat of the Law. *"The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say, but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practice what they preach."* (Mt.23:1-3). So the key to salvation still lies with Christ and His Gospel. We can see this by the fact that all the scattered churches in Christianity have vastly different rules and regulations. They all have the same Jesus, but none of them have the same man-made rules or inspirations—and, while we have been given the freedom to choose between them, we have not been given the freedom to disobey the Gospel's teachings.

Christ commanded us to obey the law because *God* keeps the law, and Jesus wants us all to behave like God. A just judge does not break the law. But now we are bound to the law of Christ, by rules of justice rather than by rules of washing and cleaning. We can see this commitment to justice in God's own actions. Because God bound Himself to Moses' decrees, everything Jesus did was done so that the Law would be kept and the scriptures fulfilled. He kept all those rules (even the ones that God did not care for—like the killing of birds and sheep for instance) for justice's sake, and so that we would not have to. In fact, the reason Jesus had to die on the cross was so that the terms of the Law of Moses could be kept exactly as written. Jesus overcame the Law and became its master by completing it on its own terms. While faith may free us to some degree from the Law, it does not free us from Christ. God led us out of the Law so the rules of Jesus would have no competition.

The power of the Church is to give the world Jesus. He does the rest. In Christ, faith rules the Law. If it did not, Catholicism could condemn Protestantism and Protestantism could condemn Jehovah's Witnesses. But that is not how it is in Christ. When a person lives in the Gospel, nothing can touch him. That is why a Mormon cannot condemn a Catholic or vice versa. *"...each must be left free to hold his own opinion."* (Rom.14:5). *"If a person's faith is not strong enough, welcome him all the same anyway without starting an argument."* (Rom.14:1). The churches cannot use their authority to *create* sin, only to bind it or unbind it. This means that no Christian has power to retain sin in the sinless. If God sees someone as sinless, no one on earth—not even the strongest church—has power to change that. In saying this, scripture proved once and for all that how we behave in the compassion and love of Christ is far more important to God than what we believe or practice theologically. We know that this is true because the hostility of the Law makes us enemies of one another—which is what the churches often do—while the love of the Gospel brings us all together as brothers and sisters in the one same Lord—which is something the diverse churches are unable to do. That is why Isaiah told us to go back to basics in our search for God: *"Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear these words behind you, 'This is the way, follow it!'"* (Is.30:21). The 'right' and the 'left' are all the different churches. The voice behind us is that of Jesus when His Gospel first touched us.

16

The Mortal Wound

"The Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says this to all the exiles deported from Jerusalem to Babylon, 'Build houses, settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce...you must increase there and not decrease. Work for the good of the country to which I have exiled you; pray to God on its behalf, since on its welfare yours depends.' " Jr.29:4-10

Throughout this book we have explored the Bible's intimation that history is not haphazard or serendipitous. Caught in the snare of God it lurches and grinds where God guides it. The pathway He has directed plows along in the footsteps of scripture's prophecy. In the Book of Ezekiel, we read that 'the 'king of the Jews' made a treaty with the king of Babylon, submitting the entire House of Israel to an extended captivity among the countries of this world'. As a prophet (one of the greatest in the history of Israel) the words of Ezekiel were meant for a people not of his time. More than that, the fulfillment of his vision mortally wounded pagan Babylon, converting a secular world into a Christian one. This created the millennium. The king of Israel truly defined in this prophecy was not Zedekiah, a contemporary of Ezekiel, nor was it Jehoiachin, the just-crowned king taken captive to Babylon. It was Jesus Christ, the great king of Israel's future. And the 'king of Babylon' with whom Jesus transacted scripture's treaty was the emperor of Rome, not Nebuchadnezzar. As we have seen, the treaty itself was Christ on the cross. Since Rome acted on behalf of Babylon in the promulgation of this treaty, its capitol city has since been viewed as Satan's throne on earth—a fact that seems to have established Rome as the capitol city of the prince of this world. In an earlier chapter we explored the fact that the spiritual forces which drive human behavior are portrayed in scripture as emanating from two rival cities. On one side there is Jerusalem, the city of God, and on the other, Babylon, the principality of Satan. With the definition of Rome established, we are able to see these two cities in both spiritual and physical forms. Spiritually, the city of Satan governs ordinary human behavior on our planet. *"The woman you saw is the great city which has authority over all the rulers on earth."* (Rv.17:19). The city of God dictates obedience to the Gospel

and rules all who submit themselves to that obedience. Each city, then, has been created by spiritual forces that dictate the way its respective populations behave. Although these two cities have now been assigned specific geographic identities, Jesus' revelation that God's city did not exist on this planet but lay hidden far away in a kingdom in heaven proved that these geographic representations are purely metaphoric. The actual city of Rome is no more satanic than the Jerusalem that sits between Palestine and Israel. The two cities in scripture depict opposing spiritual powers. Coming from heaven, God's force is the Holy Spirit. This is the power of Christ that encourages people to be good. The other—the spiritual force emanating from Satan—is the unseen power that urges everyone to be evil. It is not an evil easily recognized, since it encompasses the traditional way the world behaves—the kind of behavior we ourselves engaged in before we turned to God. Nor is it a "good" that follows world belief, but only the "good" as defined by Jesus in His Gospel. Both of these cities are portrayed in the Bible in the feminine gender. That image defines our birth. Born into the flesh we started life on this planet as a child of 'mother nature'—i.e., a child of Babylon—a child doomed to die. Conversion into Christ transforms us from that condemned city into the residence of heaven and its city of eternal life. Jesus was sent to find those who wanted to belong to God, free them, and take them to His own city in the third heaven where they are to be given eternal life. The Roman Empire's personal role in this prophecy crystallized several hundred years after the original Babylon had disappeared into history when it destroyed Herod's Temple, wiped out the Sadducees and Essenes and marched most of the surviving leaders of Judea off into captivity. This Roman enslavement of the Israeli nation duplicated the internment of God's people in ancient Babylon, but replicated it, not only on the world stage, but expanded its symbolic "70 years" duration into aeons, producing an open-ended incarceration that now extends to the farthest reaches of the planet. Freedom from captivity to the original Babylon involved only one tribe and was offered to the Jews within a calendar 70 years of their enslavement—a mere blink of the eye by comparison. The captivity culminated by Rome encapsulated all 12 tribes by virtue of the fact that Rome in the first century ruled the entire world. History shows us that Rome, formulating the exile by decree, became heir to all the Jewish dispersions. As a result, the dispersion which followed the crucifixion of Christ completed an exile from Palestine which had been taking place, tribe by tribe, for almost 800 years—beginning just after the death of Solomon when the House of Israel split apart from the House of Judea, breaking into two hostile camps, irrevocably separated. Or so it seemed. The solidarity of the Hebrew nation was erased by this split, the repercussion of which disabled the country's ability to defend itself against foreign invasions. Consequently, one after another, all of the tribes of Israel were carted away from their homes in the Mosaic "Promised Land"—and that country now emptied of the two

Houses of Israel came to be called "Palestine". In the end, even the Christians had to leave Jerusalem. Peter and Paul both went to Italy—to Rome, and the Jerusalem branch of the Christian Church once headed by James ended up fading away and finally disappearing somewhere in the sands of the eastern desert. One might have thought that the church in Jerusalem should have become the cornerstone of the entire Christian faith, but the Holy Spirit had other plans. Scripture was didactic. The conversion had to take place in Babylon (Micah 4:10). And it had to occur as an escape from captivity (Is.52:11-12). So the cornerstone and all its central pieces went to Rome in fulfillment of the prophecy "...*your king shall go into exile, he and his princes with him*" (Amos 1:14-15). "*But in the country of their exile they will take all this to heart and acknowledge that I am the Lord their God...They will sing my praises in the country of their exile, they will remember my name; they will not be stubborn anymore, but, remembering what became of their ancestors who sinned in the sight of the Lord, will turn from their evil deeds...I will make an everlasting covenant with them.*" (Baruch.2:30-35). By the time the Roman Tenth Legion descended on the Judean landscape in 67 A.D. in preparation to destroy it, all of Christ's Apostles had long since departed the country, having joined the dispersion by heading north and west into a land symbolically called Babylon, building churches wherever the people would listen and believe. Wherever they went, the Roman Empire was there as well—holding almost the entire civilized world in its captive grasp. For this reason, Rome quickly became the nucleus of the House of Israel's dispersion. This was clearly demonstrated by events which occurred in the first forty years of the Church. Peter, whom Jesus had appointed as the head of the Church, went to Rome and was crucified there by Nero. Paul, in chains, also went to Rome, and likewise died there. Both of them were victims of the sixth beast's attack on the Christian church. At the same moment Nero's attack on the Church was taking place, the Jewish nation was being destroyed in Palestine by his generals. At the conclusion of this destruction, Jerusalem's survivors were led away into Roman slavery. This sweeping abduction was memorialized on Rome's Via Sacra with a massive arch—the Arch of Titus—a monument covered with frescoes portraying the enslavement of the Jewish nation.

The physical city of Rome, then, is intimately tied to the 'Babylon' into which scripture commanded the House of Israel's captivity (Jer.27:16-22). This is especially true of its leadership. That is why the venue change which occurred within this city is so important. Because it had refused to repent in His name, Jesus said that the Jewish nation would be stripped of its authority and leadership over the House of Israel, and that authority would be given to new tenants. Prophecy shows us that change occurred the moment Jesus chased the Jewish money-lenders from the temple with a whip (John 2:13-22; Hosea 9:15;

Is.66:6; Nahum 3:1-2; Is.10:26, etc.). When the Jews rejected Jesus, the ecclesiastical power of Jerusalem in Palestine (the Jewish temple and its priesthood) disintegrated. As proof of this disintegration, both were later destroyed in the Roman war and neither were ever seen again in the Jewish religion. Yet both reappeared in Rome under Christian leadership almost instantly, proving the transformation to the new tenants. The entire ecclesiastical power of the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and the majesty that surrounded it—everything that one could have seen in the temple in Jerusalem at the time of Christ is now in Rome under the management of Christian tenants. This includes the high priest and even the liturgy of the sacrifice—now centered, not in sheep and goats and doves, but in Jesus Christ. The Vatican, therefore, images physical reflections of both the priesthood and temple—the most graphic images of Judaism's authority—held in the bondage of Babylon, and now under the management of the new tenants that Jesus predicted for it. While this image represents only the head of the Body of Christ, the dominion of Christianity over Babylon is a spiritual relationship that is shared equally by all the churches. God has no favorites (Eph.6:9). Babylon stands not just for Rome, but for the whole world, and the true Church of Christ includes every church on earth that accepts Jesus Christ as its Lord and Savior.

The world's physical grasp on the House of Israel could not be broken physically. It had to be dissolved spiritually. That is because the true captivity is internal. Our real captor is sin, not the Roman empire. Yet the Roman empire of Christ's time was, in its pagan rule, the chief progenitor of sin in the world. It held that the emperor was a god, and commanded the people, through pagan temple worship to actively sin against God. Not only did it hate the God of Israel, it hated the House of Israel as well and tried to destroy both of its two branches. First in its warfare and enslavement of the Jews and finally in its unrelenting attacks against the Christians. As a result of this warfare, Christians had to live and hide in the catacombs that lay beneath the Roman streets. Nero, the emperor who virtually destroyed the leadership of the Roman Christian church by himself, has been shown by Jeremiah in prophecy to have put to death many of the Apostles, including Luke, Peter, Paul and many others who accompanied Christ's twelve Apostles at the top of Church leadership (Jer.52:24-27). Nero's fury has earned him the designation as the sixth head of the beast in the Book of Revelation. Yet, despite this dying mayhem, the Word of God had delivered against Babylon a mortal wound. The Word of Jesus had reached out into the farthest wilds of Babylon to extend His divine offer of freedom to anyone who wanted it.

It was an offer accepted. And the proof of Christ's victory in the world was the conversion of Rome—the pagan empire that ruled the world. The capitol of paganism fell to God, collapsing on its knees in worship to Jesus Christ. The hated Roman Empire disappeared into the cross. This conversion was the 'mortal wound' of prophecy. Secular Babylon was replaced by the religious empire of Christianity. The center of paganism had accepted Christ and set the stage for the world to follow in its footsteps. And that is exactly what happened. Throughout the centuries that followed, and all across the world, the pagan idols and temples were torn down and churches for the worship of Jesus Christ erected in their place. The conversions mushroomed and soon the entire civilized world had re-navigated itself to follow in the path of God's holy Son. Though Satan's forces tried to fight back, the power of God remained greater. And so, from Babylon, the Gospel was preached to the entire world, a preaching that has now allowed every person on earth to hear the voice of God's salvation. Rome, for this reason, stands today as the bellweather of Christ's victory on earth. His strength in that city is the benchmark which defines the state of Christianity worldwide—and not just the state of Christianity, but the state of the entire world.

The mortal wound that the Word of Jesus struck against Babylon produced on earth the Christian era, a time of Church rule on earth that has stretched from the first Pentecost to the present day. Made easier by the incarceration of Satan, this era has still been a "time of trouble" for Christian believers. The bondage of God's people in Babylon—the bondage that initiated the scattering—is still widely evident in the Christian and Jewish dispersions throughout the world today. For centuries, the perpetuation of the exile has been clearly evidenced by a decaying Jerusalem lying for almost 2000 years in squalor, disconnected to a large degree from both Jesus and Moses. Several times during this period the physical restoration of Jerusalem in the land of Palestine has been attempted, but most tries have failed. The Christian Crusades were not able to free Jerusalem for very long from the grip of the kings of the East, and the Jews who are trying to do so today gained a foothold in Israel only about 60 years ago. This latest attempt has encountered formidable resistance. When the Jewish settlers returned to Palestine in 1948 to rebuild what they had lost, even though they were able to secure a portion of their lost lands, they found their rock on the temple mountain controlled by Muslims—people who will never willingly relinquish it. And so the Jews are still locked out as far as their religion is concerned—still victims of the dispersion to this day. A similar exclusion applies to the Christian Church. And that is why we find the primary symbol of the Christian Church on earth headquartered in Rome, not Jerusalem. It's presence in the pagan world's eternal city is both a symbol and the evidence of the Diaspora.

The nucleus of the Church has been centered in Rome since the time of the Apostles—since the moment Peter and Paul set up residence there in the earliest days of the Church. The Vatican, Christianity's largest city, still sits in Rome as a representation of Israel's perpetual incarceration there—a condition of the treaty Jesus made with this world on the cross. And for almost two thousand years the only way out of our earthly imprisonment has been a journey of faith wrapped in a change of behavior through Jesus Christ. By keeping us all out of Palestine these many centuries, God has kept us locked in Babylon's exile so that we might see the imprisonment of our souls to the ways of sin. While the twelve tribes have been able to make their spiritual escape by converting into the Gospel of Christ, scripture has decreed that on earth the physical exile to Babylon must continue until the day the one they call the "Prince of Persia" appears. Thus we are faced with dual images. And these will persist until the very last day. That is why, although the two cities on earth which represent these dual spiritual processes are metaphors, they must continue to play out their roles all the way to the end. As they do, we will begin to see the armies of this world coalesce in the mountains and valleys of Palestine, and witness the Rebel, when he appears, fully obsessed with occupying a throne in the city of Rome.

While many have tried to use the churches to force the people to be righteous, history has shown that this endeavor is not possible. Christ's offer was never meant to force righteousness, but to search out and find the lost children of the House of Israel, i.e., the people Satan stole from God at the beginning of time. These are the people who will recognize Christ's voice and willingly choose to convert to righteousness when they hear Him speak through the Gospel that is preached to them. For this reason, while scholars and others see a fractured church and disunity in the Christian body, the Holy Spirit has architected a beacon of perfection in the world. Jesus has saved everyone that was meant to be saved. He has sent out thousands of churches to the farthest reaches of the globe in order to touch everyone with God's message of salvation. The Bible tells us that when the end comes, not one of those Satan stole will have been lost. Not only that, but in His equanimity, God has decreed that anyone who follows Jesus will be saved, not just the lost tribes.

While scores of generations of people have been raised up to be carefully examined by the Spirit of God during the Christian era, Jesus has warned that the inspection will be of short duration. Already we can see serious signs that the age for conversion is close to its end. One hundred years ago almost every western nation in the world still actively supported the worship of Jesus by its citizens. Today, the only nation on earth that still supports this

worship is Vatican City in Rome. All the others have fallen away, mesmerized by Satan's call for the separation of church and state. This falling away was prophesied (Jer. 52:34). It represents the healing of the mortal wound—the return of Babylon as ruler of the world. *"Then I saw a beast emerge from the sea: it had seven heads and ten horns...I saw that one of its heads seemed to have had a fatal wound but that this deadly injury had healed and, after that, the whole world had marvelled and followed the beast."* (Rev.13:1-3). The Book of Revelation has made the mortal wound the ultimate sign of the New Testament. For when this wound heals—when paganism returns and drives Christianity back to the caves—this doomed world will have accessed the widely prophesied and long-feared Wrath, and beyond that, its ultimate End—conclusive proof that the world's future is in Christ alone, and that outside of Him there exists only catastrophic tribulation followed by eternal death.

The healing of the mortal wound which Christ delivered to Babylon is to be precipitated by the "Great Revolt" described by Paul (2 Thes. 2:3). This rebellion involves and represents the world's nations and people breaking with Jesus and His Church and discarding its offer of salvation (John 3:19; 9:4-5). The Revolt brings the tribulation—a tribulation already in progress, proving that the Revolt itself is already in progress. We can see that in the falling away of the nations. The Wrath that follows the tribulation will be precipitated by the erection of a "desolating sacrilege" that follows on the heels of the assassination of the anointed Bishop (Dan.9:26). The only mechanism scripture has defined for the breaking of Christ's treaty with Babylon (i.e., for the shattering of the treaty of Christ on the cross) revolves around a decree by the 'Prince of Persia' (2 Chron.36:19-21). That edict will accompany the 'Abomination of Desolation' described by the prophet Daniel. *"It (the beast) grew right up to the armies of heaven and flung armies and stars to the ground, and trampled them underfoot. It even challenged the power of the army's Prince; it abolished the perpetual sacrifice and overthrew the foundation of his sanctuary, and the army too; it put iniquity on the sacrifice and flung truth to the ground; the horn was active and successful."* (Dan. 8:10-12).

17

The Conversion of the World

"Son of man, go to the House of Israel and tell them what I have said. You are not being sent to big nations that speak difficult foreign languages...if I sent you to them, they would listen to you; but the House of Israel will not listen to you because it will not listen to me."
Ez.3:4-7

It did not take great clairvoyance for John to pen this passage in scripture: *"He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him."* (Jn.1:11). As everyone knows, the Jewish elders rejected Jesus out of hand. The leaders and priests of Jerusalem wanted nothing to do with Him from the opening days of His appearance. When Jesus was preached to the people of Babylon (the people of the 'difficult foreign languages' outside the borders of Israel), however, the reaction was just the opposite. So many people came to believe in Him across the planet that it seemed the entire world would embrace what He had to say, bringing to fulfillment this prophecy by Paul: *"He was made visible in the flesh...proclaimed to the pagans, and believed in by the world..."* (1 Tim.3:16). Hearing the word of Jesus, the vast empire of Rome abandoned its hedonistic past and converted to His faith, bringing an enormous segment of the pagan world under the rule of God. We can see evidence of the immensity of this conversion in the World Almanac which shows that even today Christianity is almost twice as large as any other religion on earth (See Graph 1) Current world statistics show that Christian believers still outnumber Muslims or Buddhists or Hindu's—or even atheists and non-believers for that matter. Worldwide, Christians outnumber Muslims and Hindu's 2 to 1, Buddhists 6 to 1, Jews 100 to 1 and Confucianist's 3000 to 1. In fact, as of the year 2000, over 33% of the entire world population was Christian. This 33% figure also appears in the prophesy of Zechariah who long ago declared, *"And it will happen throughout this territory—it is God who speaks—that two thirds in it will be cut off and the remaining third will be left. I will lead that third into the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name and I shall listen; and I shall say: These are my people; and each will say, 'The Lord is my God!'"* (Zech.8-9). Within 300 years of His birth in Bethlehem, Jesus had quietly

divided and conquered the entire Roman empire, instituting a vast spiritual revolution in the hearts of its former pagan citizens that is still without equal in the history of the world. Because Rome ruled the world when Jesus appeared, this empire's conversion into Christ made manifest the conversion of the world which Paul's letter to Timothy had predicted in scripture. Conversion to Christ gave new life to Rome, just as it would have brought new life to Jerusalem had that city made a similar conversion. History speaks to us about Rome's rise and fall, but unlike Capernaum, despite its legendary collapse, a significant aspect of the Roman empire failed to disappear into historic oblivion. On the contrary, the remnant of Babylon blossomed in its conversion to Christ to become a key component of the City of David in exile. Choosing to abandon its idols and worship Jesus, Rome was reborn into a new spiritual nation that continues in existence to this very day. It does not exist in the way that it used to, of course. The nation's pagan military government tumbled very quickly, but, as we showed in the last chapter, when the people of Rome converted into the words of Jesus Christ, they transformed their empire into the ruling spiritual power of the western world—the largest Christian nation on earth. Despite centuries of assault it is a role that has never been usurped by contenders. In sheer population numbers alone, the Roman Church is easily the most mammoth of all spiritual nations ever to grace the planet. Moreover, virtually every Christian church on earth today has spawned itself out of the Roman nucleus. What fell, then, was paganism, not Rome. God had delivered by the hand of Christ a mortal wound to Babylon, destroying the sixth head of the beast by putting an end to paganism in every land under its control. The proclamation of Theodosius made this execution official. Every pagan house of worship was ordered sealed shut. Christianity was declared the official state religion of the entire world—by proclamation of the Roman emperor. By converting to faith in Jesus Christ, Rome changed its export from violence to peace, becoming the most powerful instrument of Christian evangelism in the history of the world. In this capacity—and because it still houses the central office of the most dominant Christian nation on earth—Rome has remained the focal city of the Christian faith ever since. Prophecy has locked it in this role. Mortally wounded and fallen on its face, Babylon gave way to the rule of Christ.

Rome survived because it did exactly what Jerusalem had failed to do—it laid down its earthly weapons and took up the cross of Christ. While the world views cities and nations only in terms of military strength and defined geographic boundaries, the message of Christ has created a vast community of spiritual nations with invisible borders living side by side with the others. These are nations of churches—nations of pilgrims and refugees making their way from this world to the kingdom of God. Some of these Christian nations have

greater populations than the largest political countries on earth. The Roman church alone for instance has a population of more than a billion people. This figure represents a population almost four times the size of the United States of America. In fact, it represents more people than the entire earth held in the 19th century! These are incredible numbers, and they clearly illustrate the mammoth impact that Rome's early conversion to faith in Jesus Christ had on the world's future. While the Roman church currently claims a population greater than any political country in the world, this church today represents only one half (the western half) of the original Roman empire. The Eastern Orthodox Church represents the other half. The jurisdiction of Rome was so vast and philosophically divided, that two emperor's began to be appointed to govern it simultaneously. Constantine sealed the developing schism by creating a new Rome in the ancient city of Byzantium, naming it after himself (Constantinople, the city of Constantine). The move intensified the natural division between the Roman west and the Roman (Greek) east, and the two soon separated into their own empires. The churches of these empires followed the political schism. Headquartered at the seat of a second imperial city, the eastern churches became more and more independent of Rome's rule and eventually broke away completely, forming what we now know as the Eastern Church. Based in Constantinople, this union of Greek and Russian Orthodox believers today sports a population that numbers more people than currently live in the entire continent of North America. Together, these two churches (the Roman East and the Roman West) claim more than 70% of all Christians on earth. And they are joined by many others whose size is lesser, but still impressive by any political standard: Lutheran, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian, Coptic, Baptist, and hundreds of others—a spectacular array of spiritual nations aligned to Jesus. It is no wonder, then, given the incredible size of the populations now involved in Christ's churches, that the Holy Spirit had the prophets refer to these Christian communities as 'nations' and 'kingdoms'. *"Sing, rejoice, daughter of Zion; for I am coming to dwell in the middle of you—it is God who speaks. Many nations will join the Lord on that day; they will become his people."* (Zech.2:15). *"...I am now going to summon all the kingdoms of the North—it is God who speaks. They are going to come, and each will set his throne in front of the gates of Jerusalem, all round outside its walls, and outside all the towns of Judah."* (Jer.1:15). *"When that time comes, Jerusalem shall be called: The Throne of God; all the nations will gather there in the name of the Lord and will no longer follow the dictates of their own stubborn hearts."* (Jer.3:17). While the political break was deeply in progress at the time of Constantine, the eastern and western churches themselves, did not fully separate until 1000 A.D., when a seemingly minor theological difference in a wording change in the Nicene Creed severed their alliance abruptly.

As we saw in the last chapter, Rome's conversion had great metaphoric significance. The image it portrayed was the victory of the Word of God over the seat of Satan—a victory which caused the death of the rule on earth of secularism and blasphemy. Replaced were the pagan emperors who had demanded that the people worship them as gods, and who had bestowed upon themselves titles of invincible omnipotence. The only royal title to survive this imperial claim to celestial power was Pontifex Maximus (head of the colleges of priests). It was relinquished by the emperor at the time of Constantine and bestowed upon the presiding Christian bishop of Rome as a sign of Babylon's subservience to the rule of Christ. It was this title (Pontif) that created the Papal office. In removing this title from himself and awarding it in perpetuity to the first priest of the church, the Roman emperor proved the commanding position Christ had suddenly been accorded in the pagan world. Just 300 years after His crucifixion, Jesus was given spiritual rule over the entire empire. Helped by the incarceration of Satan, the Holy Spirit engineered these images to make obvious the massive conversion of the global populace to the religion of Jesus Christ. In this change, Rome's pagan rule over the world was destroyed and replaced by a world-rule dedicated to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This transformation created in the world a period of time in which the Gospel of righteousness reigned powerfully over Satan's empire; and it launched across the earth an incredible spiritual war—spearheaded by missionaries who had taken spiritual control of the two pagan capitol's of the world. Christ's 'Day of Atonement' had not only dawned, it had come to full 'Sonlight'.

Following in the footsteps of Rome's conversion, spiritual nations all over the earth began to rise up and overthrow the satanic forces that had held them in bondage to sin. It is this nearly 2000-year epoch of Christian world rule and spiritual warfare that is the essence of all the symbolism. It is to this momentous Christian victory that all the metaphors surrounding the 'Day of Atonement' in scripture had been pointing. A window had been opened through which the world's people could finally make their escape out of their captivity to the spiritual dungeons that had trapped them in Babylon. The call had been made. Ezekiel's 'tau' prophecy was fulfilled (Ez. 9:3-6). Those who deplored the world's violence were given a mark of baptism that separated them from all others around them. This mark was the sign of the cross—a sign which began in Jerusalem and was sent from there to the farthest outposts of Babylon. *"The glory of God called to the man in white and said, 'Go all through the city, all through Jerusalem, and mark a cross on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of the filth practiced in it. To the others I heard him say, 'Follow him through the city, and strike...but do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead. Begin at my sanctuary.'" (Ez.9:3-6). When the man in white had finished carrying out God's*

orders in the city of Jerusalem, he returned to God and made his report, "I have carried out your orders" (Ez.9:11). At that point the glory of God left the Temple and abandoned Jerusalem, and, with the entire retinue of heaven in accompaniment went off to Babylon to rescue the exiles (Ez.10 & 11).

Within a few hundred years of the crucifixion, most of the population of Rome had converted from paganism to the Christian faith. Because it ruled the world at the time, whatever Rome did, the world did automatically. And that is why the conversion of Rome was so important—it imaged what was to follow—the conversion of the world which Paul's letter to Timothy had predicted (1 Tim.3:16). Beginning with Constantine's imperial decree (the Edict of Milan in 313 A.D), and completed by the proclamation of emperor Theodosius 78 years later, the world's leadership gave official acknowledgment that the heathen planet had been transformed from spiritual paganism into the Christian faith. Billions of people, most unborn when these momentous circumstances first took place, were allowed by God's victory to be conceived in the grace of Christ as this world conversion perpetuated itself over the next seventeen hundred years. The emperor Theodosius outlawed all pagan practices in the Roman empire and made Christianity the state religion of the world by legal decree. In its sweeping renunciation of paganism, all Greek and Roman temples were permanently closed, and their activities banned. This ban was highlighted by the termination of the enormously popular Olympic games which were held on Mt. Olympus in Greece at the site of the temple of Zeus in association with pagan festival and worship practices. In its official acknowledgment and zealous promotion of Christianity, Babylon had accepted the faith that the Jews had rejected. In so doing, the rule of the pagan world passed from Satan to the Church. Paganism stumbled to its deathbed, mortally wounded. The harvest Jesus envisioned had quickly come to full swing, and just as He predicted, the fields were white with readiness.

Driven like a nail into a firm place, Peter's presence in Rome became a throne of glory for the God of Israel (Is.22:23). Like cups and saucers hanging on a single peg, out of this Christian victory grew not only the Roman and Greek churches, but all the other Christian churches as well. Every church in the faith of Jesus Christ. Each of them defining holy nations rising up in the service of God. With this conversion, the world's new master became the Christian Gospel. Satan's reign in the world had been overturned. In the centuries that followed, a large part of what was once pagan Babylon became Christianized, surrendering itself to the dominion of God by placing itself under the authority of the Church

and Gospel of Jesus Christ. The music, literature, poetry and paintings of the time proclaimed the fervor for God that had suddenly swept across the earth.

This period of passion for Christ by the people of the world is a key symbol as far as the future is concerned, because satanic processes which have already started are destined to reverse the world's conversion, and send it all back to what it was before. Early signals of this reversal included the fact that the Olympic Games, symbol of pagan worship in the days of the Caesar's, were reopened in 1896. More than that, the title 'Caesar', itself, has reappeared twice in the 20th century—as 'Kaiser' in Germany and 'Czar' in Russia. These signs gave early warning that Babylon was beginning to stir on its deathbed. The mortal wound was healing. Since scripture has defined Rome as the capitol of this world, its relationship to Christ is crucial to the prophecies. The renunciation of Jesus in Rome, then, is a pivotal symbolic element in the re-emergence of a pagan Babylon. This is why an understanding of Rome's role in Christian history is necessary to our comprehension of climactic events still destined to unfold there. Especially that fateful day approaching when future Persian forces are destined to conquer and take command of the Italian capitol and put an end to Christian worship in the city. When that happens, like long shadows, the Bible's prophecies will reach into a dark future and manifest themselves in all the circumstances for which they were originally voiced. The mortal wound will appear to heal so completely that all the worlds people will marvel over it and follow after it (Rev.17:8-9). Rome will then image a world which has turned its back on Christ and returned, full throttle, to paganism. And just as the world followed suit in the first image, it will do so again in the second, but in reverse. When that happens, the peg will be sheared off from its firm place and be cut down, *"and all the lesser vessels, the cups and saucers hanging on it, will fall with it"* (Is.22:25). The 'peg' in Isaiah's prophecy is the church built on Peter. Symbolic of Christ's victory over Babylon, when St. Peters in Rome falls, all of Christianity will come down as well. *"I tell you most solemnly, (Peter), when you were young you put on your own belt and walked where you liked; but when you grow old you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put a belt round you and take you where you would rather not go."* (John 21:18). *"And at the end of their reign, when the measure of their sins is full, a king will arise, a proud-faced ingenious-minded man. His power will gather strength—but not through power of his own—he will plot incredible schemes, he will succeed in what he undertakes, he will destroy powerful men and the people of the saints."* (Dan.8:23-24). These images are all symbols prophetically described in the Bible. God will use them because He has placed them there for this purpose so that the whole world will know whose word came true, His or theirs.

18

The Millennium of Christ

"Then I saw an angel come down from heaven with the key of the Abyss in his hand and an enormous chain. He overpowered the dragon...Satan, and chained him up for a thousand years." Rv.20:1-2

The millennium is a term which defines the reign of Christ on earth. It encompasses the 'thousand years' that God has allotted for Jesus and His Church to rule in this world. Jesus represents God's "Day of Atonement", the one day under His shining light when man can be reunited with God through the preaching of His Gospel. Scripture tells us that a day to God is like a thousand years to man (Ps.90.4). It is from this quotation that the Day of Atonement has its symbolic length. Because it has now been almost 2000 years since the Holy Spirit first appeared on earth at Pentecost just after Jesus preached, we know that the term is metaphoric. Yet a prophecy in the Book of Joshua seems to unite that metaphore with calendar reality (Josh.10:12-14). Related to this, a prophecy in the Book of Revelation reveals that two other "thousand-year" prophecies exist. One for the term of Satan's imprisonment in the Abyss and the other for a "rule of Christ" that will occur during that incarceration. It is this latter prophecy that has captured the imagination of the Baptist Pentacostalists and Evangelicals who see the vision in relation to a future era in earth's history when they predict Jesus will return to earth from heaven to rule here with Christians raised from the dead. *"The angel threw Satan into the Abyss, and shut the entrance and sealed it over him to make sure he would not deceive the nations again until the thousand years had passed. Then...I saw the souls of those...who had refused to worship the beast...they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years."* There is great confusion about this simple vision not only because it exists in four forms, but also because mankind persists in misunderstanding the rule of Christ on earth. The reign defined in this prophecy has nothing to do with the Second Coming or Jesus' physical Return. John's vision is not about that. It is clear in scripture that the kingdom of God is not of this earth. Jesus will not return to set up any kingdom here. What the prophecy actually envisions is this world (Satan's earth) being suddenly overtaken by the forces of Christ—something

history has already observed and documented. This prophecy, then, is not about our coming future, because the future it describes has, for the most part, already taken place. This vision takes us back to Rev.13 and describes more fully the time of the 'mortal wound' which God inflicted on the sixth head of the beast—the mortal wound which gave the Church dominion over the world. The 'thousand years' which John described in his Book of Revelation, then, relates to the Church and the term of its rule on earth. It describes the time of the proliferation of Christ's teaching across the length and breadth of the planet—a time made possible by the incarceration of Satan. Because the various churches have been so much at war with one another—trying to impose their own ideologies on one another and tear each other down—the rule of all this Church in the world has largely been ignored. Like combative brothers and sisters in a contentious family, Christian denominations have been so consumed with their mutual bickering and fighting, none of them has recognized the millennium which surrounds them, and which has allowed them all to flourish on Satan's earth. That is because so few of these churches are willing to recognize the other churches as a part of themselves or as a part of their own Jesus. For this reason, the millennium has passed in full view of everyone, yet has remained virtually unnoticed. In fact, it is all but over. The mortal wound Jesus inflicted on the sixth head of the beast has begun to heal in a great rebellion against Christian rule, and its regeneration has unleashed Satan from his chains and permitted him to be released from his jail in the Abyss. This tells us that his thousand years are over, and because his return is to accompany the rebellion prescribed, the Church's thousand year rule is almost over as well.

According to the Book of Revelation, Satan, upon his return from that dark cell in the Abyss will mobilize the four quarters of the earth for war (Rv.20:7-8). The proof that this prophecy has been fulfilled can be seen in two momentous events: the unprecedented global warfare that has characterized the Twentieth century, and the quiet transition from Christian to secular rule across the planet that has accompanied all this warfare. The millennium of world Christian rule, then, has come and virtually disappeared and almost no one on earth realizes that such an event has even occurred. Instead of premillennium's and postmillennium's, God has given us a contemporary millennium, and it has come wrapped in the peal of church bells. The virtual millennium of worldly perfection that so many have been looking forward to—the temporary Christian 'nirvana' thought to lie somewhere between this world and the kingdom of heaven at the conclusion of history—has been fulfilled instead by a de facto millennium of human frailty and trial by fire that has seen all the nations of the world streaming to a kingdom that will replace this earth, not just for a thousand years, but forever. For almost 2000 years people without number have been

reaching out just as Isaiah predicted they would, to a teaching that has allowed them to walk in the ways and paths of God along a road that leads to eternal life. The opportunity to walk these paths in communities ruled by the churches of Jesus Christ is the millennium that no one noticed. It is an era of peace created by a treaty that is now in the process of rejection by revolt.

God wrested control of this planet away from Satan and locked him in a prison so that Christ's message of salvation could be broadcast to those who have ears to hear it. But that offer came with a time limit. And in the world's current moral collapse we can see God's offer trailing off in a flood of rejection because the people of the world have become hypnotized by the lure of other gods. The Revolt that has precipitated this return to Babylon is everywhere around us now and it is tearing down the very fabric of Jesus' reign upon this planet. Satan's mobilization of the world for war has produced two world wars, hundreds of provincial wars, a score of United Nation kind of wars and a cold war which, by the judgment of world leaders, has moved their own analysis of a 'doomsday clock' virtually to midnight. And now it has led us to the banks of the Euphrates river, the very place where prophecy foresees the invasion that changes world rule from western civilization to eastern civilization, and ushers in the terminal paganism destined to end the world amid the rantings of a false prophet and a beast. And yet John's prediction, even in its validation, still remains obscure. That is why so few people are ready to understand what it means. The pagans are seizing control of the planet—tearing it back out of the hands of the Church. And as they do so, they bear witness that the pagan world's 'mortal wound' has now healed.

The reign of the Church is called the 'Day of God' on earth—a day the Israelites called 'Atonement'. In the Hebrew calendar the Day of Atonement was the one day each year fixed in the Law when sins could be atoned for. Sending the Holy Spirit to the earth with the light of His glorification in heaven, Jesus handed this holy 'day' to the entire world. And He lengthened it so that His forgiveness of sin could encompass the entire harvest. Visible in this divine light from above is the fact that the 'Day of Atonement' specified in Hebrew law and the thousand-year 'Day' which Jesus initiated for our reconciliation with God, define identical concepts. The first prefigured the latter. In the Old Testament, the Day of Atonement was the highest holy day in the Israelite calendar—a day now called by the Jews, 'Yom Kippur'. It was the one day each year when the Jewish high priest could enter the room called the 'Holy of Holies' inside the temple and secure mercy for the people of Israel. As a part of this yearly ceremony, the High Priest would take two perfect unblemished goats—one he would kill, offering it up in sacrifice to God, and on the back of the other

(which remained alive), he would load all the sins of the people. This 'scapegoat' as it was called would then be led out to the desert and given over to Satan. Jesus, of course, changed this ritual when He absorbed this entire ceremony in Himself, taking the sins of the people on His own back as He was led out of Jerusalem and handed over to Satan to be crucified. Fulfilling the Yom Kippur event on terms that were divine, Jesus placed within the heart of every Christian believer a part of His own light, the presence of the Holy Spirit. That presence within each of us allows us to make sacrifices directly to God on the highest altar, sacrifices which only the high priest was allowed to make before Jesus arrived. Because of this, each Christian has become a high priest under God. Giving us all a common temple in which to conduct our worship, Jesus removed the Holy of Holies from its sanctuary in the temple in Jerusalem and, wrapping it in His own Holy Spirit, placed it inside the soul of each Christian believer. Changing the sacrifice from the blood of innocent animals to the commandments of the Gospel, Jesus made our high priesthood work for compassion, mercy and gentleness on earth rather than for blood and gore. This allowed us to offer the kind of sacrifices that truly please God—acts of goodness and love for others—acts which destroy sin completely.

Jesus created this time of reconciliation and atonement that we now find ourselves in on earth, so that we could escape the death sentence sin had decreed for our soul. The Day of Atonement, the light of the millennium, is Jesus preached openly all across the earth. The Bible's comparison of Jesus to sunlight and therefore, to the 'day', is a reflection of the kind of light which forms this holy time of atonement: the light of the Son. From the very beginning, the Bible has used the metaphor of light to describe the nature and substance of God and His word. Jesus is portrayed as the 'day' and his reign as 'daylight', while Satan is seen as 'darkness' and his rule as the 'night'.

The terrestrial perfection thought by many Evangelicals to occupy the earth after the devastation of the Wrath—something like a glorious alternative to purgatory—has no basis in scriptural fact. The Bible indicates that this world is destined for annihilation in the final days because its evil cannot be cured. *"Yes the sluiceways above will open, and the foundations of the earth will rock. The earth will split into fragments...so heavy will be its sin on it, it will fall never to rise again."* (Is.24:18-20). After the final blows against sin have been struck, there will be nothing left here on which a kingdom can be placed—only an asteroid-like belt of tiny fragments floating around in space. The kingdom of God is in heaven. Jesus came, not to cure this world, but to rescue us out of it. More than that, the wickedness of this world

extends to the ends of the universe—to every place where death exists. And the judgment will destroy it all. *"That day, God will punish above, the armies of the sky, below, the kings of the earth."* (Is.24:21). When that day comes, God will take those who have been faithful to Christ directly to the new kingdom—directly to the Jerusalem of heaven. The earth and the lower sea in which it now floats will disappear forever. *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven..."* (Rv.21:1-2). There will be no 'millennium' (no thousand years) in heaven because life in the holy city—the new Jerusalem of heaven—is eternal. There are no time limits to our life in the kingdom of God—no 'thousand years'. In God's kingdom of heaven our lives will last forever. Since heaven is eternal, the only time limits that God has set relate only to this world. Therefore the millennium—the time limit of a thousand years—must relate only to the time that God has allotted for Christ to be preached so that all mortals can repent and be saved—the time when Church government has ruled over secular government on earth. The key to the millennium is the fact that it consists of a set number of years. As such, it has both a beginning and an end. This means that it is temporary. God has given the pagan world only a short time to discover and follow Jesus Christ—the era of world faith that John said would lie between the two wars and which was predicted by prophecy: "All the pagans will come and adore you, Lord, all will glorify your name." (Ps.86:9).

In Peter's prophecy quoting the Psalms, that a day to God is like a thousand years to man (2 Peter 3:8), it is easy to see how a thousand years can relate to a single day in God, but relating the 2000 years that have passed since the time of Christ to a one thousand-year millennium could prove daunting. How can the two thousand years of Christian rule that we have witnessed on earth be considered a single millennium as far as the Bible is concerned? The fact is, scripture foretold it. In the book of Joshua is contained these words: *"Is this not written in the Book of the Just? The sun stood still in the middle of the sky and delayed its setting for almost a whole day (making one day into almost two)."* (Joshua 10:12-13). If we say, as the Bible tells us, that a thousand years to man are like a day to God, then 2000 years to us must be like 2 days to God. This is a true equation because it comes from the Bible. It tells us that the one day scheduled by scripture for the rule of God to occur on earth has become almost two days. The divine time-frame for mankind's reconciliation with God (His Day of Atonement) has almost been doubled. God has doubled His mercy. Jesus said that when a man asks you to go one mile with him you should go two instead. The Lord was not just ordering us to behave in this way, he was also telling us the behavior of God that we should try to imitate. Going the extra mile is God's behavior. By extending the time of

mercy, God has gone the extra mile for us. The conversion of the world—the fact that the world believed in Jesus Christ when he was preached to it—has actually caused the days of the millennium to be multiplied: *"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom; the knowledge of the Holy One—perception indeed! For days are multiplied by me and years of life increased."* (Prov.9:10-11). According to the scriptures, life is lengthened and death is forestalled by conversion into God's righteousness: *"My son, do not forget my teaching, let your heart keep my principles, for these will give you lengthier days, longer years of life, and greater happiness."* (Prov.3:1-2). The light of Christ has shown for almost a thousand years longer than it was prophesied to shine. The light of God that began on the day of Pentecost in 30 A.D. is now only 24 years shy of 2000 years old, i.e., "almost" 2 days to God. And since we stand today at that terminal moment in Joshua's prophecy ('almost two days'). It is no wonder that we are now seeing Christ's 'day' disappearing so quickly into Satan's coming night.

The rule of God over the nations is referred to as 'the time of the iron scepter'. *"Ask and I will give you the nations for your heritage, the ends of the earth for your domain. With iron sceptre you will break them, shatter them like potter's ware. So now, you kings, learn wisdom, earthly rulers, be warned: serve the Lord, fear him, tremble and kiss his feet, or he will be angry and you will perish, for his anger is very quick to blaze."* (Ps.2:8-12). It is this image that constitutes the reign of the Church on earth. *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven."* (Mt.16:19). With this proclamation, Jesus gave the Church absolute power over the material world. And it is this power that defines the millennium. It is what Daniel called, *"the power of the holy people"* (Dn.12:7). In showing that every person who receives the Holy Spirit is an heir to this power, Jesus said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained."* (Jn.20:23).

The millennium has produced a time of contradictions on earth. While the wicked have pockmarked history with arrogant and ungodly deeds during this period, a great many others, mostly the poor and the gentle, over the past seventeen hundred years lived quiet Christian lives and tried to structure themselves and their families in the word of God. The governments, in their close alliance with churches and church officials, publicly encouraged Christian behavior in the masses, going so far as to even sanction death sentences or long prison terms against those they felt were trying to abolish or interfere with their strictly enforced theological moral codes. Most citizens in the early Middle Ages supported the rule

of church leaders. The vast majority of people (the average citizens) during the millennium were so oriented to the Church in their mind and thought that they viewed the dissidents around them the same way we would gangs, anarchists and seditionists in our own times. That attitude has now changed, of course. Today, few Christians would sanction publicly punishing the enemies of Jesus, or attempt to enforce Christ's moral code on society the way the civic leaders of those time did. In the societies of the millennium, everyone was committed to a life in Jesus so each of those communities were like broad extensions of the kind of group Peter managed when he disciplined Ananias and Sapphira. When everyone was a Christian the church felt obligated to follow Peter's lead.

Today, in the final phases of the Revolt, such 'iron scepter' moral rule is not possible because so many citizens are no longer committed Christians. The society of past ages was produced by a conversion of heart. The society replacing it has been produced by a hardening of heart. It is not possible to recreate the gentle spirit that lay at the heart of the millennium by force or by government action. It can only return by a change of heart—the same way it came in the first place. The enemies of Christ have become so many that the moral scepter of Christ is no longer wielded in government circles. We are now encouraged to allow all who disagree with the teachings of the Bible to behave as they please. And as this opposition continues to grow, we are beginning to see communities oblivious to Christ; and, perhaps more importantly, ones in which the Christian message is being increasingly suppressed. Openly pagan behavior and beliefs were not tolerated during the previous era of governmental Christian rule when the preaching of the Gospel was officially commanded by world leadership to touch everybody. So it is a serious anachronism for us to consider the world today as a mirror of the world yesterday. Things have changed, and they have changed dramatically. For many of us, they have changed in our own lifetime. Elementary school nativity plays, for instance, are now gone. So is public documentation of the Ten Commandments. Until just a few years ago the churches set the moral standards of the world community. Movies and art and literature had to comply with strict codes of ethics—ethics which today are ridiculed as artificial and unrealistic. The reality of history shows that human society has been held in the iron grasp of a Christian-imposed morality since the days of Constantine. That hold has finally been broken—actually shattered—in our own time. This hold may have been artificial as the scholars now insist, but that only proves the reign of Christ on earth, it does not argue that those 2000 years did not happen.

19

A Time of Trouble

"Know this, then, and understand: from the time this message went out: 'Return and rebuild Jerusalem', to the coming of an anointed Prince, seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, with squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt, but in a time of trouble." Dn.9:25

Since a measure of Satan's influence still remains on earth, the millennium here has not been a time of perfect peace and harmony; it has been a time of difficulty and trial—a fact attested to by the prophet Daniel (See Daniel 9:25, above). John referred to this time of trouble as the 'Great Persecution' (Rv.7:14), and every Christian has had to be touched by it. But by locking Satan in the Abyss, God has held back the worst of these trials so that most people in the world have been able to repent and be saved in an atmosphere conducive to conversion. That repentance and the salvation it brings is the rebuilding of Jerusalem that the voice of Christ initiated on earth. It is a rebuilding that has been accomplished 'living stone by living stone' (1 Peter 2:5-6). *"Wait before you do any damage on land or at sea or to the trees, until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."* (Rv.7:3). John's words show that the wrath has been held back for baptism. This 'time of waiting' which scripture tells us must occur before any damage can be done on earth defines the age of the millennium—the age of baptism. Satan locked up, Jesus temporarily ruling on earth, and the children of God being searched out by the Holy Spirit and baptised into safety—that is what the millennium was all about. It was all about a period of time on earth when there existed in the world a political and social atmosphere conducive to repentance and faith. In Satan's absence, the troops of God were able to march in and take temporary command of Satan's city. Removing Babylon's pagan administration, they placed it, instead, under the martial rule of Christ. For seventeen hundred years forces promoting Jesus have been in control on earth. We can see this dominion mirrored in the authority of the Church and its rules of Christ-centered morality which have governed the world and its major governments for almost 2000 years. This world belongs to Satan, so the millennium here cannot be a copy of heaven. Satan's dominion is such that there can never be a divine utopia on earth.

But for a little while the philosophy guiding worldly rulers changed. During this period, the children of God have been able to accomplish the rebuilding that Daniel predicted. *"With squares and ramparts restored and rebuilt, but in a time of trouble."* (Dn.9:25). In an atmosphere conducive to obeying Jesus, Christian believers have rebuilt Jerusalem through faith and conversion. But we have done so in a troubled world that continues to live in hostility to the Gospel. The fact of the Great Persecution has not been changed by the millennium. What the rule of Christ in this world has changed is the mechanics of this persecution. Christian people have never been spared the trials that wash each of them in the blood of Christ, but for almost 1700 years, most have been spared grave physical harm during that persecution—and in many areas, even the verbal abuse and character defamation associated with Christianity's adversaries has been significantly minimized. The rule of Christ then, mellowed the hostility in a way that allowed the word of God to spread easily across the world—touching every person in its path so that the spiritual restoration of Jerusalem could extend to the ends of the earth. It did not make the world obey Jesus, but it did make the world listen to Him. And that is what the millenium of God was all about.

The spiritual restoration associated with this spread of the Gospel has occurred as the world watched, but it has not been centered in Palestine—it has taken place throughout Babylon, the domain of Satan in fulfillment of the prophecies (Micah 4:10)—gathering together a world-wide restoration of God's people to spiritual unity with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven (Heb.13:14). During this 1700 year period of Christian rule, the world-conversion to Christ has put the Gospel above the governments, allowing all people to see the light of God as the true power that it really is. This is precisely the message that we get when we see the images of all the mighty kings of the past bowing in homage before the cross of Jesus. During this Christian reign, the people of the earth have been allowed to see the righteousness of God for themselves, and have been free to choose to repent and convert and be saved if they want to be. It is not in God's plan to legislate righteousness by force as far as heaven is concerned. The rule of Christ on earth did not occur to force the people to be good. Instead it occurred to give everyone a chance to be good—to have the opportunity to choose whether to be good or bad in relation to the Gospel. That is why evil behavior has persisted on earth despite the conversion of much of the world to Jesus. Because faith is not given to everyone there are those who choose to be evil despite all of God's offers. It is this fact that has given Satan the power to return at the end of the millennium and deceive the nations one more time, returning them to the paganism of the past (Rev.20:7-8).

Jesus is the light of God shining on earth, and as long as He shines (as long as He is preached), the daylight remains. Emphasizing this, Jesus said *"Work while you still have the day, night is coming when no one can work"* (Jn.9:4). The 'night that is coming' defines the time when Christ's reign on earth will come to an end under the onslaught of the beast. As the master architect of this 'night', Satan has already re-entered the arena of the millennium and begun corrupting the world's thinking, deceiving the hearts of those who live here by instilling in them a thirst for war and violence. This is where Gog and Magog come into the picture. According to John, Gog and Magog are the powers destined to bring the millennium to an end (Rv.20:7). Besieging Babylon, these eastern forces are going to swarm into the city of God and destroy the power of the holy people (Dn.12:7). Since there can be no Gog or Magog in this world until after the millennium comes to an end, their appearance on the planet will define the completion of the 'thousand years' (Rv.20:8). If these two are building now, the thousand years are virtually over. Scripture clearly shows that Gog and Magog cannot come and assemble the nations of the world for the second war until after the thousand years have ended and Satan has been released from his chains: *"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive all the nations in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and mobilize them for war."* (Rev.20:7-8). Gog, of course, is the Rebel, and Magog his empire—the ten-nation confederacy of the last days. The fact that these forces are stirring now is the ultimate proof that the millennium (God's Day of Atonement) is soon to end, and that we, ourselves, are living in its final days. That means the time is short. There is not much time left for those still unbaptised to accept the offer of eternal life being offered by God through Jesus Christ. The imperative of quickly accepting that conversion is obvious.

"I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight." (Amos 8:9). The prophet Amos shows that the wrath of Satan's 'night' will come at the height of Christianity's influence in the world—at the noon of preaching—suddenly, at the moment when God decides that the apostasy has reached its peak. There will be no sunset for God's Day of Atonement. This broad daylight will be the intense faith of the saints of God as they openly resist the Revolt and proclaim Jesus at the top of their voices, using satellites and all other forms of modern communication to preach His Gospel into the remotest areas of the darkening world. *"They lift up their voices, singing for joy; they acclaim the majesty of the Lord from the sea. Therefore in the islands of the sea they give glory to the name of the Lord, the God of Israel...from remotest earth we hear songs, 'Honor to the upright one'. But 'Enough, enough!' I say, 'Woe to the traitors who betray!' Terror, the pit, the snare for you, inhabitants of the earth..."* (Is.24:14-17). Isaiah's prophecy here reveals that while the earth

is being plunged into darkness in most of the rest of the world, there will still be a measure of faith in a place he calls the 'islands of the sea'. Daniel has shown us that these lands lie in the west, in lands across the great ocean. Isaiah's words demonstrate that the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ will still be shining brightly in the world when the great attack on Christianity begins. In that attack, the darkness will come so quickly it will seem to have happened all at once, the millennium coming to an end at a time when it would seem impossible to most of the world's Christians that such a thing could ever happen.

20

Two Resurrections

"Then I saw the souls of all who had..witnessed for Jesus and preached God's word...they came to life, and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. This was the first resurrection; the second death cannot affect them..."
Rv.20:4-6

John said that the two 'reigns' of Christ will be tied to two resurrections (Rv.20:5). The first of these two rebirths from death, he said, will launch the thousand year reign of the Gospel and the second will result in God's eternal rule in heaven. John does not elaborate further on these two ascensions except to inform us that the 'thousand years' itself will separate the two. According to John, the first resurrection will inaugurate the millennium and the second will take place on the Day of Judgement (not long after the reign of Christ on earth ends, i.e., not long after the thousand-year "millenium" ends). These resurrections are surrounded in mystery. Precisely when the first of them took place is a matter of great interest. John said that it happened just after Satan was placed in his jail in the Abyss. He gives no date for this, but we can assume that it took place some time between 30 A.D. and 95 A.D. Satan's imprisonment had not yet occurred when Christ was preaching in Galilee. This we know, because Satan himself personally tempted Jesus after his baptism at the Jordan river (Mt. 4). But he was gone by 95 A.D. when John wrote the following quotation in the Book of Revelation: *"The beast you have seen, once was and now is not..."* (Rev.17:8). The pagan Roman empire was still in existence in 95 A.D., so John could not have been referring to it when he wrote: 'and now is not'. So his words show a millennium that seems already to be in progress by that date. The 'beast' which had disappeared by 95 A.D., therefore, had to be either Satan or Nero—or more likely, both. Nero died in 68 A.D. If the imprisonment of Satan and the death of Nero both occurred at the same time, the first of the two resurrections described by John probably took place very soon afterwards. Possibly in the year 70 A.D. There are so many other events which happened around this time, that this year stands out boldly from the rest. If this is the case, it would mean that God

has tied both resurrections to the death of a 'beast'—with each specifically related to a 'rule' of Christ. The first resurrection (tied to the death of the beast Nero) was related to the millennium (Christ's rule on earth), and the second (tied to the death of the Lawless Rebel at the End) will be related to the coming of the kingdom itself—to Christ's eternal rule in heaven. The first war against the Church reached a peak of sorts during the reign of Nero. It was at his directive that Peter and Paul and most of the apostles died. Nero's assault on the Church of Christ was devastating. He specifically targeted its leadership and went after that elite corps with a vengeance unequalled by any of his predecessors or descendants.

Nero sparked a reign of terror against Christianity that was equal to and in many ways greater than anyone who has ever followed him. With his death, an arch-image of the beast died—an Antichrist who bitterly persecuted the Christian Church—the man John has pinpointed as the 'sixth head' of the beast. The most critical events that launched the thousand-year reign of Christ on earth—the death of Nero, the first resurrection, the deaths of most of the original apostles, and the incarceration of Satan in the Abyss—all seem to coalesce around the year 70 A.D., the same date that Jerusalem and its temple were being destroyed by the Romans. In fact, the very day that Herod's temple was burned down may itself be significant, because it occurred on August 29th (the 10th of Loos in the Hebrew lunar calendar), the same day the temple of Solomon was burned down by Nebuchadnezzar when the first exile to Babylon began. So both temple losses and both exiles to Babylon occurred on the very same calendar day—a fact which helps to underscore the divine relationship between them. This one year and day, then, stand out more than any of the others. It was on this same date (August 29th, 70 A.D.) that the Pharisees and Sadducees all disappeared, that the Sanhedrin became extinct, that the High Priest vanished and the 2000 year Jewish diaspora truly began. Even though intense battles raged afterward, the end of the first war and the beginning of the millennium seem to coincide with events surrounding the death of Nero and the destruction of the Jewish temple. For all these reasons, it is probable that the first resurrection occurred in 70 A.D., and took place before the end of August that year. The Church has long celebrated a type of 'resurrection day' on November 1st, memorializing all Christians who have died in the faith of Christ. It is called 'All Hallow's Day', i.e., 'all who are holy'. Because in God all symbolism looks ahead, perhaps the significance of November 1st relates to an event that is still to come—perhaps to the second and final resurrection. Both events may share a similar date. More likely, since this Christian "Memorial Day" relates to the fallen Christians (to the Christian martyrs), and if the date has a focus at all, it probably lies in the persecution itself.

A compelling final indication that the first resurrection occurred before 95 A.D. came from Jesus himself when He told John the Apostle that John had to stay behind until He (Jesus) came back. To the others, Jesus said, 'follow me' (Jn.21:20-23). When the Apostles questioned him about this, Jesus said to them, "*If I want him to stay behind until I come, what does it matter to you? You are to follow me.*" (Jn.21:21-22). Christ's 'coming back' of course, refers to the 'Second Coming' an event which still lies in our future. It is interesting to note that John did not die with the other apostles, but went into prison on the island of Patmos where he wrote the Book of Revelation. By the time he did die (sometime after 95 A.D), not only had Satan been locked in the Abyss, and Nero passed away, (events John himself confirmed) but the first resurrection had apparently already come and gone. Because he did not participate in this first resurrection, John had to wait 'until Jesus came'—until the 'Second Coming' for his own resurrection. "*The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were over.*" (Rv.20:5). This suggests that John will rise with us when Jesus returns. It would seem fitting perhaps, that not only would God lead us into the kingdom of heaven with Apostles, but that he would have one following behind us as well to keep up the rearguard—the Apostle He called his favorite. It would further fulfill what Jesus, Himself, said, "*The first shall be last and the last first.*" Except for these first few who died early in the faith, and who are now reigning with God in heaven, most Christians will rise in the second resurrection. John and all those who came after him (ourselves included) will not come to life until Jesus returns (Rv.20:5). Until that day arrives (which seems now very close) all the souls of those whose bodies died during the millennium of the last 2000 years will remain near the altar of God, wearing white robes and waiting for the final roll to be completed (Rv.6:9-11).

One thing is certain. The Christian era does have two resurrections—the first of which occurred just as the millennium started. This would seem strong evidence that the Apostles, early disciples, friends and family members of Jesus are all alive today in heaven reigning with God right now just as the prophecy in the Book of Revelation states—actively participating with Jesus in the management of His millennial rule on earth. "*They came to life and reigned with God for a thousand years.*" (Rv.20:4). Their duties and assignments during this period are unknown. Can they plead for mercy on our behalf? The Holy Spirit has informed a great many Christians that they can and do. No one really knows for sure; but considering the majesty of the offices awarded them, and the supreme authority bestowed on them, it seems quite likely that God has given all these Apostles and disciples great power to continue working on behalf of our salvation. Knowing that Jesus' Apostles are there with Him and actively working with God on behalf of our salvation, a great many Christians,

Roman Catholics especially, petition them in the same way that we might talk to people in official positions here on earth. Whether that helps or not, depends on the duties they have been given by God. But it is fascinating to think that we might be able to actually communicate with Peter or Paul, for instance, or even with Mary, Christ's own mother. Considering the fact that very few of us can ever hope to personally meet the Pope or talk to Billy Graham or speak with people like Mother Theresa in our own lifetime, the thought that we could have a personal audience with Jesus' closest associates in a simple prayer seems incredible and marvelous beyond belief. On earth, such audiences are granted mostly to the great, but when the vision of Mary appeared to the children of Medjugorje, she told them that the only reason that she could manifest herself to them was that they were not special. She explained that if they were special, God would not have permitted her to appear to them. If the vision is true, this suggests that God has emplaced around us a divine network of communication in which the common man has access to persons of far greater import than do the kings and potentates of this world who speak so freely with the current religious leaders who reign above us. *"God is near to the broken-hearted, he helps those whose spirit is crushed."* (Ps.34:18). *"I live in a high and holy place, but my heart is with the contrite and humbled spirit, to give the humbled spirit new life, to revive contrite hearts."* (Is.57:15). Since prayer is a petition, and not worship (in essence, prayer is conversation with God and His angels) there seems no harm for those who believe in it, to ask for whatever assistance they can deliver to help us in our daily struggle on earth against the forces of Satan

In the last chapter we saw that God has structured His millennium in the concept of daylight—two days having been made into one. There is another aspect of this principle (two days in one) that takes place in the natural world and it also may interact with biblical prophecy as well. It can be used to solve the mystery surrounding the Last Supper of Christ and the Passover meal which that dinner should have overlain (to satisfy the Law of Moses). Few will tolerate the use of natural principles, discovered centuries after God may have used them invisibly, as an instrument of His hand in keeping scripture. But we will recount the concept here anyway because the possibility is compelling, and it shows that most of the works of God really are invisible. It proves that God has ways to fulfill prophecy far beyond our imagining. When we look at the day, we consider it to be the same everywhere on earth. But that is not true. The fact is, two days always exist on earth at the same time. Half the world is in daylight and half the world is in darkness at all times simultaneously. They are superimposed in our one day, but they are very separate and very real. Where they meet, two days coexist almost simultaneously, so that a person can take a single step and go ahead or back in time 24 hours. Not in real time, of course, but as far as the calendar and the clock

are concerned. It was, remember, the calendar and the clock that ruled the Law of Moses. That surreal place is called the International Date Line and it now lies along a jagged line drawn through the Pacific Ocean. Since it is something that any of us can do whenever we want, natural law does not have to be violated for us to take this leap into the future (or into the past). While the line itself may be artificial in its placement, what it designates is a reality that world leaders have learned they must deal with. Because the world is round, this line has always existed. The fact of its existence, however, was not discovered until Magellan's crew returned to Spain from a trip around the world in 1522. The existence of such a line at the time of Christ, 1500 years earlier, was unknown to the inhabitants of the world. But still, it did exist. Mankind did not designate a location for this line until the 18th century. Before that, its positioning was in the hands of God. And since God is the Alpha and Omega (the Beginning and the End), such a date-line would most logically lie along a plane that intersected the presence of God. That would put it (at the time of Christ) in Jerusalem.

In the 18th century, long after Christ had emplaced God inside human hearts, the line could be arbitrary because God was then acknowledged to be everywhere. But before this change (i.e., when Mosaic tradition ruled the people of God) the line had to intersect Jerusalem. If God wanted Him to, Jesus could have put this natural principle to work at the time of the Last Supper, walking back and forth as directed by His Father across a date-line known only to Him and to God and in the process bring the days and dates of the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and the Passover into harmony with one another. Thus Jesus could offer his already crucified body to his apostles on the night after he was crucified, for instance, or celebrate the Passover on the correct night as far as the Sanhedrin was concerned. All of this would have been invisible to the Jews, and even to the rest of us, for centuries—until our knowledge of celestial mechanics increased to the point where it gave us the ability to see that it was all scientifically feasible and in accordance with natural law. Jesus, while He walked the earth had not yet been glorified, so the line would have to intersect the location of the Father, not the Son. This might explain why Jesus and his apostles traveled such an extended distance from the Mount of Olives all the way across Jerusalem to the far western side of that city to celebrate the Last Supper on the night before he was crucified. This was an exceptionally long walk simply to go to dinner, and it suggests that God and the holy cortege that surrounded Him (Ez.1:4-28) dwelt somewhere above Mount Zion—the peak of Jerusalem's western hill. We know that God was not in the temple on Mount Moriah at that moment. Jesus had emptied Herod's temple of its Jewish hierarchy a few hours earlier with His whip. And Ezekiel shows us that God actually departed the temple far earlier (Ez.10:15-19)—at the time of Nebuchadnezzar when Jeremiah

took the word of God out of the temple and hid it in a cave. The missing 'Word' which Ezekiel shows had departed the temple about 587 B.C., did not return to that edifice until Christ appeared; and since Jesus was not permitted to take His place in that temple (as the missing Word returning), the structure should have remained empty of God's spirit. The Bible tells us that God is Word. The refusal of the Temple leaders to let God's Word in left the structure empty. Since the Gospel indicates it was very important to God that Jesus not violate the laws of the Torah when he came down to earth, it seems likely that God would instruct His Son to use the rules of nature if they could help him achieve in absolute perfection scripture's holy directives.

In the Jewish calendar, the new day began at sundown. Walking west across the dateline on the eve of the Last Supper, Jesus and His disciples would have passed from thursday into friday. Once the day's sun had set, friday then became saturday, allowing Jesus, after sunset, to distribute to His disciples at that meal, his already crucified Body. Not in real time, of course, but by the calendar—the calendar that was so vitally important to the Jews, and on which so many of the rules of the Torah were based. This would have allowed Jesus to offer to His disciples His Last Supper on the actual calendar date of the Passover which began at sundown on Friday, just hours after Jesus died on the cross. Returning to the Garden at Gethsamane, which was some distance to the east, Jesus and His disciples would then have been able to pass back across the dateline into the darkness of friday's morning to complete the mission of God. If nothing else, such unseen principles show how God has hidden power to override our literal interpretations of the times and dates of scripture. The foregoing descriptions are perfectly harmonious with the rules of nature, so the question here is not one of whether natural law had been violated. The issue is one of perspective. Has God used the nature He has created to further His truths or does He allow theological opinion to drive His actions? Jesus told us that God pays no attention to theological opinions. These are the "traditions" He excoriated so sternly. God has not allowed truth to be taken prisoner to narrow perspective—not even when that limited perspective is issued by holy people with impeccable religious credentials.

The descriptions given above actually work, and they work in harmony with the nature God has made. Nature does not have to be remade in order to make them work—at least, not until the day nature itself is destroyed and the elements interchange their qualities to refashion a new nature in the image of God. That is what the Bible is really trying to tell us. Nature and God are not enemies. It is sin that is God's enemy, not nature. But sin is bringing this world to an end and there is nothing God can do about that except to rescue us

from the death that is coming. The millennium described by John, the thousand-year reign of the Church, has already come—and is now almost gone. There are no additional 'thousand years' of glory in this earth's future—only catastrophe. The world has already started to rebel against Jesus and when this rebellion becomes full grown, the planet will not be able to survive its consequences. Those who do survive will do so only because they have obeyed Jesus. These survivors will be ushered by God directly into the highest heaven itself, where they will find no way-station to block their procession—no half-way house of limited years. It is clear in John's words that the millennium's end will bring us to the time of the second resurrection and, with it, the moment of the great wedding feast—a procession that will open the gates to the kingdom of God and to its glorious city, Jerusalem, which has been rebuilt by the deeds of the saints. This is the real meaning behind those mysterious words written in the Book of Revelation. They tell us about the two great wars against the people of God masterminded by Satan, and of the thousand-year reign of the Church which lies between these two conflicts. A thousand-year reign bordered by two resurrections of God's faithful. They are all about the warfare of Satan, the peace of Christ and the judgment of sinners.

All who have wrapped themselves in Jesus and His Gospel of righteousness will be resurrected into eternal life. Dressed in gowns of brilliant white, holding palms and singing the praises of God (Rv.7:9-10), those whom God has chosen will pass, not into a temporal court, but through heaven's own portals into the majestic eternal kingdom itself. They will reign with Jesus, not just for a thousand years, but forever. And when that happens, no one will have to stay behind in the lower sea to spend a transitional 'millennium' waiting for the true eternal kingdom (and a third resurrection which was never prophesied) to come and rescue them from earthly life. There are only two resurrections, not three, and there is only one kingdom of heaven, and it is, said God, not of this earth.

PART 6

THE LANGUAGE OF GOD

"Yes, certainly with stammering lips and in a foreign language, he will talk to this nation..." Is.28:11

21

Removing the Veil

"I have been telling you all this in metaphors; the hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in metaphors; but will tell you about the Father in plain words.
Jn.16:25

God has hidden the mysteries of heaven behind a divine cloak. The seven seals which form this veil are composed of metaphor and for many centuries they effectively blocked every person on earth from seeing clearly the hidden truths of heaven. *"There are many prophets and holy men who longed to see what you see and never saw it."* (Mt.13:17). Perhaps the most important difference between early Christians and the ruling aristocracy of Judea was the way in which each interpreted the word of God. To many Jews, the Torah was literal. They saw no secondary meaning hidden behind its words. Christians, on the other hand, because they had been instructed by Jesus, saw these books veiled in metaphor—their true meaning hidden in a spiritual language structured in the design of God. When John in his vision was taken by the angel into heaven he saw God there, sitting on a great throne and holding in His hand the Bible. *"I saw that in the right hand of the One sitting on the throne there was a scroll that had writing on back and front and was sealed with seven seals."* (Rv.5:1). In his vision John was shown that among all the angels and men of heaven or earth there was only one person worthy enough to break the seven seals on this book: *"...the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed, and he will open the scroll and the seven seals of it."* (Rv.5:5). The Lion of the tribe of Judah—the key that unlocks the scriptures—is Jesus Christ. *"You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it, because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought men for God of every race, language, people and nation..."* (Rv.5:9). Opening its metaphoric curtain, Jesus released into the world the hidden language of God—all the secret instruction that unlocks the gate of heaven. Yet, in doing so, he kept the screen guarding His message intact. He did this by talking to the people only in parables: *"In all this Jesus spoke to the crowds in parables; indeed, he would never speak to them except in parables. This was to fulfill the prophecy: 'I will speak to you in parables and expound things hidden since the foundation of the world.'"* (Mt.13:34-35). This was so that the Holy Spirit could distribute the invisible secrets of God

selectively. *"The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven are revealed to you, but they are not revealed to them. For anyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough; but from anyone who has not, even what he has will be taken away."* (Mt.13:11-12). It was because of the people's wickedness that God made His message a mystery. His words hold the secret to eternal life—something the wicked cannot experience, so only those with ears to hear have been given access to their hidden meaning.

The idea that scripture could have a spiritual dimension was clear even to the writers of the Old Testament. The Book of Proverbs, for instance, opens with these words: *"Proverbs...for understanding words of deep meaning...for perceiving the meaning of proverbs and obscure sayings... the sayings of the sages and their riddles..."* (Prov.1:1-6). While their ancestors may have seen obscure sayings in the Bible, orthodox Jews today do not talk about the scriptures in such terms. In Christ's day, wide-spread disagreement raged among the leaders in Jerusalem about the nature of God and His impact on men. In those days Jewish scholars searched the scriptures for proofs of their various beliefs. We can see this in the Gospel's accounts, and especially in the widely disparate views of the Sadducees, Pharisees and Essenes. The Sadducees were more like the Jews of today, but the Pharisees believed in angels and looked forward to resurrection—ideas that are not shared by most modern Jews. The Essenes, on the other hand, seemed to follow a prophet-oriented Judaism that closely paralleled the philosophy of the Maccabean period. They seemed to pattern themselves after the Hassidean freedom fighter's who successfully liberated Judea from the forces of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.

The unification of Jewish theology occurred soon after Jesus appeared and delivered God's interpretation of the Holy Writ. Rejecting Jesus' interpretation, the sudden Jewish codification seems to have been a response to the Roman destruction of the temple and priesthood, to Christ, and to the fracturing division his Word was creating in Jewish synagogues. And once the Jewish interpretation of scripture had been strictly defined in the Hebrew tongue and to a particular rescension of that tongue, Jewish leaders rejected the idea of a scripture underlain with symbolic or hidden meanings. By blocking such metaphoric interpretation, it became impossible for Jewish scholars or those they taught to see Jesus Christ. Paul called this scriptural cloud a veil and said that it had been divinely placed, *"...indeed, to this very day, that same veil is still there whenever the old Covenant is being read, a veil never lifted, since Christ alone can remove it."* (2 Cor.3:14). This divine seal not only clouds Jewish minds, it covers the vision of others as well—religious, secular and pagan people all across the world, especially those the world considered, and still consider,

their brightest thinkers. In fact, Jesus predicted this blindness to the secrets of God's mysteries: *"I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and clever and revealing them to mere children instead."* (Lk.10:21). The only people able to understand the metaphors of God are the children of God. To all others, there is nothing but the veil—a veil that can be removed only through the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a significant mystery here. How God's secrets could be misinterpreted by scholars but understood by people without any education seems incomprehensible. *"As your word unfolds, it gives light, and the simple understand."* (Ps.119:130). This defies all logic. Yet this paradox is locked in the concept and function of the Holy Spirit. The understanding of the simple is something which can only come through the power and guidance of the Spirit of God. When he spoke to His apostles Jesus anticipated this divine, invisible instruction. *"The hour is coming when I shall no longer speak to you in metaphors but tell you about the Father in plain words."* (Jn.16:25). *"I shall ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate to be with you forever, that Spirit of truth whom the world can never receive since it neither sees nor knows him; but you know him, because he is with you, he is in you."* (Jn.14:16-17). But to those outside of God Jesus said, *"Do you know why you cannot take in what I say? It is because you are unable to understand my language. That is because the devil is your father and you prefer to do what your father wants."* (Jn.8:43-47). The entire Bible, new and old Testament alike, is written in this hidden tongue. *"Elijah has come already and they did not recognize him..."* (Mt.17:12). *"It was the stone rejected by the builders that became the keystone..."* (Ps.118:22). *"If David calls him Lord, then how can he be his son?"* (Mt.22:41-45). *"I am going to strike the shepherd so that the sheep may be scattered."* (Zech.13:7). Understanding the secret meaning behind these words is at the very core of hearing God. This is why Jesus was so insistent with his apostles that they *decipher* his words, and not just listen to the literal stories that encapsulated what He had to say. *"If you do not understand this parable",* he once asked them, *"how then will you understand any of the parables?"* (Mk.4:13-14). Deciphering scripture requires an understanding of spiritual language, the hidden tongue that lies just beneath its surface.

The Bible is written in two languages simultaneously—narrative and poetic. Narrative is like the text caption below a picture and poetic is the picture itself. Poetic language is deeply symbolic and filled with metaphor. Through it, one word can be transposed in the mind to conjure up a sweeping variety of meanings. Narrative is just the opposite. Meant to be a language of precision, it demands exact meaning from its vocabulary. Because precise language requires precise definition, narrative takes a lot of words to say very little. That is why we say 'one picture is worth a thousand words'. If no

words are available to describe an idea in narrative language, the idea cannot be expressed. Worse, until it can be precisely described, the idea does not even exist. Communication and thought, therefore, are intimately related. These two forms of thinking have recently been linked to the right and left sides of the brain, showing that each is processed by the mind in a completely different way. Narrative has become the fundamental form of expression in the western world because of its precise way of denoting ideas. One of the most important Greek influences in the world was the shift to narrative as the basis for communicative language. Up to that time, especially in the east, people communicated in both forms—in both narrative and poetic—so that the two ways of speaking and thinking were interchangeable. Consequently language and thought were often mystical and arbitrary. Aristotle changed all that. Given the Greek preoccupation with the absolutes of science and philosophy, Aristotle decreed that the basis for communication be narrative, and everyone since then has agreed with him.

The epitome of narrative language is law. As its ultimate expression, law also shows us narrative's most glaring problems. Meant for precision, it can work just the opposite. Simple contracts work well in law, but complex ones are often a disaster. Narrative breaks down, even among the experts, when it comes to complex or abstract ideas. It is because of this breakdown that Einstein had to use poetic thought in order to come to his revelations about space and the universe. He thought in terms of elevators and freight trains, and transposed what he saw in these to outer space. In doing this, he discovered there were similarities between the two which matched. In the freedom of poetic thought he could extrapolate these similarities and see new things beyond them never dreamed of before—his mind unfettered by the restrictions of past definition. To explain his ideas to an academic world which thought in narrative however, he had to redefine his ideas back into the kind of prose his audience could understand. He did this through the intermediary of mathematics—the ultimate expression of precision in a world which God made "*according to measure, number and weight*". Those who think only in narrative terms look at Einstein and say, 'How did he ever think of those things?' Freed from the jail of a defined narrative, he entered a process of thinking which could roam about freely outside of vocabulary.

Because poetic language and thinking have no precise definitions, the mind is free to contemplate an infinite variety of meanings. This expands interpretation to the borders of imagination, allowing the mind to explore options which are virtually unlimited. Precision is sacrificed for scope. And definition for creativity and understanding. This makes poetic a language of discovery. The two languages used together lead to deeper understanding. The

reason why this works is because God has replicated creation over and over again using similar processes, creating dualisms to all things. Einstein proved that this dualism extends to the borders of the universe. God obviously did this on purpose so that we could see one thing, and through it, understand in it many other things as well—because all of it is pointing to one thing alone—Jesus Christ. When we say that history repeats itself, we are implying that the same processes apply even to human behavior. The Holy Spirit has used metaphoric dualism as a basis for all the words of prophecy. That is why an understanding of this process and the language used to describe it are so essential in removing the veil which now hides God's prophecy from our minds. Daniel, for instance, could describe an event that occurred 2300 years ago and have us see in it the mirror image of a sacrilege that still lies in the future. God has created a world in which the patterns keep repeating because we live in a place where two opposite spirits are warring for our soul. Satan does not change and neither does God, and so the conflict between them which is carried out in our own flesh always impacts in the same way. Sin always leads to catastrophe. When the experts warn that 'the Big One' is coming, most people look to the San Andreas fault, but we can also use the same expression for Armageddon. This kind of poetic dualism can be seen in all things because sin is bringing the world to an end. Disaster has an ultimate focus—so all the catastrophe's are related. They tell us that God is near—at the very door.

Despite the drawbacks to narrative, and the need for poetic thought to counterbalance it, western society has virtually drummed poetic language out of existence. Our world has become too disciplined to tolerate any imprecision in thought or communication, even for creative purposes. In today's format every concept must be narrowly defined. We can see this in a simple example. The Declaration of Independence says that 'all men are created equal'. This, of course, is a poetic expression meant to include all mankind, but in narrative thinking it has excluded women and children. "*What about us?*", they ask. Because we have excluded it from our minds and communication, poetic language is no longer understood or tolerated by much of the population—showing that the part of the brain which deals in this kind of thought has been shut down in many people. That is why we have seen these kind of questions pop up in recent years. Especially in relation to the Bible—a book filled with poetic language. When God gave Moses authority to write the Bible, there were no restrictions governing the way ideas should be expressed. Consequently, the Bible was produced in both narrative and poetic language simultaneously. The easiest way to see this is in scripture's liberal use of metaphor—all the parables, for instance. In eastern religions, poetic language is known as mysticism, but in Christianity it's mystery has been solved and so we refer to the Bible's poetic language as spiritual, not mystical. Because the Bible is

written in two kinds of language, its concepts must be understood in both ways. The Jews see Moses in the strict definitions of narrative law, but God has interpreted that law in poetic terms: Jesus was the underlying focus of the Old Testament from the beginning as far as God was concerned. Yet this was a truth that could only be seen poetically. The fact that God had hidden a poetic language even in the narrative of Moses shows that not just the parables, but every word in the Bible must be understood both literally and metaphorically. These two types of language, narrative and poetic, are interwoven together so that they envelope every sentence in the Bible. In this way the Holy Spirit has combined both precision and infinite thought together in the one document. God has allowed scripture to be fulfilled both ways, but His primary objective was that it be understood poetically (spiritually). That is because it is not the Bible itself that instructs us, but God. The Holy Spirit is our teacher and the Holy Spirit simply uses the words in the Bible to show us the ultimate truths about God. Therefore it is not the writer's intention that is the primary object of the literature, it is the message that God has hidden for us inside the writer's description that is of paramount importance—a message that can only be understood by means of the Spirit. Paul was showing us our need to see God in poetic terms rather than in the narrative of the world when he said, *"We teach, not in the way that human philosophy is taught, but in the way that the Spirit teaches us: we teach spiritual things spiritually. An unspiritual person is one who does not accept anything of the Spirit of God: he sees it all as nonsense; it is beyond his understanding because it can only be understood by means of the Spirit."* (1 Cor.2:13-14). God is unseen and cannot be proved. Neither can heaven nor hell. No one has seen a soul and no one can prove its existence. Even the angels are invisible to us. The only way we can know that any of these things exist is through poetic thought. Faith, then, is the ability to see spiritual things spiritually.

Since we tend to interpret the Bible in strict narrative terms (law), we usually see God as a severe judge, holding a Damascus sword, and just waiting for us to make a single small mistake so that He can slice off our heads. Theology, of course, as our narrative definition of the Bible, defines the mistake that God seems to be looking for. Each person's narrative defining something different. This is why we have so many diverse theologies on earth forming all the various churches. Each of them are convinced that God wants us to obey an array of man-made rules, most of which were expressed in one way or another in the narrative of Moses. They all say they are structured in the mercy of Jesus Christ, yet they all tie strict and uncompromising man-made narratives to his Gospel—narratives ranging from magic incantations to complex human regulations. This obsession with their own legality is why all the various churches are so intolerant of each other. It not only explains why

Mormons and Protestants and Catholics cannot interact, but why all of these major divisions have produced a vast array of warring subsets within themselves. Each of them utterly convinced that their own legal interpretation of scripture is the correct one and that all the others are wrong—and therefore, probably fatal. This occurs because we think only in narrative terms—in the terms of this world's language. The 'creeds' of our various churches are the ultimate examples of the way in which our theologians transpose Christ's poetic expressions into narrative. For this reason, law and faith always go together. God intended it this way because both languages in the Bible are true. Yet God has tempered the inflexibility of the Law with mercy—transforming it from letter to spirit. In this transformation, the spirit of the law became the higher authority. Unable to fathom the poetic, it is inconceivable for us to come to grips with a God who has developed a sliding scale—to a God who said, for instance, "*To him whom more is given, more will be expected*" (Lk.12:48). This kind of variable judgement is not acceptable in a contemporary human court where we say 'ignorance of the law is no excuse'. As a result, these two languages represent a collision between two entirely different ways of thinking. That is what happens whenever God comes into contact with man. What Jesus' words show is that God is not going to judge us on our own narrative terms. He does not care whether we go to church on Saturday or Sunday or even Wednesday for that matter. He does not care whether we are Protestant or Catholic or Mormon or fat or thin or black or white. He does not care whether we eat meat or dance or wear beads. God wants us to be holy—simply to put Christ's commandments into practice in our own lives. We can see this in the poetic expression of Jesus, but it is invisible to us in the strict legal narrative of Moses. God keeps the Law of Moses because He is righteous, and no one who is righteous breaks the law, but He has given up His Son to a death on the cross so that our sins with respect to that Law could all be forgiven. In that one instant, he removed us from the Law and made us responsible to Him only in terms of our obedience and faith to Jesus Christ. The poetic concept of this is almost beyond our prosaic mind to grasp. We still think of God in the simplistic precision of man-made restrictions—the kind of precision that rules our vocabulary and thinking. That is why we step right over the top of Jesus and go on to look for the 'true' church—the perfect creed—which we are sure lies just over the next horizon.

Since narrative operates only in absolutes, when the Bible is viewed in that language alone, it has no component except the exact meaning of the vocabulary itself. We call this absolute, the 'letter of the law'. Its opposite poetic component is the 'spirit of the law'. The spirit of the law has no meaning in a contemporary courtroom where only narrative thinking exists. That is because narrative thought is always empirical. A lawyer has no time for what

is 'right' or what is 'true', only for what can be proved. Scholarship and science are the same, existence only relates to what can be seen, proved and described. The problem is, God has many things to reveal to us which do not fit into any of these categories. Most of God's creation is invisible, unknown, cannot be proved and no words exist to describe it. Therefore there is no way for Him to speak to us on the literary terms we have set. By blocking poetic expression—the vocabulary of the Spirit—we have made language choices which lock us into a legalese which God has great difficulty penetrating. The only way He can communicate ideas about His invisible and spiritual world is through a spiritual language which most of us have rejected and therefore cannot speak or understand. *"Do you know why you cannot take in what I say? It is because you are unable to understand my language."* (Jn.8:43). This is why a barrier exists between mankind and God. And even if we did have a vocabulary for all the ideas God wants to express to us, it would take so many words to define these ideas that we would be left, not with a Bible, but with an entire encyclopedia. As John said, *"The world itself, I suppose, would not be enough to hold all the books which would have to be written."* (Jn.21:25). By speaking to us in poetic terms, God has used an economy of language to bring many different concepts into a single form which could *unfold* as our understanding grows—ideas that would have been impossible for God to divulge in pure narrative terms. Precise definition does not lend itself to an unfolding revelation. That is because the descriptive narrative has to be entirely re-written with each new discovery. That is why the schools use new textbooks every year. But we cannot go back and re-write the Bible. Everything that God needed to say to us, had to exist in one form from the beginning.

This is a fundamental reason why God structured the Bible in the fluidity of poetic terms. As our understanding of the world evolves, so must our perception of scripture. That is why Jesus told his disciples that he had many more things to tell them which they were not yet prepared to hear (Jn.16:12). When we view the scriptures only in its narrative language, deeper understanding is lost and an unfolding revelation is impossible. When we tie our religious definitions to our knowledge of this world, we cannot tolerate scientific discoveries, or any other contrary opinions for that matter, to cloud these definitions. Because our knowledge of this world is going to change, any definitions we tie to it must change as well. Cemented in strict and uncompromising definitions, the whole narrative structure is completely interdependent. Any slight change makes the whole document invalid—requiring that we re-write the entire book from scratch. This is why the Roman hierarchy was so intolerant of Keppler and Copernicus when they looked out into space and saw that the earth revolved around the sun. We would think today, 'who cares?', but that one discovery blew

an entire theological narrative. It meant that a whole Vatican theology had to be re-written—right down to the core. This is what happens to us when we compartmentalize God and try to make Him fit into our faulty narrative knowledge. Our entire faith can be shattered in a single discovery. This is why when Jesus appeared to Cleopas on the road from Jerusalem, he explained the second language of scripture to him—the hidden language behind the narrative. The difference between these two languages can be seen in a simple example. In one language the Bible says *'70 years'*, a fixed definition which has been precisely defined for us by astronomers and scientists, but in another it says *'a day can be like a thousand years'*, and that erases the fixed definition and brings us to poetic interpretation. It brings us to the second language. We can see exactly the same process again today with the discovery of the process of evolution. An entire wing of the Christian church is up in arms over this concept because it does not fit into their narrative perception of the world. They have taken the poetic expressions of the Old Testament and interpreted them in a strict legal narrative little different from what Roman theologians had done before the telescope was invented—tying their belief in God to a single point in the world's unfolding knowledge. And again, just as the discoveries of Kepler and Copernicus did before him, Darwin's findings have altered the world's knowledge. And again like Kepler and Copernicus, it has done so in such a way that appears to contradict religious traditions born out of literal interpretations of the Old Testament. Yet the One who made creation also guided scripture, so Darwin had no way of discovering a world that proved the Bible wrong. Instead, Darwin's findings show that those who interpreted scripture in narrative terms alone were dealing with only a fraction of God's message. Had they been listening, they would have known that two thousand years ago Jesus described Darwin's revelation in spiritual terms. In his parable Jesus said that the kingdom of God was like the angels throwing a net into the sea and bringing in a catch of all kinds. When it was full, the angels sat on the bank and sorted through it, keeping the good and throwing the bad away. This represents survival of the fittest (faithful) by supernatural selection. It is God's way of paraphrasing Darwin, showing that what Darwin actually discovered was a dualism that proved the truth of Christ—it shows that God made this world in such a way that it would point to the Gospel's truth on every level. All Darwin discovered was the earthly equivalent of God's own rules. The same kind of dualism can be seen in Kepler's discovery as well. This world revolves around the sun because we revolve around the Son of God. Man is not the center of the universe, God is. Because we have made ourselves the center, we have reversed reality. That is why so many of us tend to see God in anthropomorphic terms—with hands and legs and arms and such. The Bible said that God made man in His own image and instead of comprehending that in poetic terms, we switch it into narrative and make God into *our* image. So instead of seeing ourselves in the

image of God, we make God into a man. This turns it upside down and locks us into a theological narrative which is not true and never was true. These are spiritual images that can only be seen by means of poetic thought. When we keep going back to viewing the Bible only in the strict and uncompromising terms of narrative language, we instill into it our own biases and lock ourselves out of seeing the larger truths behind its words. Jesus tried to tell us this when he implored his apostles to try harder to understand the hidden meanings behind his parables (Mk.4:14). His metaphors held the key to eternal life and he was trying to tell the people who listened to him that they must learn to understand his language in terms of its poetic (spiritual) meaning. Once they did that, the veil of scripture would be removed and the hidden meanings of the entire Bible would be opened to them. God is above the universe and beyond even what lies behind it. We can see this in the words of John: *"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth. The first heaven and the first earth had disappeared now and there was no longer any sea. I saw the holy city, and the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven..."* (Rv.21:1-2). Through poetic understanding we can see God's invisible kingdom in a place that lies even beyond the sky—far beyond anything our telescopes can probe. This leads to concepts which are incomprehensible to narrative thought—concepts that can only be seen through metaphor—and it means that the future can never leave Jesus behind, because whatever science discovers, Jesus made.

It does not take a genius to listen or think in the poetic. It doesn't even take a lot of education. Jesus proved this with his parables—parables that small children could understand. God spoke easily to those who did not meet this world's criteria for intellect. In fact as we have seen, it was the educated who were misled by these parables, not the children. When Jesus described God's process of creating the world and mankind, he said, *"How it came to be no one knows. First came the shoot, then the ear, and then the corn in the ear."* (Mk.4:26-29). In these words, Jesus illustrates God's prudence of language, as He leads us past what is not important and focuses our attention, instead, on what is important. How it came to be is not important. It is the end of things that holds all the meaning. The entire creation was formed to lead first to Jesus, and then to judgement. When the time was appropriate—when the corn appeared in the ear—Jesus suddenly came to earth to offer mankind reconciliation with God before the judgement could destroy us. In his reconciliation, Jesus removed us from man's terms and put us squarely before God alone. The judgement will be entirely spiritual. Theology will not be involved. Only the spirit of the law will matter. The terms of God's judgement will be based entirely on the Gospel Jesus preached (Jn.12:47-48). And this is the paradox. There *is* a narrative for judgement, but it is God's narrative, not man's.

22

The Template of Moses

"Then he told them, 'This is what I meant when I said, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, in the Prophets and in the Psalms, has to be fulfilled'. He then opened their minds to understand the scriptures..." Lk.24:44-45.

When God gave Moses authority to write the Law (the Torah), He placed in his hands great control over the design of the framework of the covenant—i.e., over the template of that covenant which Jesus would later follow with meticulous care. Everything that would come later in Jesus had to be structured according to the architecture of the template Moses laid down. This is why Jesus, when He talked with His disciples, was so insistent that all of His actions adhere closely with those required of Him in the books of the Old Testament. If He had not patterned His actions according to this framework, "...then", as Jesus asked His Apostles, *"how would the scriptures be fulfilled which say that this is the way it must be?"* (Mt.26:54). *"In the scroll of the book am I not commanded to obey your will?"* (Ps.40:7-8). True, He came to change the covenants, but the basic architecture between the two had to remain the same so that the patterns of the fulfillment of this change could be clearly seen. This was established by a divine decree: *"Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, not one little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man who infringes even one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be considered the least in the kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps them and teaches them will be considered great in the kingdom of heaven."* (Mt.5:17-19). Great controversy has raged in many Christian circles over the precise meaning of Christ's directives in these passages of Matthew's Gospel. Jesus is speaking in this passage about the Law of Moses and its transition into the Law of God. That transition considers them to be two parts of the same Law. Moses authored a reflection of the Law which was to be fulfilled in its entirety by Jesus Christ who brought the true Law of God down from heaven. The Law of God is the Gospel Jesus taught, and that is

a major part of the Law referenced here – i.e., the Gospel, the Law of God that completed everything Moses foresaw . We are ordered in Mt. 5:19 to keep all the commandments of Jesus Christ, down to the very smallest detail, and teach others to do the same. At the same time, many parts of the Mosaic Law have not yet been fulfilled. For instance, the Law of Moses decrees that if the sin offering is not eaten, fire from heaven must come down and burn it up. The sin-offering is communion—the "Perpetual Sacrifice" whose fate is described in the book of Daniel. When the Lawless One at the end of time takes away that offering, it will not be eaten and so, in fulfillment of Moses, the fire from heaven will surely come, almost certainly in the catastrophic rain of hailstones the Book of Revelation calls the "most terrible" of all the plagues. This shows an interaction between the words of Jesus and Moses that continue to this day and will continue until the very end. All of the prophecies in scripture depend on this interaction. That is why prophecies and verses scattered throughout the Old Testament, not yet fulfilled, are certain to be fulfilled as written (although not necessarily as interpreted). God keeps scripture, but He keeps it His way.

The Law of Moses is the template of God's Law. It forms the substructure upon which the whole is built. We can see that in the fact that the worship we offer to God has changed from burning up birds and animals to an offering of good deeds and good actions. Left in place in that transition are such things as priesthoods and sacrifices, but the essential focus of the liturgy surrounding them has changed from a human physical orientation to one based upon the true spirit of God. Christ became the sacrifice required by the Law, and we have become the priesthood which takes His sacrifice into our hearts, transubstantiating His Word into actions that lead to eternal life. What has changed is that the meaning of the Law has become in Christ the essence of the Law's interpretation, not its literal statement. In this interpretation, the Apostles were able to discard everything foreign to God's intent—especially those bloody animal sacrifices that had overwhelmed the Jewish liturgy—and to replace these with elements that mirrored the love of God. *"On the day of God's sacrifice, I will punish the ministers, the royal princes, and all those who dress themselves in foreign style. On that day I mean to punish all those who are near the throne, whose who fill the palace of their lord with violence and deceit."* (Zeph.1:8-9). That the Apostles had divine permission to make these changes was decreed in scripture: *"I tell you solemnly, whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven."* (Mt.18:18).

Using this directive, the Apostles met in Jerusalem in a momentous gathering early in the history of the Church and erased the literal interpretation of virtually every injunction

defined in the Old Testament (Acts 15). This left the developing Church free to remold the directives of the Law into a format consistent with the commandments of the Gospel. This was accomplished by letters and treatises sent to the various churches by the major Apostles—the bulk of them authored by Paul. As soon as the Church defined which of these letters and treatises would be included in a set scripture, the binding was completed. The template of Moses had already decreed that once scripture had been formed, it could not be altered or rejected (John 10:34-35). For this reason, the New Testament, once it was formed, established for all eternity the divine articles of the new covenant. For all who accepted the new covenant's replacement terms, the Old Testament regulations were immediately superseded. *"We have seen that Jesus has been given a ministry of a far higher order, and to the same degree it is a better covenant of which he is the mediator, founded on better promises. If that first covenant had been without a fault, there would have been no need for a second one to replace it."* (Heb.8:6-7). Jeremiah had predicted this change of covenants in plain language. *"See the days are coming—it is God who speaks—when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master."* (Jer.31:31-34). *"By speaking of a new covenant, he (Jeremiah) implies that the first one is already old. Now anything old only gets more antiquated until in the end it disappears."* (Heb.8:13).

That end has not yet come. For this reason, as shown above, the Old Testament is still with us today. As the contract between God and man regarding human civilization on earth, it houses the template for the final events of history. That is why we have to study its terms in our search of prophecy. As the template of the Law, it tells us the future of man, and the future of the earth. The new covenant, on the other hand, is not about the earth—it is for the kingdom of heaven. As citizens of that new kingdom, we have broken with this world and its covenant. That is why we can escape the terrible future that this world has been bound by the Law to endure. To show that God is the author of this change of covenants, He has given absolute power on earth to those who accept His offer of reconciliation: *"As the Father sent me, so am I sending you." After saying this he breathed on them and said: 'Receive the Holy Spirit. For those whose sins you forgive, they are forgiven; for those whose sins you retain, they are retained.'* (John 20:22-23). Although this directive gives great power to the Christian Church in its struggle with the secular world, Christians have only limited power to implement it against each other. God cannot be pitted against Himself. No one can bind sin in anyone God sees as sinless. Sin must exist or it

cannot be bound. Instead, this is a power that God has given His Church over all pagans, so that sin might be forgiven. It is the power of baptism. And it was given for a saving purpose. Thus it is an edict whose terms can be greatly temporized by obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ.

Moses, when he originally designed the template of the covenant, did so according to a vision he had received while on the mountain in Sinai. As we have seen before, the Mosaic covenant was a reflection of the Law, and was made with the intent that it be replaced from the very beginning. It had been formed in the aftermath of the Sinai compromise when the people of Israel balked at the idea of God coming to them in person to deliver the balance of His commandments. Successfully begging Moses for an intermediary, the people got an interim covenant to keep them safe in holiness during the years between their request and the day that God's selected intermediary should appear. From the very beginning, then, the Mosaic covenant was an alternate covenant (a guardian covenant) destined to be replaced when the true Father arrived. Expectantly, the tribes waited for the coming Christ as they gathered themselves around the tenants of the interim covenant. This covenant was built from the memory of Moses. It was his interpretation of the vision he had seen on Sinai; and because of this, like an impressionistic painting, its design was not exact—but it did follow a basic format decreed by God in heaven. It was good enough to keep the people righteous while they waited. But the people rebelled and abandoned the Ten Commandments around which Moses had defined that first covenant. Mutinous and restive, the guardians of the first covenant set up a materialistic and ostentatious ritual revolving around their unholy love of money, power and violence. To make all these changes in the Law legal, they defined a vast codicle to the Mosaic Law called 'tradition'; and with its implementation, were able to run off with God's Law, taking it where God did not want it to go. As a result, Jesus, when He appeared, came to a people in revolt. God had no intention of honoring their ritual of tradition because it was being used to worship the things of Satan. He instructed Jesus to discard it and to provide the people, instead with a blueprint describing the architecture of heaven. Keeping the skeletal framework of Moses intact, Jesus implanted into the hearts of His disciples a design which had power to impart eternal life. As we have seen before, nothing in the Law of Moses could give such life. With the formation of the New Testament, the Holy Spirit fulfilled the Mosaic instructions that this blueprint to eternal life be given to the people in writing (Ez.43:10-11).

Everything in the Torah (the book of Moses) was about Jesus. *"You place your hopes on Moses, and Moses will be your accuser...since it was I that he was writing about."*

(Jn.5:45-46). When Cleopas and his friend were walking from Jerusalem toward the town of Emmaus (just after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus) they discussed the activities that had just occurred in the holy city. Suddenly Jesus appeared and joined them. At first, they did not recognize Him. He asked them about their conversation. Cleopas turned and said to Him, *"You must be the only person staying in Jerusalem who does not know the things that have been happening there these last few days".* *"What things?"* the stranger asked. *"All about Jesus of Nazareth" they answered 'the prophet...who was sentenced to death...we had hoped that he would be the one to set Israel free...'* Jesus turned to them, *"You foolish men! So slow to believe the full message of the prophets! Was it not ordained that the Christ should suffer and so enter into his glory?"* Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, he explained to them the passages throughout the scriptures that were about himself." (Lk.24:13-27). All these passages in scripture formed a divine template upon which God defined the appearance and actions of His promised Messiah. Everything in the Old Testament existed only to serve as the architecture upon which Jesus would structure God's true religion. None of it was created for itself. Nothing in the Old Testament can stand alone or sit apart from this holy template. And neither can the world, for it was not just the passages in the Old Testament which God designed in the name of Jesus Christ, but the entire universe. Everything that we see bears witness to this plan, from the tiniest particles of matter that dart around atoms all the way to that heavy particle at the beginning of time that birthed the universe—all were created so that God could raise up a human civilization that would have the opportunity of affirming or denying the message of the Gospel.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. We can see that completion in every aspect of Christianity. The Old Testament forms the template upon which the religion of Jesus Christ has been built. The entire architecture of the Church is built on this Mosaic template. That alone proves the template's fulfillment. So does the fact that Jesus made such extensive efforts to fulfill every prophecy written about Him in the Old Testament. Through the teaching of the Holy Spirit, Paul recognized that there could not be two laws. One belonged to the Guardian (Moses). It was meant to be a caretaker of the people until the true law of God arrived to take its rightful place. He also realized that there is no place for a guardian law once the true Father had taken His place. The Law of Moses had to pass away. Only the Law of God through Christ was eternal and would never pass away. As scripture teaches, no one can go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing. It had to come down. *"By this, the Holy Spirit is showing that no one has the right to go into the sanctuary as long as the outer tent remains standing; it is a symbol for this present time. None*

of the gifts and sacrifices offered under these regulations can possibly bring any worshipper to perfection in his inner self; they are rules about the outward life, connected with foods and drinks and washing at various times, intended to be in force only until it should be time to reform them." (Heb. 9:8-10)

It was clear to everyone that no one could be saved in the Law of Moses. No one could survive the Law. Any slip in the Law at any time meant death. No one could stumble in even the smallest of its myriad regulations and live. Moreover, the Mosaic sacrifices were imperfect and for this reason unable to meet the stringent specifications of their own law. A perfect unblemished sacrifice for sin was essential to fulfill the precise language of the Mosaic Law. That is why everybody in the Old Testament died. Moses could save no one. His Law was good, outlining sin in detail, but certain death to humanity. That is why Paul told the Jewish leaders the following about their Law: *"If you can teach the ignorant and instruct the unlearned because your Law embodies all knowledge and truth, then why not teach yourself as well as the others? You preach against stealing, yet you steal; you forbid adultery, yet you commit adultery; you despise idols, yet you rob their temples. By boasting about the Law and then disobeying it, you bring God into contempt."* (Rom. 2:20-24). The Law was unable to do anything about a sinner but condemn him to death. God had carried out this very sentence on His own Son in order to cancel the Law's ability to condemn those who accepted Christ's death as their own in His name through baptism and conversion into His Gospel (the true Law of God). There could be no higher or more perfect sacrifice than Jesus, the Son of God.

Paul expressed our rescue in these terms: *"Before faith came, we were allowed no freedom by the Law; we were being looked after till faith was revealed. The Law was to be our guardian until the Christ came and we could be justified by faith. Now that that time has come we are no longer under that guardian, and you are, all of you, sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus."* (Gal.3:23-26) *"When law came, it was to multiply the opportunities of falling, but however great the number of sins committed, grace was even greater; and so, just as sin reigned wherever there was death, so grace will reign to bring eternal life thanks to the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom 5:20-21). *"Through the Law I am dead to the Law, so that now I can live for God. I have been crucified with Christ, and I live now, not with my own life, but with the life of Christ who lives in me."* (Gal.2:19). *Jesus Christ died on the cross to replace the Law of Moses with grace. "...we acknowledge that what makes a man righteous is not obedience to the Law, but faith in Jesus Christ."* (Gal.2:16). *"But if you do look to the Law to make you justified, then you have*

separated yourselves from Christ, and have fallen from grace." (Gal.5:4) It is this same freedom from the Law of the Old Testament that was verified and codified at the Jerusalem Council meeting by Peter, Paul and the rest of Christ's Apostles without dissent. Faith (the Word we proclaim) is the Law of God, the true Law of heaven and earth that brings grace in place of the Law for all who are baptised in His name. *"The word, that is the faith we proclaim, is very near to you, it is on your lips and in your heart. If your lips confess that Jesus is Lord and if you believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, then you will be saved. By believing from the heart you are made righteous; by confessing with your lips you are saved."* (Rom.10:8-11) *"He has overridden the Law, and cancelled every record of the debt that we had to pay; he has done away with it by nailing it to the cross; and so he got rid of the Sovereignities and the Powers, and paraded them in public, behind him in his triumphal procession."* (Col. 2:14-15). Because Jesus overrode the Law, Christians are able to stumble in Christ and not die because they are protected from failure by God's Grace which protects those who are faithful to Him. *"Does it follow that we should remain in sin so as to let grace have greater scope? Of course not. We are dead to sin. so how can we continue to live in it? "* (Rom.6:1-2) *"That is why you must not let sin reign in your mortal bodies or command your obedience to bodily passions, why you must not let any part of your body turn into an unholy weapon fighting on the side of sin; you should, instead offer yourselves to God, and consider yourselves dead men brought back to life; you should make every part of your body into a weapon fighting on the side of God; and then sin will no longer dominate your life, since you are living by grace and not by law."* (Rom.6:12-14). *"You must live your whole life according to the Christ you have received – Jesus the Lord; you must be rooted in him and built on him and held firm by the faith you have been taught, and full of thanksgiving."* (Col. 2:6-7).

It was essential that the guardian law of Moses be separated from God's Law brought by Jesus Christ. As Paul's letters show, various Jewish Christians of his time were trying to resurrect the Mosaic laws and raise them up as legalities that competed with the freedoms of grace: not only circumcision, but saturday sabbaths, distinctions between pagans and Jews, temple rituals, rules of retaliation and graven images, idols, distinctions between male and female, hair and clothing styles; distinctions between foods, Hebrew and Greek language; jewelry, words and scores of other regulations either documented in the Torah or contained in the traditions of the Talmud. The cut had to be 100%. There could be no middle ground. Arbitration on which rules constituted a saved Christian could only lead to division, separating Jews from Greeks and pagans and bringing chaos to the religion. Thus we can see in Paul's teaching that Christ's exhortation in Matthew 5:17-19 is divided into two parts.

The first applies to Jesus' completion of the Law and the Prophets – bringing to pass all that the Mosaic Law promised. The second applies, not to the Mosaic copy of the Law, but to what it pointed to—the Law of God (the commandments of the Gospel) brought down from heaven by Jesus Christ.

23

God's Word Declared

"What I have spoken does not come from myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak, was commanded by the Father who sent me, and I know that his commands mean eternal life. And therefore what the Father has told me is what I speak."

Jn.12:48-50

When given the option, the Jews clung to the Bible and rejected the Gospel. So that Christians would not do the same, the Apostles rescinded the Torah, releasing us from every rule in the Old Testament (Acts 15: 5-29). They did this so that we would understand that Jesus was greater than the Bible. Seemingly a paradox, this truth is so fundamental to our understanding of God that it should be headlined in the largest print. We say that the Bible is the word of God, and it is. But, as the Apostles have borne witness, not all the words in this sacred book share the same divinity or authority. Jesus Christ is greater by far than the Old Testament which predicted Him. Most of the Bible is made up of words inspired by God, not His own personal Testimony. There is an enormous difference between the two, because one has power to save us from death and the other does not. The fundamental difference separating Jesus Christ from the rest of scripture is the supreme authority of Christ's Gospel. The words He spoke come directly from the mouth of God (Jn.12:48-50). Jesus is God's voice on earth. His words come straight from the throne of heaven. Jesus in fact, is God—a fact proved by the Trinity. This revelation is unique. Nothing like it has ever happened in the history of religion. Jesus brought God's voice down from heaven so that we could hear the Creator's words in plain language. The Gospel He preached not only tells us in clear detail what God expects of us, it is the key that opens the door to the hidden secrets that lie buried behind every mysterious word written in the Bible. Without His words (without the Gospel of Christ) scripture would lead nowhere. It would remain divinely and impenetrably sealed—it's buried truths hidden in God's concealed language. The Bible was sealed in divine metaphors. The Torah's didactic statements all had deeper meanings—meanings that revolved not around themselves, but around the divine righteousness of the Gospel Jesus was sent to preach. *"I want mercy, not sacrifice."* His revelation of scripture's symbolism put Jesus in direct conflict with those who held that the teachings of the Old Testament were

absolute and needed to be accepted literally and followed exactly as they were written. Because obsession with these rules was so pervasive and so compelling (even among early Christians), reforming the ritual of the Old Testament became one of the earliest priorities of God. When the Apostles gathered in Jerusalem to decide this matter, there was much disagreement among them as to how much of the Torah should be retained and how much discarded. Moved by the Holy Spirit, Peter stood up before the assembly and argued, "*God, who can read everyone's heart, showed his approval of the pagans by giving them the same Holy Spirit he gave to us. It would only provoke God's anger now, if we were to impose on them the very burden of the Law that neither we nor our ancestors were strong enough to support. Remember, we believe that we are saved in the same way as they are: through the grace of the Lord Jesus.*" (Acts 15:8-11). This statement silenced the discord. In one of the most momentous decisions in the history of the Christian Church, the Jerusalem assembly then decreed: "*It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and by ourselves not to saddle you with any burden beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals and from fornication. Avoid these, and you will do what is right.*" (Acts 15:29). With this decree, the Apostles in Jerusalem severed the Church from its bondage to the rules of the Torah so that Christians could live their lives in the mercy and justice of Jesus without having to struggle with the voluminous decrees of the Law of Moses. When this meeting ended, only the template of the Torah and the symbolism it advertised remained in place. The Laws and rituals of the Old Testament were all discarded. These were replaced almost entirely by the commandments of the Gospel and the directives of a 'new' Testament which had begun to be penned around the letters of Paul. Despite authorizing this freedom, Jesus predicted that obsession with the Law would continue long after he was gone. "*Beware of men...*" (Mt.10:17). The ministers, he said, would keep trying to promote their own traditions despite everything He warned about. This we have seen for ourselves. There has been no end to the stream of religious potentates and prophets who have tried to lead us back in one way or another to the old rules and regulations of the Mosaic Law. Symbolically, this might be considered a return to Egypt.

The importance of what happened that day in Jerusalem, at that council, cannot be overstated. The religious freedom of the entire Christian Church occurred instantly the moment those council directives in Acts 15 were approved and announced. Who has power ever to overturn their decree? The entire Apostolic body was there. All the elders of the Church were in attendance, the great and the small. In addition to all of Christ's original twelve Apostles, Paul, Silas and Barnabus were present as well. Of the council members, those who were of the Pharisaic party and had converted to Jesus, argued that the Laws of

Moses should be incorporated into the rules of Christian doctrine. There was a long discussion on the matter (Acts 15:6-7). When all the members of the gathered assembly had presented their views on the subject, and after Peter had made his own statement, James, the head of the Jerusalem church and a Mosaic hardliner, arose and said: *"My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has described how God first arranged to enlist a people for his name out of the pagans. This is entirely in harmony with the words of the prophets...I rule then, that instead of making things more difficult for the pagans who turn to God, we send them a letter telling them merely to abstain from anything polluted by idols, from fornication, and from the meat of strangled animals..."* (Acts 15:13-20). This directive immediately separated the Christian Church for all time from the rules and regulations of the Old Testament, and the body of believers who made this decree were so prestigious that no one could ever come later and overrule their decision. While they kept intact the framework of the Law—all the prophecies and symbolism-- the laws and traditions themselves were instantly erased. The freedom that resulted allowed the Church to build itself only in the directives of Christ.

While many of the commandments Jesus gave were pre-announced in the Old Testament through prophecy, they lay there among the myriad directions of a ritualistic Law, and so they remained undiscovered. Because their eyes had been blinded by the elaborate rituals set up by the priests of Moses, no one knew what God really wanted in the way of worship. The lords of the flock who had been chosen to lead the people of Israel to God, had led them away from the Ten Commandments—God's own personal word—and toward solar pillars and animal sacrifices instead. These leaders scoffed at the idea of loving enemies and fixed, instead, on a worldly morality which taught a harsh philosophy of revenge—an 'eye for an eye' and a 'tooth for a tooth'—in which forgiveness was seen as weakness, and the pursuit of money one of the life's highest virtues. They taught a morality that 'worked' in this wicked world, and which therefore seemed right. But they were wrong. And so, according to Jesus, were parts of their sacred scrolls. These had been contaminated, said scripture, by 'wormwood'. Satan's corruption, Jesus explained, had reached even into the Bible itself; bringing into it errors which He had to correct throughout His Gospel. *"You have learnt how it was said (in the Bible) to our ancestors : You must not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you: anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court; if a man hurls an insult at his brother, he will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if a man says to his brother, 'You Fool!' he will answer for it in hell fire..."* (Mt.5:21:22-48). *"It has been said (by the Torah of Moses) 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a writ of dismissal.' But I say this to you..."* *"Again, you have learnt how it was said to our ancestors (in the Book of the Law): 'You*

must not break your oath...' But I say this to you..." *"You have learnt how it was said (in the Bible): 'Eye for eye and tooth for tooth' But I say this to you..." "You have learnt how it was said: 'You must love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'* But I say this to you..." (Mt.5:21:22-48). Over and over again, Jesus altered the teachings of the Hebrew Old Testament. The Torah was not a book that could be taken literally. It was a book with flaws so serious that it thwarted all chance for eternal life. Without the corrections and instruction of Jesus Christ, the bread offered in the name of Moses was useless as far as heavenly life was concerned. Of those who ate it, almost all died (Jn.6:32-49). Despite the fact that it had been built on divine inspiration, it only served to blind those who read it outside the instruction of the Gospel. *"Now I will give them wormwood for their food, and poisoned water to drink, since from the prophets of Jerusalem godlessness has spread throughout the land."* (Jer.23:15).

A bible with errors in it, though unthinkable to the scribes and priests of Jerusalem was foreseen by the prophets of ancient Israel. Jeremiah had predicted it over 2500 years ago: *"How dare you say: 'We are wise, and we possess the Law of God' But look how it has been falsified by the lying pen of the scribes!"* (Jer.8:8). Because it is a blemished book, the Old Testament has no power of redemption. That is why the Book of Hebrews tells us that in the end, it will disappear entirely (Heb.8:13). The temple of Moses has specified that redemption requires perfection. Since scripture assures us that God considered Jesus a perfect unblemished lamb, his words carry the same flawless nature. His single purpose in coming to the earth was to give us God's own words, infallible and pure from heaven. If He came from the earth, his words would be blemished. *"...Man cannot redeem himself or pay his ransom to God...it is beyond him."* (Ps.49:7-8). But since He came down from heaven, His words carry heaven's faultless perfection. *"The word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory, the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14). We have already seen that salvation comes not from the Torah, but from Jesus Christ. Only the words which Jesus came down from heaven to say—the words revealed to us by the Holy Spirit in the Gospel—have the kind of power necessary to carry us alive through the fire into God's heavenly kingdom. This is why Jesus said that it is not the Bible that saves us, but only the words that He spoke. *"You study the scriptures thinking that in them you have eternal life; now these same scriptures testify to me, and yet you refuse to come to me for life!"* (Jn.5:39-40). There is something in the Bible which is greater than the Bible.

Scripture teaches that God is word: *"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God."* (Jn. 1:1). For that reason, the Gospel of Jesus—the truth of heaven—is an essential aspect of the Godhead itself and is therefore identical with God. The opening words of John's Gospel show that there is no way to separate the Gospel from the Godhead. It is synonymous with the Holy Spirit. This is verified by the fact that scripture reveals the Gospel and the Temple to be one and the same. John saw in his vision that Jesus was himself both 'Word' and 'Temple' (Jn.1:1, Rv.21:22). Correlating the design of God's temple with the blueprint of the Gospel, Ezekiel said that the design of this temple was to be given to us, not just in words, but in writing as well—a writing that God expected us to put into practice: *"Son of man, describe this temple to the House of Israel to shame them out of their filthy practices. Let them draw up the plan, and, if they are ashamed of their behavior, show them the design and plan of the temple, its exits, and entrances, its shape, how all of it is arranged, the entire design and all its principles. Give them all this in writing so that they can see and take note of its design and the way it is all arranged and carry it out."* (Ez.43:10-12). Ezekiel was not speaking on his own. The Holy Spirit empowered Ezekiel to speak in the person of the 'son of man'—a designation signifying that he was previewing, through Old Testament prophecy, the teaching of Jesus Christ. In order to rebuild ourselves in Christ's image—to rebuild the Temple—we must rebuild ourselves in the image of Christ's word—the design Jesus described. We must remake ourselves into the design and plan of God's true Temple, i.e., in accordance with the Gospel He preached. The blueprint for rebuilding the ruins of Jerusalem, then, is the Word that Jesus taught (Jn.12:47-50).

The temple Ezekiel describes is God, and the blueprint for its design is the Gospel—the word in which all creation has its genesis. A 'Word' that was written down just as Ezekiel foresaw. *"Now go and inscribe this on a tablet, write it in a book, that it may serve in the time to come as a witness forever."* (Is.30:8). The voice we hear in this book is the voice of Jesus Christ. It is the same voice that spoke to Moses from the midst of the fire at Sinai (Dt. 4:12). And it is the same voice that we can hear whenever we pick up the Gospel and read it's words: *"The deaf that day will hear the words of a book and, after shadow and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see."* (Is.29:18). The eyes of the blind see and the ears of the deaf hear because they can read, and in that reading hear the words of God's voice. *"You heard the sound of words but saw no shape, there was only a voice. And God revealed his covenant to you and commanded you to observe it..."* (Dt.4:12-13). These words were obviously meant for us, because, just as Moses declared, we see no shape or form either. None of us know what He really looked like. But the voice is there so clear that

we are able to walk the earth with Him and listen to Him preach whenever we open the book and read what He said. The Gospel that the Holy Spirit has placed in our scriptures is Divinity itself, and we must build our lives according to its holy design. When we do, we create in heaven a spiritual structure—a holy Jerusalem built, not with bricks and stones, but with repentance and conversion into the righteousness of God's holy Word.

The spiritual food of heaven is God's word. *"My teaching is not from myself: it comes from the One who sent me; and if anyone is prepared to do his will, he will know whether my teaching is from God or whether my doctrine is my own."* (John 7:16-17). *"He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, even if his testimony is not accepted...since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words..."* (John 3:31-34). *"The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."* (John 6:63). *"For what I have spoken does not come from myself; no, what I was to say, what I had to speak, was commanded by the Father who sent me, and I know that his commands mean eternal life."* (John 12:49-50). Revealing that heavenly morality has little to do with the philosophies of men no matter how inspired or holy their words may appear to be, Jesus defined a new set of ground-rules for faith. One in which all ministers, all religions, all theologies, and even scripture itself, must take a back seat. *"Trust no more in man..."* (Is. 2:22). *"Do not put your trust in men in power, or in any mortal man—he cannot save, he yields his breath and goes back to the earth he came from..."* (Ps.146:3-4). *"Alas for you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who are like whitewashed tombs that look handsome on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of corruption. In the same way you appear to people from the outside like good honest men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."* (Mat.23:27-28). *"The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do what they tell you and listen to what they say; but do not be guided by what they do: since they do not practise what they preach...everything they do is done to attract attention...long tassels and robes...taking the place of honor at banquets...the front seats in the synagogues...being greeted obsequiously in the market squares and having people call them Rabbi."* (Mat.23:1-7). With declarations like this, scripture testified both to the fallibility of the ministers and to the perfection of Christ. *"It was neither messenger nor angel but his Presence that saved them."* (Is.63:9). Jesus was more than a mortal man. He was God on earth in person (Jn.14:9). This is why the words of Jesus are different. *"The fact is brothers, and I want you to realize this, the Good News I preached is not a human message that I was given by men, it is something I learnt only through a revelation of Jesus Christ."* (Gal.1:11-12). There are thousands of human philosophies on earth, many of which seem quite inspired, but all of these are just opinions that have come swirling up from

the dust. They have no power to create a world or end a world, or to impart life or to tell us the truth about heaven—because God gave only one man on earth that power—the One who came down from heaven specifically for that purpose. *"He who is born of the earth is earthly himself and speaks in an earthly way. He who comes from heaven bears witness to the things he has seen and heard, even if his testimony is not accepted...since he whom God has sent speaks God's own words..."* (Jn.3:31-34). *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never be hungry; he who believes in me will never thirst."* (Jn.6:35).

The bread of Moses was not a bread of life. It did not come from heaven. *"I tell you most solemnly, it was not Moses who gave you bread from heaven, it is my Father who gives you the bread from heaven, the true bread; for the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."* (Jn.6:26-27). By referring to the Torah—the first five books of the Bible which Moses had authored—as bread, Jesus proved that in God's eyes, religious teaching is spiritual food. Because it did not come from heaven, the food of Moses in scripture had no lasting value because it had no power over death. *"Do not work for food that cannot last, but work for food that endures to eternal life, the kind of food the Son of Man is offering you, for on him the Father, God himself, has set his seal."* (Jn. 6:27). Jesus defined the bread that lasts forever: *"I have food to eat that you do not know about...my food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work."* (Jn.4:32). That same food will give us eternal life as well. *"I tell you most solemnly, whoever keeps my word will never see death."* (Jn.8:51).

24

The Works of God Go In Pairs by Opposites

*"This is the way to view all the works of the
Most High; they go in pairs by opposites"*

Sir.33:15

Every prophecy in scripture happens in pairs. From the beginning Christians have had to deal with the concept of two Jerusalems. One the eternal Jerusalem of God in heaven and the other, its opposite counterpart in Palestine. We, ourselves, also exist in opposite pairs because, although our body is physical, the soul inside our body which constitutes the reality of who we are, is spiritual. Jesus said that it is the conflict between these two parts which represents the battlefield of Satan (Mt.26:41). This same kind of dualism can be seen in scripture's descriptions of the various 'nations' which are destined to gather against Jerusalem. The *spiritual* countries amassing against a wicked and unrepentant Jerusalem in the prophecies of Jeremiah are formed by the Christian churches which represent the House of Israel returning from captivity; but an opposite group of nations has also formed against Jerusalem. This hostile coalition represents the confederacy of Satan and consists of the countries of this world who are opposed to the people of God. The prophecies show both groups of nations (the spiritual nations of God and the physical nations of Satan) coming down on Jerusalem from the north. So, webbed together, there are spiritual nations and physical nations and spiritual cities and physical cities and all of them are intricately intertwined in the prophecies of scripture. An even deeper weaving of dual pairs can be seen in the several concepts of 'Israel'. Paul talked about the 'Israel of God' as if its primary meaning was Christianity (Gal.5:16). Some writings in scripture show Israel to be the entire people of God. Other verses restrict the term to the "House" of Israel, the lost ten tribes that disappeared into the land of the North and whose return forms the hidden nucleus of Christianity. Yet the world looks to 'Israel' as if *it* were only Judaism. When the reborn Israeli nation in Palestine was being formed in 1947 there was an argument in the Jewish legislature whether to call the country 'Israel', or 'Judah'. The population was all Jewish and therefore it was actually 'Judah' that they were re-establishing in Palestine, not Israel. So by choosing the name 'Israel', they have complicated the dualism; *making the works of*

God go in pairs by opposites in more than two ways. Isaiah predicted beforehand that they would do this when he said: "*Listen to this, House of Jacob, you who bear the name Israel and have sprung from the seed of Judah...*" (Is.48:1). How convoluted this prophecy! The original Israel did not come from the seed of Judah; it and he both came from the seed of Abraham. Israel was Abraham's grandson. So Judah, Israel's fourth son, came from the seed of Israel, it was not the other way around. According to biblical chronology, Israel (Jacob) was Judah's father. Judah was Israel's fourth son. God changed Jacob's name to Israel (a name which means 'rebel') when Jacob tried to wrestle a holy angel. It was Israel, then, that gave rise to his son Judah, not visa versa, but Isaiah's verse here has not only ignored this physical reality, it has *reversed* it for prophecy's sake. He is predicting the birth of Christ and the birth of God's holy nation out of Christ. Because Jesus was born a Jew, the *spiritual* House of Israel which has grown out of Christ has in fact been born out of the stock of Judah, thus fulfilling this perplexing prophecy in spiritual terms. *We* are 'Israel' and we have all sprung from the seed of Judah through Jesus Christ. Thus the final meaning of this prophecy—the fact that in 1947 when the Jewish legislature chose to name their new nation 'Israel', it completed a circle of "pairs by opposites" all circulating around the children born of God. This harmonized the prophecy with the warning it intended, bringing the message to modern times and showing in spectacular fashion that everything that happened in 1947 had been predicted long ago in scripture for everyone to see and bear witness to (Is.48:1-3). Out of the seed of ancient Judah has appeared on the modern stage, a nation that bears the name Israel. The dualism God has placed in scripture verses that seem to repeat like repeating melodies in a musical score, each different in arrangement, but all somehow the same. This is because God has caused scripture to be written like an elegant symphony of words and it repeats in the same way, sounding out spiritual echo's that reverberate all across its pages and out into history.

God has arranged scripture so that it speaks to us in patterns. Patterns are very important because exceptions exist to every rule. Scholars see every issue in terms of these exceptions. That is why their analysis tends always to be equivocal: "*Yes, but...*". If we were to have to depend on this kind of analysis for an answer to scriptural questions we would never get one. Certainly not one that is didactic. But scripture is didactic because faith is didactic. There was a finite beginning and there is to be a finite end as well. Sin destroys lives, it destroys families, it destroys cities, it destroys nations and it will soon destroy the earth as well. But, as the scholars have shown, these didactic realities exist in a vacillating environment. That is why an understanding of the patterns of scripture are extremely important when interpreting the prophecies. One of the most graphic of all these

patterns relates to Sodom and Gomorrah. Standing as it does a template in the Old Testament for God's wrath in the wake of wicked behavior, this pattern sets the most visible standard we can apply to the modern world as a measure of Armageddon. It is very significant, then, that a repetition of the kind of behavior that made these two cities so infamous has suddenly been embraced by today's world. The Apostle Peter predicted this would happen. He wrote that these cities were destroyed by God as a warning to the people of the future, i.e., as a warning to us (2 Peter 2:6-7). Because God has made this particular behavior scripture's template for the fires of the wrath, this development, more than any other sign we have seen in this century, defines the imminent nearness of the violent havoc predicted to precede Christ's return.

Within all of scripture's patterns are subpatterns. Because it touches the freedoms of thought, scripture's metonymic language empowers the reader with an ability to see beyond the necessary constrictures of ordinary narrative thinking—while not only allowing, but actually guiding the mind of the reader towards exploring the unseen centrifugal horizons implicit in its symbolism. Scripture's metaphoric language is definitely not incidental or poetically artificial. It is central to the Holy Spirit's design. The underlying importance of the Bible's symbolic patterns is that they were implaced there by the inspiration of God. It is purposeful, designed to show that Jesus is God's only truth. The poetic patterns of the Bible are constructed in subpatterns that are almost always arranged in opposites. For instance a significant biblical pattern involves the seven churches. This is a spiritual designation incorporating all theologies in the faith of Jesus Christ. It is an unseen reality, one which Jesus said 'no can look at and say "here" or "there"', a fact that divorces the concept from a physical equivalent. Its sum total cannot be captured in any single theological statement. The inability of many church leaders to understand this teaching has led to much ill-guided warfare over the centuries. To explain this concept the Holy Spirit has presented us with contrasting metonymic subpatterns which are visible—all the different individual churches, for instance, the seven lampstands of Moses (the Menorrah), and its identical almond-shaped cups, Isaiah's 'river divided into seven streams', and the seven pillars which form the foundation of God's religion in the Book of Proverbs. Similar contrasting poetic patterns exist for every other major idea God wants to convey to our minds through scripture. There is the pattern of sin, for instance, and its curse; the pattern of Babylon and the pattern of the peace treaty which brought the world a temporary deferment of the wrath. There is the pattern of the spread of Christ on earth (from the east to west across the globe)—the pattern of global victory of the Church (the event called the millennium). There is the pattern of Persia and the eastern king who is destined to come and put an end to the treaty. The Great

Revolt has its own patterns, as does the war which follows it, and the rescue of the House of Israel's rearguard—the Jews. And finally, there is the Day of God itself and all the events which surround its appearance. These events are all arranged in patterns in scripture because they repeat throughout its pages as recurring themes like echo's reverberating among the various writers. It is this duplication which gives symmetry to prophecy and harmonizes our understanding across the Bible's diverse books. All of the major spiritual patterns incorporate within them finite subpatterns structured by the Holy Spirit in opposites for the purpose of contrast and visibility. These opposites apply not only to nations and to cities: scripture says that all the works of God go in pairs by opposites. Thus we can see the same processes at work even in the Body of Christ. Because Jesus specified His body as food, many Christians see His body now as the communion Host in the Eucharist. But, as we have already shown, the Gospel that Jesus preached is a food from heaven even more important. One is physical and the other spiritual. One is for this world and the other is for heaven. Virtually all of the contrasting patterns of scripture polarize on these two focal points.

John revealed that while Jesus was present on earth, he could not give the Holy Spirit to us. He had to ascend to the Father and be *glorified* first (Jn.7:39). This proves that the Holy Spirit is something that emanates from the glorified nature of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, then, is the spiritual 'Sonshine' of heaven. God has, in physical nature, created for us a contrasting opposite that we can see and comprehend, and it's importance to earthly life stands as a stark and ever-present witness to the importance of the Gospel for our heavenly lives. This physical opposite is the sun in the sky. Using the metaphor of God's solar system, 'sunshine' is not the sun itself, but it is the same substance as the sun. Emanating from the sun, this flowing light has the power to bring the life-giving energy of the sun into every plant and creature on earth so that all can live. Not just rays or waves of light, sunshine is composed of actual photons of light energy. Thus sunlight is able to create our physical body of flesh by bringing into it the life-giving energy of the sun. What man calls 'food' is actually sunlight. All the groceries we buy are simply packages of sunlight in stored form. Plants absorb the sunlight, storing it in their fruits and leaves which are then eaten by animals causing the stored energy of sunlight to be passed into them. In this way, sunlight is distributed throughout the living world in a process called the food chain. In this world, food and sunlight are two parts of the same substance. Without this food—without eating sunlight—we could not live on earth. Therefore, God has glorified a part of the darkness (the sun in the solar system is darkness glorified) to make it into a kind of metaphoric image of Himself—a pale worldly image of the glorified Son of God. Because

just as sunlight is a product of the sun, the Holy Spirit is the product of the glorified Son of God. The fact that sunlight must enter inside our body to give us its life echo's our relationship with the Gospel, and it indicates that the Holy Spirit and the Gospel are exactly the same substance. Both emanate from the glorified Christ. The Spirit, then, *is* the Gospel. It forms our spiritual body of divine light by feeding us divine light. This shows that the Bible's pattern of "pairs by opposites" can produce metonymic concepts that transcend metaphor, becoming literal realities in themselves. This is actually profound. It may be the ultimate truth of God's use in scripture of metaphor in the first place, an idea that gains credibility when we consider that all physical reality (whether it be kitchen tables, mountains, planets, etc.) is in itself only tiny vibrating charges of electricity. Nothing in God's creation is what it seems at first glance. Jesus alluded to this when He told Nathanael to *"I tell you most solemnly, you will see heaven laid open and, above the Son of Man, the angels of God ascending and descending."* (John 1:51). We live behind a veil implaced by God, and that veil is going to be removed in the Return of Jesus. Scripture exists in pairs by opposites to show images behind this veil in advance of that Return.

John said that God is Word (Jn.1:1). Since God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit are all word, the Godhead can only be known on earth in terms of the Gospel of Christ. This is precisely what Jesus said, *"It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh has nothing to offer. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life."* (Jn.6:63). This is what makes the Testimony of Jesus—the four Gospels—so much greater than all the other words that the holy Bible contains (Jn.5:39). Those who 'eat' the Gospel of Jesus will live forever. *"I tell you most solemnly, whoever keeps my word will never see death."* (Jn.8:51). In his vision, the prophet Ezekiel warned that most people, even though they were fascinated with Jesus, would fail to actually take into their hearts the Gospel which could save them: *"Son of man, the members of your nation are talking about you on the ramparts and in doorways. They keep saying, 'Come and hear the word that has come from God'. They throng towards you; my people sit down in front of you and listen to your words, but they do not act on them. They cannot tell the truth and their hearts are set on dishonest gain. As far as they are concerned, you are like a love song beautifully sung to music. They listen to your words, but no one puts them into practice. When this takes place—and it is beginning now—they will learn that there has been a prophet among them."* (Ez.33:30-33). This neglect is the reason why Christ said that the road to heaven is narrow and that few people would find it—and it demonstrates that the world's dualism even applies to faith.

History is not the only thing that repeats itself. God has made all creation adhere to a configuration of repeating patterns. That is why Einstein could probe the depths of outer space using earth-bound similarities like elevators and freight trains and find truths that extended to the boundaries of the universe in them. We can see a similar kind of pattern linking concepts of 'good' and 'evil' to the processes of 'order' and 'chaos' in the world of nature. Physicists, for instance, in studying the world, defined two decades ago a physical creation made up mostly of chaotic elements called fractals. They divided these elements into three parts. One orderly, the other two, chaotic. On part of the chaotic the physicists saw as 'manageable', the other they termed 'unmanageable'. Scripture shows a human nature that may follow a similar pattern in terms of God in Jesus Christ. We can see divine truths reflected quite often in the physical order. This could be another. Metaphorically, order always applies to God and chaos to Satan. The three forms of nature may mirror the formula expressed by Zechariah when he defined the numerical strength of good and evil in humanity on earth (Zc.13:8). According to Zechariah, one part of humanity will choose God, while two other parts in their rejection of God are destined to be 'cut off' from Him. Since Zechariah's formula shows us a human creation comprised of one-third for God and two-thirds for Satan, it is not surprising to find a similar ratio possibly existing in physical nature—with two forms of chaos coexisting with order there as well. Moreover, in both cases, the part that is chaotic seems to exist in manageable and unmanageable forms. And it is this similarity that allows us to see in fractals an image of the millennium. Such an image may seem remote in terms of biblical symbolism, but it points out for our purpose, a basic truth underlying the era of Christianity's world reign. During the millennium God took a chaotic (pagan) environment and made it temporarily obey Christian rule by locking Satan in the Abyss (Rev. 20:1-3). The 'narrow road' leading to salvation was not changed, but suddenly a great part of human civilization acquiesced to the rule of the Christian Church, allowing the preaching of the Church to spread to the ends of Satan's kingdom. Many didn't follow those rules; they continued to live lives that were openly rebellious to the teachings of the Gospel, but the majority supported the Church and backed its aims irrespective of their own lifestyle. In this sense, the millennium of Christ is very much like the world of nature where chaotic fractals act under the control of God to produce an environment, which on the surface appears harmonious and obedient to God, but underneath that surface is found to be predominately chaotic. That is why we see a litany of Christian governments leading down through history from Rome to the United States of America where leaders and citizens alike have often been immoral themselves in their private lives, but who nevertheless have publicly promoted obedience to Christian principles. When God changed the rule on earth from pagan to Christian (by locking Satan up in prison), the portion of human nature that was

'manageably chaotic' responded by not resisting the philosophical rules emplaced by God. The third part of chaos, the unmanageable part, resisted God's authority and refused to comply with Christ's reign on earth at all. This rebellious coalition was left in such a minority, however, because of the alliance of the other two, that it lacked the strength to overthrow Jesus' rule on earth. And that is precisely what we have seen during the historic term of the millennium. The forces of Satan have tried repeatedly over the centuries to overthrow the Church, but, until recently, these forces have been consistently beaten back by an alliance of civic leaders and church officials. The Revolt has changed all that. Now, with the greater population in rebellion and Satan himself back in the picture, all chaos is being reunited with its true master. This is changing the balance of rule because it is leaving 'order' once again in the minority. The "iron scepter" (governmental authority) is passing back to the pagans where it will soon bring forth Gog and Magog. It is obvious in John's prophecies concerning the millennium that latent evil had to exist somewhere on earth throughout the entire term of God's rule, or Satan would not have been able to rise up at the end of the 'thousand years' in fulfillment of John's vision and deceive world forces by leading them into a second war against Jesus Christ (Rv.20:7-8). It is in such warfare that the Bible says the millennium will come to an end. For evil to resurface on earth at the end of the millennium, it had to exist on earth throughout the millennium, but in secret, as Paul pointed out in 2 Thes. 2:7. At the end, of course, this analogy of "thirds" falls apart. The end of the harvest is shown in prophecy to be marked by a disappearance of virtually all of the world's Christians as it passes from gleaning to empty fields. It is only because that time has been shortened that anyone will be left (Mt. 24:22).

The successful management of God's opposition is a key factor defining the era of Christian rule on this planet. God, of course, accomplished this by locking Satan in the Abyss. This incarceration divided Satan's forces and left them leaderless. Like a type of 'manageable chaos', during the reign on earth of the churches most kings of the world didn't obey Christ personally—they waged their wars and continued to chase after riches—but they preached otherwise, positioning themselves and their nations at the foot of the cross. They allowed no mention of the dragon, nor did they legitimize his works or allow his principles to be discussed openly in their kingdoms the way they do now. Officially, in those days, God's order prevailed as the ruling philosophy. God created this world entirely for Christ's purpose. Not just in scripture, but in everything He made. That is why the 'order' and 'chaos' of the physical world mimic the order of God and the chaos of Satan in human nature. God created one to mirror the other. And He made that mirror visible. Because chaos belongs to Satan, his return from the Abyss will put the part of chaos that was

malleable during the millenium of Christian rule back under his control, and because that return is now in progress, we can see the balance of power among the citizens of Babylon now shifting back to the pagans. Manageable evil is becoming suddenly unmanageable, and so a reign of violence is sweeping the earth just as Jesus predicted. The world's majority no longer support His Church. Instead, they are now attacking it, not only from outside, but from inside it as well in a concerted effort to degrade its influence in society. Surrounding the wave of violence accompanying these attacks, the philosophies and principles of this world (Satan's world) are once more being promoted and encouraged by the world's leaders through all their channels of communication. Once Satan has achieved full dominion over his forces by reuniting them all, he will use his power and influence to try to completely eradicate Christ's 'order' from the earth. This will bring the Wrath. If the images follow through, even the physical fractals themselves will begin to come apart the closer to the End we come. Scripture bears witness to this. It tells us that the seas will become chaotic, the earth will quake and rock off its axis. The stars will fall. Manageable chaos will become unmanageable even in the physical realm. As far-fetched as these descriptions may seem, they follow the patterns of prophecy.

When God glorified Jesus in heaven, he made Jesus the source of heaven's light—a light which imparts God's everlasting life into whomever it enters. The only life that the sun has power to impart is a worldly copy of that life. And the difference between the two is that the life which the sun imparts is short-lived and filled with flaws. Sunlight must be eaten over and over again, and even then, those that eat it soon die anyway. By contrast, the glorified light of heaven that Jesus brought down to us in the form of his Gospel (the 'Sonlight' of heaven) imparts an everlasting life that never dies. It only has to be eaten once for all time—by putting the Gospel into practice in our lives. And once completely consumed, it stays in us forever. Although sunlight is transient and imperfect, it shines in our sky with a brilliance that allows us to begin to comprehend the glorification of Jesus in heaven. God made it that way on purpose. Not as perfection, but as a symbol of perfection. As the food of heaven, Christ's word feeds an invisible body that God has built around our soul to replace the visible one we now wear. When we obey God's word, we eat it spiritually—that is how we take His new life into us (Jn.4:32-35). This brings us back to the meaning of scripture's dualism. The heavenly garment that will encase our soul in heaven must be built out of the food that Jesus brought down to us *from* heaven, and this is why we must consume the word of God by taking it into our hearts. The baptism of the Spirit produces within us a spiritual embryo—our new body in Christ—which we must nourish by feeding it the food of heaven, so that it can grow up inside us to produce eternal life

(Jn.4:14). If this were not true, grace would not be a variable. The very fact that we can fall from grace shows that we cannot go back to our old behaviors. If we do, the spiritual embryo growing inside our hearts will shrivel up and die. To be filled with the Holy Spirit is to be filled with the Gospel—to live in its commands. Jesus died on the cross so that we could die to our mortal flesh which has trapped our soul in sin (Rom.6:3-7). And so that our soul would not remain naked after this mortal tent died, he touched us with a new body—His Spirit—a heavenly tent for life in the kingdom of God. Coming to us in embryonic form, this new spiritual tent must receive the nutrition Jesus brought down for it from heaven—the bread of life. God gave us this wheat of heaven in the form of his Gospel so that, by eating it, our new bodies are able to grow from embryo to birth in the substance of the new creation, enabling God to transform us from this temporary world to the eternal world of Christ's new kingdom (Jn.6:57-58). All the dualism of scripture hinges on this transformation and that is why the idea of transformation lies at the heart of the liturgy of the communion feast of God. Remodeling ourselves into the image of Christ's word is a process which allows us to grow into eternal life (Mt.7:21-27).

Examples like this emphasize the fact that God speaks to us in all sorts of metaphoric ways—not just in words, but even in the symbolism of nature—to show us the truth of Jesus and to encourage us to follow Him to the eternal life He offers. The Holy Spirit seems to have directed the Church to use this same symbolism in its calendar. The Hebrew calendar was based on the moon—on *reflected* light. In the calendar used by Christian's, however, the days are based on the sun—on the direct source of the solar system's light. This is why Passover and Easter usually fall in different weeks from one another even though the passion of Christ originally happened in the Passover period. Metaphorically, the use of a lunar calendar implies a reflected word of God—a word reinterpreted by the minister's and priest's. Lunar light is reflected light. By changing to a sun calendar, Christianity implies a word of God free of the yeast of the Pharisees. The pure unreflected light of God. At the very top of Hebrew theology was Moses, himself only a reflection of the light of God—and so his light relates to that of the moon. But at the head of the Christian Church is Jesus Christ, the only Son of God—a divine Being who was sent down from heaven to give us God's exact words in God's own voice. And the Gospel of Christ is just that. The calendar structure continues a strong theme found in scripture where sunlight points to Godlight. Dualism proves the heavenly correlation between the Bible and nature—the fact that Jesus not only made the creation we now live in, but that he made it in such a way that it would always point to His own ultimate truth (Rom.1:19-21). The themes are consistent. That is why the spiritual repetition that reverberates through scripture echo's right out into nature itself. It is

the Holy Spirit's way of showing us that the reason why God made everything in pairs by opposites is so that we could come to a better understanding of a heavenly kingdom which can only be understood by means of such symbolism—so that we could look at the transient visible and see in it images of an eternal invisible.

We can see a similar relationship of pairs by opposites in the chaos at the foundation of matter. God is order, not chaos. Scripture says that God created "*all things by measure, number and weight*" (Ws.11:21). But when the scientists have used their equipment to probe the fundamental structure of this world what they find at the base of existence is chaos (i.e., randomness), not order. The 'measure, number and weight' seems to be built on a base of chance and operates through the mechanism of probability. Albert Einstein, when he saw this, refused to believe it. "God does not play dice" he said. What Einstein did not realize was that this world not only reflects the order of God, it also reflects the contamination of Satan. The order comes from God, but the chaos comes from Satan. The two are intertwined, and since the world *belongs to Satan*, chaos would likely form its base construct. We live today in the re-creation of a world that was completely destroyed in flood waters because of sin. God has taken a ruined world (Eden) and rebuilt it—much like we would a shattered plate which we try to glue back together again. The plate is the order, but all the cracks and fractures in it show the wreckage it came from, and the glue is the temporary power that keeps it from going back to its shattered state. This is precisely what Babylon is. It is an order God formed out of the elements of a crash that left it like the plate above, shattered and broken. It is a temporary replacement of Eden, rebuilt from the chaos of the flood. God 'parted the waters' of that flood to establish a temporary order here for the sake of our salvation. "*By your power you split the sea in two.*" "*He turned the sea into dry land, they crossed the river on foot!*" (Ps.74:13, 66:6). The Bible says that God had to use great power to bring order into this chaotic world—'sheer power' is the term Moses used (Ex.13:11-15)—and when He releases that power, all order in this world will dissolve and disappear. Just as they did on Pharaoh, the waters of creation will come crashing back, erasing everything in their path. Once God has found in this world what He is looking for, He will leave it—taking order with him—and when He does, the world will return to the chaos and darkness of the death sentence earlier imposed on it because of Satan's rule. The wrath that accompanies the end of the world is an integral part of this return to chaos. When order dissolves, everything in this world collapses and falls apart and that brings the Judgment.

Signals of this collapse have been with us from the beginning so that we can see exactly where Satan's rule is leading us. Death, disease, and decay. This is Satan's legacy. On earth, spring always leads to winter. For winter to return to spring a resurrection out of death must occur. The entire world exists on signs which show the inevitable collapse of order in the presence of sin. Using immense power, God has rescued us from Satan's captivity by coming deep into the dragon's own domain and taking control of it for a short period of time. God is holding the waters of chaos apart with great energy so that we can find our way out of Babylon and return to the Jerusalem of heaven. *"By sheer power God brought us out of Egypt, out of the house of slavery."* (Ex.13:14). But God cannot hold back the wrath forever. Like the pathway He formed when He held back the two walls of water in the Red Sea, the road leading out of sin's slavery is temporary. Decay is everywhere, eroding order wherever it appears. Redemption is essential and immediate. That is why Moses tied redemption and this 'strength of God's hand' together (Ex.13:14-15). We must leave quickly and at once by the path He showed us. As soon as He deems the journey complete, God will take back His 'sheer power', allowing the waters to crash together again, permitting chaos and darkness once again to envelop the world. And then all that is not of God will be hurled into the burning lake of fire described by John in the Book of Revelation.

Because of Satan, the new life that starts here in order always ends in chaos as the elements gradually return to their original chaotic state. Every new baby is born with great fanfare in a perpetual renewal of hope, but the only hope is Jesus Christ, and so outside of Christ, no child can last. Ultimately all this fanfare gives way to nursing homes and funerals unless these children are led to safety in Christ. God did not raise us up here to live, but to choose. The order which springs up here only exists for a short time—just long enough for us to make that choice—and then the chaos returns. *"Man lasts no longer than grass, no longer than a wild flower he lives, one gust of wind, and he is gone, never to be seen there again."* (Ps.103:15-16). The light of Christ has come into the darkness of this world to show us that there is an escape from death *"...the word of our God is forever."* (Is.40:8), but we have only a short time to grab onto it before the waters of chaos return and our chance to find it snuffed out. We can see this return of chaos with each sickness and with each injury of the flesh. This is God's way of warning us to make our escape from Babylon while there is still time to do it. And death itself shows us that there are no other options: *"Remember the last things and stop hating, remember dissolution and death and live by the commandments."* (Sir.28:6-7). God has allowed us to see the chaos in this world so that we can understand how tenuous our stay here really is, and how immediate our need to follow

the path Jesus has marked out for our escape. *"...take care of yourself before you fall ill. Examine yourself before judgment comes, and on the day of visitation you will find yourself acquitted. Humble yourself before you fall ill, and when you sin, repent. Let nothing prevent your discharging a vow in good time, and do not wait till death before setting matters to rights. Bear the wrath of the last days in mind, the time of vengeance when God averts his face."* (Sir.18:19-24). The law of God holds order together and sin pulls it apart. That is why faith is so powerful in this world—it holds back the wrath—faith holds back the return of chaos. Yet faith was not given to make this world eternal. This world belongs to Satan and so its basic nature is intrinsically chaotic. It is not earth, but heaven where Einstein's 'dice' are not played. It is only in God's kingdom where order rules everything. If scientists were to probe the fundamental structure of heaven, they would find no probability there, no chance—because in heaven there is no chaos—no disintegration into death. There is no decay because order has nothing to decay into. Everything stays orderly, perfect and eternal forever because decay does not exist there. *"On this mountain he will remove the mourning veil covering all peoples, and the shroud enwrapping all nations—he will destroy Death forever."* (Is.25:7-8).

There is a theme in scripture defining this world in terms of iron. This, too, is a part of the dualism of God. All of these references are used metaphorically to describe Israel's captivity—'iron furnace', 'iron bars', 'yoke of iron', etc. God has raised us up on an iron planet so that Jesus could come and show us a kingdom that is its opposite—one that is completely free and open. Through an understanding of opposites, God has made it possible for us to comprehend His world even though it now lies hidden from our eyes. There is no question that this world, like a jail, is made of iron. Iron forms the core of almost all of the solid planets and is a defining component of earthly life. While a metaphor involving the metal iron may seem contrived, it is not. In heaven life is freer than even the gasses of early stars, but in this universe it is restrained to exist only in iron cells. Scripture, then, simply bears witness to the fact that God has raised us up in a metallic world created from the iron furnace of our own galaxy. *"I will break your stubborn pride and make the sky above you like iron and the ground beneath you like bronze."* (Lv.26:19). When Moses saw Jesus, His feet were standing, not on a floor of bronze, but on a floor of polished crystal. *"They saw the God of Israel beneath whose feet there was, it seemed, a sapphire pavement pure as the heavens themselves."* (Ex.24:10). These references exist not so much to prove Christ as to acknowledge His omnipresence throughout all time—so that we can see an Old Testament, not separate from Him, but made by Him and formed in the images of His own Testimony. The Bible and the universe are an integrated whole—all revolving around Jesus who formed

them Himself for a single purpose. Just as He brought the children of Israel out of an Egypt that Moses called a 'furnace of iron', God brought all mankind out of the 'iron furnace' of this solar system—raising all life up here out of the dust of this earth. But, like the pavement of sapphire beneath God's feet, our real world is of another kind: *"When you raise your eyes to heaven, when you see the sun, the moon, the stars, all the array of heaven, do not be tempted to worship them and serve them. The Lord your God has allotted them to all the peoples under heaven, but as for you, God has taken you and brought you out from the furnace of iron, from Egypt, to be a people all his own, as you still are today."* (Dt.4:19-20). This prophecy, imbedded in the rescue of Christ, alludes to our rescue from this universe and transport by the power of God to another (Jn.18:36). While iron may form the core of our earthly bodies, it has nothing to do with our soul or the kingdom of heaven, nor even with the Spirit that comes from God. And that is what the dualism exists to tell us. In God, there is a very real but invisible spiritual world that exists all around us which we cannot see. It is so unlike the material 'iron' world that currently imprisons us that when the prophets describe it, they use terms like Moses did which allude to crystal—a delicate, beautifully ordered and transparent substance which, when light is shined through it shimmers in a spectacular array of colors. *"The wall was built of diamond, and the city of pure gold, like polished glass. The foundations of the city wall were faced with all kinds of precious stone...diamond, lapis lazuli, turquoise, crystal, agate, ruby, gold quartz, malachite, emerald, sapphire and amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls...and the main street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass."* (Rv.21:18-21). These two completely different worlds existing side by side show that the world in which we live in the flesh is only a small part of the complete creation of God. *"Many mysteries remain even greater than these, for we have seen only a few of his works..."* (Sir.43:32). That is why Jesus could tell Nathanael about the heavens being rolled back before his eyes and a different world suddenly appearing to his eyes (Jn.1:51).

It is God's will that we see very little of His entire creation. *"The Lord has not granted to the holy ones to tell of all his marvels which the Almighty Lord has solidly constructed for the universe to stand firm in his glory."* (Sir.42:17). As a result we know very little about our own universe let alone the invisible immensity which lies beyond it—the existence of which Jesus first revealed to Nathanael. The only 'proof' of God's spiritual world is Jesus Christ who acknowledged its existence to us. Jesus said that God is spirit (Jn.4:24), and that is why no one has ever seen God. Flesh and blood cannot see spirit. Like body and soul, the two are polar opposites. God has made all His works go in inverse pairs like this because we are in exile—banished from the presence of God by sin. This is

also the reason why we must have faith—because the most valued things of God are invisible to us in this material world of exile. Paul said that *"flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."* (1 Cor.15:50). This means that the third heaven cannot be entered in the flesh. Not even the second heaven can be entered that way. In fact, even the lowest part of the first heaven—the iron and gaseous heaven above our heads—requires rocket ships and space suits even to touch its fringes. Flesh and blood, therefore, can barely exist even in the material world, showing just how tenuous exiled life is in God's immense creation. The kingdom of heaven is not only different from the material world, it lies far beyond the first heaven because it exists outside the lower waters. A 'spiritual' world is something we cannot begin to comprehend using scientific understanding—especially the spiritual world that God has described to us in scripture—one with multiple tiers. It is only the dualism of scripture that brings us fragmentary images of this kind of creation. That is because all we can see here is the yoke of iron which envelops us, and therefore the only worlds we can comprehend in scientific terms are ones formed in similar iron chains. That is why science fiction always traverses the galaxies of the lowest heaven chronicling the wars of the violent. Paul said that we must be like people who can see the invisible, because seeing the invisible is the ultimate meaning of faith. *"And so we have no eyes for things that are visible, but only for things that are invisible; for visible things last only for a time, but the invisible things are eternal."* (2 Cor.4:18).

Our body and soul exist in a combined universe (a place called the lower waters) which God split into two parts because of the exile. This split is the exile itself and it is the reason for all the dualism. This division is at the heart of God's pairing everything by opposites, and it is the reason for the necessity of baptism. The essential message the Bible brings to us about the division of the universe is that our soul needs to be clothed. Adam and Eve could not remain naked in the Garden at Eden. This was God's way of showing us that every human soul needs to be clothed in a body. In order to be whole in the eyes of God, the soul cannot exist without this garment or covering. In the case of Christ's kingdom, a new spiritual body of God's universe must be united with our soul from this universe. The two must be combined within us in order for our soul to live in heaven. The body we wear now won't work. It doesn't live long enough. It is temporary, like the covenant of Moses upon which it is based. The covering that God made for Adam and Eve was temporary and it blinded them to the existence of the spiritual world because the flesh God put over them represented a tent of exile. That same tent is the one we currently wear—a temporary iron tent meant to drive home the reality that we are in prison somewhere out in the wilderness of creation, and live there now awaiting a sentence of death because of Satan's contamination.

All flesh is short-lived and is doomed to die the moment it is born. Knowing this we can search for an escape. That search is what leads us to Christ. What we discover when we find Jesus is His promise that He can cut away the temporary and perishing flesh now covering our soul and replace it with a garment (the Holy Spirit) which is eternal—a garment with the power to transport us out of this dying universe into one that lives forever. It is precisely this process which Paul described when he said that we die to our body when we are baptised in Christ's death. When we are touched in his death (through baptism) our soul is set free from the dying flesh of this universe. And with the entrance of the Holy Spirit, a brand new body takes root in us. When we drink in Christ's Gospel we build into strength this new body (God's Spirit) so that we can live forever in God's new kingdom. Paul proved this when he said, *"when we were baptised in the Lord Jesus we were baptised in his death"* (Rom.6:3). *"In him you have been circumcised, not by human hand but by the complete stripping of your body of flesh. You have been buried with him when you were baptised; and by baptism, too, you have been raised up with him through your belief in the power of God who raised him from the dead."* (Col.2:11-12). What replaces this flesh is the 'wedding garment'—the Holy Spirit. *"My soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation, he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity, like a bridegroom wearing his wreath, like a bride adorned in her jewels."* (Is.61:10). We receive this new clothing when we receive the Holy Spirit. This is the baptism of the Spirit. *"All baptised in Christ, you have all clothed yourselves in Christ."* (Gal.3:27).

As we have seen, the pairs and opposites defined in scripture can also manifest themselves in more than one way. God's first creation, Eden, had a land to the east of it called 'Nod', so Babylon has its own east—a land called 'Persia'. The prophecy that the people of God must serve the king of Babylon until the kingdom of Persia comes to power is a key part of scripture's imagery. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the prophets foresaw that the east would one day come to power, crush Babylon and in the process set the people of Israel free from their Babylonian captivity. This happened over 2500 years ago and is destined to be echoed again in our near future. But a deeper imagery lay hidden by the fact that this would happen in more than one way. Cyrus was the Persian king who destroyed the power of Babylon and allowed the Jews to leave their captivity in Babylon and return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple. For this reason, Cyrus, himself, is seen by biblical scholars as the essential fulfillment of these prophecies. However, the underlying focus of scripture is Jesus Christ, not the king of Persia. The east regained its strength much more decisively in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. Those in Judea who went out to rule the world in fulfillment of these prophecies, then, turned out to be Christ's disciples of peace, not the

troops of Cyrus. Thus Jesus turned out to be the spiritual fulfillment of Isaiah's words. Jesus came like the rising sun because he was the brilliant light of God dawning on earth. *"Arise, shine out, for your light has come, the glory of the Lord is rising on you, though night still covers the earth and darkness the peoples. Above you the Lord now rises and above you his glory appears."* (Is.60:1-2). Like the rising sun, Jesus came up out of the Middle East to spread his light all across the world, freeing mankind from the bondage of sin. Isaiah's prophecies concerning Cyrus reflect this spreading light of God. They point not to a literal Persian king and physical freedom, but to Jesus Christ (who has risen up out of the east to set the people of God free from a *spiritual* Babylon). Speaking for God, Isaiah wrote, *"I am he who says of Cyrus, 'My shepherd—he will fulfill my whole purpose, saying of Jerusalem, 'Let her be rebuilt', and of the temple, 'Let your foundation be set in place'"* (Is.44:28). These were the very decrees Jesus brought to the world. The freedom Jesus offered was spiritual and eternal, but there is also a *physical* release from Babylon. First came Cyrus of Persia who freed the Jews from Babylon, and on whose actions Isaiah's words were based. Then Jesus—the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy; and finally, to complete scripture's echoing theme, one more 'Prince of Persia' is standing in the wings ready to make his appearance as well. When he arrives he will issue a decree terminating the treaty of peace Jesus made with Babylon. This will bring the House of Israel's physical captivity in Babylon to an end once and for all (2 Chron.36:21). The Rebel, himself, then, is the third major figure involved in the Cyrus prophecy. And because his appearance will mimic that of Christ, the scriptures portray him, too, in terms of light. Not sunlight, though, but much dimmer—a bright planet. He is likened in the prophecies to the daystar, Venus—the bright star-like planet that heralds the dawn in the eastern winter sky. And that is precisely what the final Persian prince will do. When he appears, his coming will herald the dawn of Christ scheduled to follow right behind him. In the winter months, Venus was called the 'daystar' because it rose in the east just before the dawn, and therefore it heralded the coming of the day. This is also why the ancient Greeks named Venus in its winter phase, 'phosphorus'—a name which means 'light-bringer'. The fact that Venus foreshadows the dawn only in the winter sky, is another demonstration of this planet's metaphoric relationship with the end-times—with the 'winter' of this world.

All these illustrations show the complex interplay between pairs and opposites that exist in scripture, and they provide a clear indication of just how intricately the Holy Spirit has used the images of nature to inspire the prophets to bear witness about the future through them. The prophet Joel indicated how this 'dawn' of God would suddenly break on top of the destroyer, shattering his darkness: *"Let all the inhabitants of the country tremble, for the*

day of God is coming, yes it is near. Day of darkness and gloom, day of cloud and blackness. Like the dawn there spreads across the mountains a vast and mighty host, such as has never been before, such as will never be again..." (Joel 2:1-2). *"How did you come to fall from the heavens, Daystar, son of Dawn? How did you come to be thrown to the ground, you who enslaved the nations? You who used to think to yourself, 'I will climb up to the heavens; and higher than the stars of God I will set my throne. I will sit on the Mount of Assembly in the recesses of the north. I will climb to the top of thunderclouds, I will rival the Most High.'* What! Now you have fallen to Sheol to the very bottom of the abyss!" (Is.14:12-14.). Isaiah's words show us that the Rebel's momentary triumph on earth will be like the appearance of Venus in the winter sky just before dawn when darkness is at its greatest. Like a wintery Venus, the Rebel's appearance will be the sign that signals to everyone that the brilliant Son of God is coming like the dawn just behind him. *"From the beginning I foretold the future and predicted beforehand what is to be. I call a bird of prey from the east, my man of destiny from a far country. I have stirred up one from the north, and he comes—one from the rising sun who calls on my name."* (Is.41:25, 46:10-11). The interrelationship between the Messiah and the pretender who tries to rival Him at the end of time are shown in numerous biblical passages. Not only that, but the imageries of scripture show us two rivals, not just one. Venus heralds the dawn by rising immediately ahead of the sun only during the winter months. We can see it in the eastern night sky just before the sun rises. In summer, however, it does just the opposite. In summer Venus follows the sun. It shines in the western sky just after the sun has set. This, too is a pattern that was repeated in messianic circumstance. Just like with Venus, the daystar of the prophecies, there are two phases to the pretender of scripture. One came like the daystar of summer, just after Christ's crucifixion; and the Great Rebel will come just before he returns. One hundred years after Jesus was crucified the Jewish rebel, Bar Kokeba (the 'Son of the Star') proclaimed himself messiah of the Jews and led the final Jewish assault on the Roman empire. Like the descent of Venus in the summer sky, Bar Kokeba followed the setting Son of God. His grandiose efforts sealed the diaspora, terminated Judah as a nation and cost him his own life in the process. Where Bar Kokeba came after Jesus was crucified, the future false messiah (the Persian Madman scheduled to end history) will come in advance of His return. And this schedule has been placed in the sky by God so that we can watch it proclaimed day after day and year after year with the rising and setting of the sun.

Babylon has been cut in two by the Gospel of Christ. Part of the world has believed what was preached and converted, but another part refuses to believe. From the very beginning, mankind has found itself divided into two peoples—the people of God and the

people of this world. The name 'Hebrew' comes from the word 'Habiru' which means 'outsiders'. This indicates that the people which God chose as His own were never really a part of this world—they are foreigners here—rejected by the world from the beginning. Jesus showed that this division is spiritual, it is not genetic—but the Jewish presence in the world gives it a genetic appearance. The Bible's partition of the world into east and west (Persia and Babylon) is the geographic equivalent of this spiritual division, and, as we have already seen, it provides its own set of opposites. From the beginning, the events of history have revealed an eastern world that has successfully deafened its ears to the message of Christ. In its ability to block the power of the Church, the East represents the seed territory of the Antichrist. He will rise to power there. Spiritually he rises to power inside every heart that rejects Jesus, and that is the basis for the allegory. The Bible shows us a God with two sides. One is the New Testament image of a God of mercy—a mercy that comes from repentance. And the other is the Old Testament image of a God of wrath. The people of Babylon will renounce their conversion to Christ and wax secular, throwing away their chance for mercy, and decimating the wall that protects them from those whose belief is in the wrath. In the ongoing political confrontation between east and west then, God has given us a physical image of the great spiritual conflict that is taking place between the forces of God and the forces of this world everywhere on earth—a spiritual warfare that is raging just as fiercely within our own families as it is internationally. This spiritual conflict has no boundaries because the war is internal and is being fought within ourselves, but the physical counterpart to this conflict (i.e., its dual image) does have boundaries. And these physical boundaries will soon define the End. The East has been held in check only because God has locked Satan in the Abyss and imprisoned his most aggressive angels at the Euphrates river—two events empowered by Christian faith. As that faith disintegrates, so will the chains. Completing scripture's dualism, God has keyed the final events of history around the Euphrates. The protracted fighting which has erupted around this river points to the release (or at least the imminent release) of Satan's angels from their chains. Suddenly given freedom to act, these eastern angels have a single objective. Returning from the Abyss, Satan has decreed that his spirit of war be sent into the hearts of everyone who will listen to him, inflaming the citizens of this world and molding them into a readiness to fight. He has ordered the angels at the Euphrates to mobilize pagan forces everywhere on earth for combat—an armed struggle, according to scripture, that will revolve around the partition dividing east from west. With the release of these angels, therefore, one would naturally expect great war clouds to begin swirling around the Euphrates river—the area which God has prophetically designated as the doorway to the end times. Because Iraq houses ancient Babylon, it houses the terminal dualism of the last days. In the coming years this ancient site

of Hebrew captivity will once again fall to Persian forces. When it does so it will herald the final desolation the handwriting announced—foretelling the impending annihilation of global Babylon at the hands of Persian invaders, and with it, the termination of Satan's captivity of the House of Israel once and for all (Rom.1:19-21). In so doing it will bring all dualism on earth to an end.

While God has placed images of His truth in the deepest areas of scripture, He has placed Himself only in its veneer. Those who probe religion deeply go right past God and end up in their own imaginaton. This is the dilemma of theologians. God has hidden His truths, revealing them only to the simple but hiding them from the learned and clever. Those who probe the depths of scripture in an attempt to bring it all into mental understanding are able to see truths they never have to obey. They see with their minds, not their hearts. The simple, however, see no farther than the surface. They see with their hearts, not their minds and so they relate to God like children who simply obey. Deep understanding usually eludes them. Yet these are the ones who inherit all the promises of God. Those who 'see' but live otherwise, inherit only the burning lake. This is scripture's greatest paradox. Deep understanding is a 'view', it is not a path. Seeing into the kingdom of God and getting into that kingdom are entirely different from one another.

25

God Speaks Greek to Israel

*"Do you know why you cannot take in what I say?
It is because you are unable to understand my
language."
Jn.8:43*

About five decades after Jesus was crucified the Jews became convinced that God spoke only Hebrew. The rest of the world's languages they decided were pagan—especially Greek. They had good reason to be concerned. Christianity was exploding all around them at the time—preaching even inside their own synagogues—and it was all happening in Greek. In order to become a world religion, Christianity had to be broadcast in a world tongue. The ten lost tribes of Israel that God had scattered among the nations of the north were spread throughout the Greek language (Jer.3:6-18). As a consequence, knowledge of this language was the one thing that all of God's hidden people in the first century had in common. It was not the Jews, but these paganized exiles that were destined to accept the new covenant (Ez.11:14-21). For this reason, the New Testament when it was first recorded, was written down not in Aramaic or Hebrew, but in *Greek*. A speech that even to this day is identified with a kind of 'gobbledigook' that few people can understand. A familiar modern phrase, for instance states of the unintelligible that *"it is all Greek to me"*. This fulfilled both parts of the prophecy that Jesus would be seen by the Jews as a foreign language. *"Who does he think his message is for?...With his 'sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav, zeer sham, zeer sham!' Yes, certainly with stammering lips and in a foreign language, he will talk to this nation, he who once told them: Here is rest... But they would not listen. That is why the Lord now says: 'sav lasav, sav lasav, kav lakav, kav lakav, zeer sham, zeer sham', so that when they walk they may fall over backwards and be broken, snared and made captive."* (Is.28:10-13). Since Jesus spoke to the Jews in their own Aramaic tongue, Isaiah's prediction had to apply to his words in another way. We have already shown that the ultimate language of God was sealed in the Old Testament in the form of metaphor—in a divine symbolism which lay hidden to the world until Jesus came and brought it to light. Yet as with everything else in scripture, God's prophecy about a foreign language also had a literal basis as well. The Jews did not understand either the parables

Jesus preached, nor the language in which His message was first published and given to the world—a language they subsequently banished from scripture.

By allowing Jesus to be taken to Rome, God tore down the barrier that had separated the Gentiles from the people of Israel. The fact that God intended in Christ to break down this wall was evident from the beginning. *"You have put on a new self which will progress towards true knowledge the more it is renewed in the image of its creator; and in that image there is no room for distinction between Greek and Jew..."* (Col.3:10). With the conversion of the Roman empire to Christ, the wall separating Greek and Jew collapsed forever. Focusing on language as the key to this barrier, the Jewish leaders have, over the centuries, tried desperately to reconstruct it. Although Rome ruled the world at the time of Christ, it borrowed much of its culture from the Greek empire—an empire it had earlier subdued. Therefore, underlying the framework of the civilization of Rome was the powerful influence of Greece. It is because of this dual relationship that historians now refer to the two as the Greco-Roman world, much in the same way that people today unite the Judeo-Christian world that has evolved from Moses and Christ. Because of its close ties to the Hellenistic culture, virtually everyone in the Roman empire spoke Greek as well as Latin. In fact, Greek at the time of Christ was the common language of the entire civilized world. Thus, no matter where in the North they lived, all the lost tribes of God were versed in Greek. God demonstrated the importance of this relationship when Andrew and Philip came to Jesus and told him that "some Greeks" wanted to see him. That must have been the signal, because the response Jesus gave to them was this: *"Now the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified."* (Jn.12:20-23). God had obviously instructed Jesus that through the mouths of the Greeks His message would go out to all the world. The event that would set all this in motion was earlier prophesied in the Book of Ezekiel, *"And Son of Man, on the very day I deprive them of their sons and daughters...on that very day a fugitive will come and bring you news of this. On that day your mouth will be opened to speak to the fugitive."* (Ez.24:25-27). The fugitives (Greeks) who brought that news to Jesus were announced to him by Andrew and Philip—an event that occurred just before the last supper, apparently on the same day that Jesus drove the money lenders out of the temple with a whip, voiding the first covenant (Jn.12). Having been rejected by his own people, the voice of God (which up to that time had only been heard in Aramaic and revealed to Palestine) was about to go out to the whole world in the Greek language, and so it was these Greeks coming to Philip and Andrew who fulfilled Ezekiel's prophecy. God's mouth was about to be opened to speak to the pagan world in its own language. The word of God was about to be written down in Greek, the language of the world. In the dictionary, the word 'fugitive' means 'one who

tries to escape or flee—running away or intending flight'. The word is suggestive of the House of Israel trying to escape the bondage of Pharaoh in Egypt. Mirroring that earlier flight from captivity, these two Greeks were 'fugitives' from Babylon—harbingers of the lost tribes of Israel seeking to escape sin and follow God to the safety of His new world. Officially designated messengers of God, they represented the language that He would use in the broadcast of Christ's message across the earth—the universal language of the pagan world. In the days that followed, when the books of the New Testament began to appear, they were all initially penned in the Greek tongue. There was precedence for this. Three hundred years before Jesus was born, the Old Testament had been transcribed into the Greek language by a group of Hebrew scholars specifically for Jewish exiles. Translated by 70 Jewish rabbis in Alexandria, Egypt, it is this Greek version of the Old Testament that the world today refers to as the 'Greek Bible', and which served all the Jewish synagogues in foreign countries around the civilized world when Jesus preached in Galilee. Formed under the auspices of the Jewish Sanhedrin in Jerusalem, this Greek bible carried, as we shall see, the tacit approval of that august body. This is why it had become, in the First Century, the preferred scripture of the Jewish diaspora. This was the Old Testament used by Peter and Paul and all the Apostles. It is still in use today in all the Eastern Orthodox churches and to a major extent by the Roman church. It has, however, been discarded by most Protestant churches. Following the lead of second century Jewish Rabbi's, Martin Luther chose, in the sixteenth century, to ostracise the Greek books from his growing movement. Nevertheless, since these Greek scriptures were being used by all Christians and Jewish exiles alike, the union between it and the Greek manuscripts that form our New Testament made it extremely important in Christian history. Together, the two represented the 'foreign tongue' Isaiah predicted would confuse the Jews and make them blind to the Lord (Is.28:10-13). The extraordinary response Jesus gave when informed of the arrival of those two Greek visitors (who came to see Him just before He was crucified) proved not only that He was fully aware that this incredible circumstance would occur, but that it was all structured in the original plan of God.

In order to fully understand the division of Israel into its two competing Houses (Christianity and Judaism), we need to examine the Old Testament template that explains the roots of this partition. After the death of Solomon in about 900 B.C., the nation of Israel broke apart, polarized by two competing leaders and two houses of worship—one at Bethel, the other at Jerusalem. This disunity allowed the country to be invaded on numerous occasions by foreign governments and its citizens to be taken prisoner in wave after wave to all parts of the world. As a result of these deportations, by the time Christ appeared not only

were all the northern tribes of Israel and their temple at Bethel gone, a great many Jews were gone as well. In fact, more Jews at the time of Jesus lived abroad than inside Judea itself. Accommodating these exiles, Jewish settlements and synagogues were scattered throughout the civilized world. And because Greek was the universal language of the world, it was the one language spoken in all of these remote Jewish communities. Most of these exiles, though Jewish, understood neither Aramaic nor Hebrew. Three hundred years before the birth of Christ, the Jewish Sanhedrin permitted the translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into the Greek language specifically to address this deficiency—i.e., to give these Jewish exiles a Bible in their own tongue. Once finished, the book proved immediately and immensely popular. By the time Jesus appeared, it was this Greek translation of the scriptures that the Jewish exiles were using in all the synagogues outside of Judea. And not just outside of Judea. According to the Talmud, both versions of the old Testament were displayed side by side in Herod's temple in Jerusalem when Jesus taught there. This was understandable since Jewish law required that all foreign dwelling Jews make regular pilgrimages to the temple—a rule which swelled Jerusalem's population to many times its normal size (especially during the festival of Passover) bringing into the city millions of Jews who spoke only Greek. Actually, very few Jews could read or understand Hebrew—even among the resident Jews in Jerusalem. The native language of Judea at the time of Christ was not Hebrew, it was Aramaic—the language in which Jesus preached. But there was no Aramaic 'Bible'—only 'targums' (basically, catechism's). The Greek Old Testament filled this void. When Christ was preaching, Hebrew was a dead language used only by priests—the same way Latin is a dead language today and used by priests. This explains why none of the words of Jesus or any part of the New Testament was ever penned in Hebrew. Almost no Christian or Jew could read it—or even understand it. Hebrew was quite complicated (the language had no vowels or word spacing) and it was too secret (its knowledge restricted only to upper class scholars) to be of value. Aramaic was of no use to the apostles either—it was only spoken in Palestine. The rest of the world spoke Greek, so it was in the Greek language that the message of Jesus first spread across the planet. This fact was a key mechanism used by the Jewish leaders at Jamnia to finally separate themselves from the preaching of Jesus in their synagogues and thus seal completely Isaiah's prophecy that Jesus would be to them a foreign language. Some time between 80 and 100 A.D., these Rabbi's declared Greek to be a 'pagan' tongue, and with this decree, ripped everything Greek out of their scriptures. This decimated a large part of Jewish literature, but to the Rabbi's of Judea it was worth the cost because it also got rid of Jesus Christ.

Forty years after the crucifixion, the Jews in Judea were facing two critical threats to their national existence. Christian converts were preaching (or whispering) the message of Jesus to their neighbors and kin in all the scattered synagogues of the world, and the Romans had just wiped out Judea militarily, killing in the process a great many of its most influential leaders. Those not killed were led away in the chains of slavery to Rome. In just four decades, the Judea of Jesus' time—the Judea we read about in the Bible—had disappeared and was gone forever. The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Essene's, the Sanhedrin, and even the Jewish priesthood were only memories—their existence had been erased from the face of the earth by the Roman military less than 40 years after Jesus died. With the Jewish state in disarray and faced with political extinction, Christians were popping up everywhere—they were in every synagogue of the world preaching Jesus to the Jews that still had not converted. To the Jews who remained in Jerusalem this two-pronged attack on their homeland and religion was, by far, the gravest calamity they had ever faced. Especially the Christian proselytizing which had the capacity to end Mosaic heritage for all time. So when the Roman general Tacitus gave the Judean survivors permission in 73 A.D. to establish a rabbinical school (the 'Academy of Jamnia') as a replacement to the defunct Sanhedrin—he gave the Jews a tool to launch a counteroffensive. Seeing a solution to the Christian problem in the fact that Jesus was being written and preached only in the Greek language, the Jewish rabbi's declared all writing not originally penned in Hebrew scripturally invalid. Had they still retained divine authority to rule the people of Israel in the name of God, this decree would have permanently separated Jesus from the Old Testament, and neutralized His word as theologically unclean. But it did not because Jesus had changed the management. The Jewish decree actually held no legal weight because God had placed new tenants at the head of the religion many years before it was issued. Out of office, the Jewish party no longer had authority to make any kind of decree that would be binding on the people of God. When Jesus drove the money-lenders out of the temple with his whip, he activated a change of leadership which immediately terminated the tenure of the pharisees and sadducees of Judaism. As their successors, God appointed Peter and Paul and the other Apostles of Christianity to take their offices. For this reason, any action the Jewish contingent took decades later, like this 'Hebrew-only' decree, was not legally valid, because it did not carry the co-signature of God. The ruling was promulgated by people no longer in office. This change of management is such an important religious concept that God has placed it before us in the form of a major allegory in scripture. When Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took over the leadership of the Hebrew nation, the dissidents who did not want him as their king followed an opposition leader named Jeroboam instead, and under his guidance they set up an opposing temple outside the Law at Bethel. This is exactly what happened at Jamnia where

the Jews in their rejection of the idea that God had sent Him, tried to set up an alternative Hebrew religious system outside of Christ. The events defined at Jamnia are precisely what the allegory of the great Israelite schism was placed in scripture to show us. The Bethel decision divided the House of Israel into two parts—into two spiritual houses—and that is exactly what Jamnia did all over again. On both occasions a large group of Hebrew dissidents bolted from God's will and implemented a system for worship that was not authorized by Him. Solomon's son had legal authority over the twelve tribes of Israel because he was born into the House of David (David was Solomon's father). This formed the template. Jesus had absolute authority over that same house because He Himself was the true son of David which all these prophecies pointed to. *"I have made a covenant with my Chosen, I have given my servant David my sworn word: I have founded your dynasty to last forever, I have built you a throne to outlast all time. I shall make him my first-born, the Most High for kings on earth."* (Ps.89:3-4, 27). The allegory of the schism, remember, (1 Kings 12:20-33) hinges entirely on loyalty to the House of David. As king of the Jews, Jesus, the divine David, was taken prisoner to Babylon and the whole House of Israel had to go there with Him. The dissidents who tried to set up a rebel religion in opposition to this trek to the North had no legal authority as far as the House of Israel was concerned and so all their religious declarations were shown in scripture to be outside the law of God (1 Kings 13:1-10). Three hundred years before Christ was born, the Jewish Sanhedrin at Jerusalem (a tribunal which still had legal authority under God) had authorized the formation of the Greek Bible. So the dissidents at Jamnia who tried to destroy that instrument were not only outside the governing body, they were attacking an instrument which the tenants in power had earlier authorized. This is supported by two important sources. First, as we have already shown, the Jewish Talmud has officially informed us that both Hebrew and Greek Old Testament scrolls hung side by side in Herod's temple in Jerusalem at the time of Christ. And second, the manuscripts at Qumran (all of which parallel or pre-date the birth of Jesus) consist of both Hebrew and Greek books together). After Jamnia, all Greek books disappeared completely from the Jewish scene.

Not only did the ban of Jamnia do away with the Greek Old Testament in the Jewish synagogues, much more important, it defined (as far as scripture is concerned) all Christian writings invalid as well because of their original Greek penning. The entire New Testament, remember, had been first-written in Greek, not Hebrew. 'First written' was the key mechanism the dissident Hebrew leaders at Jamnia decided would separate scripture from non-scripture. According to their ordination, nothing first-written in Greek could ever be considered true scripture—not even books with a Hebrew author. This decree removed from

scripture the influence of the Holy Spirit and left a book defined only by language. Using this formula, the Rabbi's at Jamnia swept away everything Christian from the Hebrew scene. It turned out to be a brilliant maneuver for the people who opposed Jesus. By ordaining a religious separation on the basis of language, they fulfilled the prophecies about God speaking to them in a foreign tongue and effectively sealed the divorce between the two houses of Israel. Condemning all New Testament writings to a perpetual ban, the decree drove these two houses far apart. In keeping with the new edict, the venerable Greek Bible (the 'Bible of the Seventy' as it was called) which foreign country Jewish synagogues had been using for over 300 years was replaced with a single Hebrew scripture approved by the Academy. In defining this particular Hebrew manuscript, the Rabbi's of Jamnia met in session after session trying to determine not only which books of the Bible they would keep and which they would discard, but even the particular Hebrew recension (translation) they would accept. In the debates which followed, all Old Testament documents written originally in Greek were discarded outright. This eliminated from their scriptures all the books Protestants now call 'apocryphal', including the Jewish 'freedom fighter' books—the accounts of the Maccabees—which detailed the exploits of the Jewish warriors known as 'Hassideans'. The Maccabee books also contain the only biblical information regarding 'Hannukah'. This material is of particular interest to us as far as Bible prophecy is concerned because it recounts in great detail the actions of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in his desecration of the Jerusalem temple and therefore provides a wealth of data relating to a period in Jewish history that Daniel has defined as the template for the end of the world. Much of what Antiochus Epiphanes did, Daniel has informed us, will be repeated again (but this time on a Christian stage) in the era of the Apocalypse.

Not just Greek books, but even some books originally written in Hebrew came under intense rabbinical fire during the Jamnian sessions—especially those which referenced the 'son of man' (the metaphoric title scripture often uses when it alludes to Jesus). The Book of Daniel, for instance, barely escaped the axe. But the closest of all was the Book of Ezekiel. According to the Jewish Talmud, after many heated debates, the Rabbi's were leaning toward discarding it—and it was saved only at the last minute by a bribe of 300 jars of precious oil. As it turned out, the edict of Jamnia erected a great and almost irreconcilable wall between the Greek (Christian) world and the Hebrew (Jewish) world. Thus it followed perfectly the template of Bethel. It has duplicated the ancient Hebrew schism on a world stage, dividing the two houses of Israel into Jewish and Christian parts, each with their own competing 'temple' of worship. The spiritual food offered by these two competing 'temples' is based on the book (language) in which each of these foods is housed. In decreeing a separation by

language, the Jews got rid of the 'food' of Jesus. Doing this, they separated themselves from God. *"This people's leaders have taken the wrong turning, and those who are led are lost."* (Is.9:15-16). The paradox to all this is that Jesus went with the Greeks, proving the prophets true who said that God would favor the exiles (Jer.29, Ez.11). Scripture stipulated that the rescue of God could only come from Babylon (Micah 4:10). By separating themselves from Christ's word, the Jewish leaders put out the light of Christ from their own synagogues. *"And so the night will come to you: an end of vision; darkness for you: an end of divination. The sun will set for the prophets, the day will go black for them."* (Micah 3:6-7). By erecting a language separation between themselves and the lost tribes in exile, the Jewish scholars locked all of these prophecies into place. And to further prove that the true target of this decree was Jesus, not language, sixteen hundred years later when the Protestant church rejected the Greek Old Testament and adopted the Hebrew scripture of Jamnia in its place, the Rabbi's threw that one out, too. As a result, Jews today are not permitted to accept as scripture even the Old Testament of the King James Bible.

Housed in the Greek Old Testament approved several centuries before Christ by the Jewish Sanhedren are several books that are referred to today by certain Protestants as being 'apocryphal'. It is important here to understand that this 'Apocrypha' is not a collection of satanic verses as some now incredibly contend. If not actually scripture as the Eastern Orthodox and Roman churches contend, they are as close to scripture as writings on earth can ever get. These were not books waiting to get into the Bible, these were books *removed* from the Bible just after the death of Jesus by people who wanted to distance themselves from the growing Church of Christ. These are the works of 'foreign tongue' that Isaiah said God would speak to us in through Christ. As such, they are a gift to the lost tribes of the House of Israel from God. At first, all Christians used the Greek Bible exclusively; none used the Hebrew Bible. That is because from the very beginning, Christian preaching was aimed at the exiles of Israel (almost all of whom used Greek editions of the Old Testament). As we have shown, these Greek Bibles were acceptable at the time because they were authorized for foreign use by the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. It was not until the Sanhedrin was destroyed and the Academy at Jamnia replaced it that this Greek book became an inflammatory Jewish issue. This is why Paul and the other Apostles (who all preached and died before Jamnia was ever founded) were able to use the Greek scriptures so universally in the earliest days of the Church. Christianity today reflects this beginning. About 80% of all Christians currently use either a Greek or modified Greek Old Testament while only 20% use Hebrew. Moreover, all Christian churches use the 'Greek' New Testament. The Greek Church (the Eastern Orthodox Church) uses the Greek Bible exclusively. The Roman

Church accepts a great part of the Greek material. The Protestants, however, (except for Anglicans) reject the Greek works entirely and have gone with the Rabbi's of Jamnia taking their Hebrew version of the Bible instead. Here, again, the allegory of Jeroboam follows through. In that allegory, the Lord sent a 'man of God' to Bethel to condemn the illegal altar there. Once he had denounced its altar, the man of God left Bethel as he had been instructed to do, and after traveling a short distance, stopped to rest under a terebinth. A false prophet from Bethel came upon this man of God as he sat there and asked him *"Are you the man of God?"* *"I am", he replied. 'Come home with me' the false prophet said 'and take some food.'* *'I cannot go back with you, or eat or drink anything here,' the man of God answered 'for I have received God's order: "You are to eat or drink nothing there, nor even to return by the way you came".'* Contradicting these holy instructions, the false prophet began to lie to the man of God, *'I too am a prophet like you',* he said, *"and an angel told me this by God's order: "Bring him back with you to your house to eat and drink".* But this instruction was a lie. He was not a real prophet at all and he had seen no angel. Deceived in this way by the false prophet of Bethel, the man of God went back with him and ate and drank the food of Bethel against the direct order of the Lord (1 Kings 13:14-32). And here is the meaning of these words: The food of Bethel and the food of Jamnia are identical. The Old Testament is a book passing away. It is a food without salvation (Heb.8:7-13). The Hebrew language cannot change that fact or resurrect it from its passing. Both versions, Greek and Hebrew, have been replaced by the New Testament of Jesus Christ. That is why the Apostles separated us from the Torah. Hebrew is not a divine tongue. The food of heaven comes neither from Jamnia nor Alexandria. It comes from the Gospel Jesus preached. That is the only food we must eat. Those who think otherwise have been deceived by a lie, just like the man at Bethel.

With the current reconstruction of Jerusalem, this whole issue can be seen in an even more dramatic way. Blaming Christianity for everything bad that has happened to them over the past 2000 years, Jewish animosity to Jesus remains so strong today that even the definition of what constitutes a 'Jew' has been changed in the land of Israel from the genetic designation of the past to one now defined in Jesus Christ. For instance, any Jew in the world who steps on the soil of Israel is automatically awarded Israeli citizenship on the spot—every Jew, that is, except those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah. 'Christianized' Jews are denied citizenship out of hand. Astonishing as it may seem, then, Jewishness in Israel today applies only to those who reject Jesus as Messiah. This means that all twelve of Israel's tribes are now defined by the very same measure—Jesus Christ. In that measure, one door remains tightly closed—and it is this fact in Jerusalem's current restoration that has

Christian eyes fixed on the sealed 'Golden Gate' in the city's eastern wall. The opening of that gate and the opening of Jewish eyes will be simultaneous.

PART 7

PROPHECY AND REVELATION

*"From the beginning I foretold the future, and predicted
beforehand what is to be." Is.46:10*

26

God Reveals the Future in Advance

"Does the trumpet sound in the city without the populace becoming alarmed? Does misfortune come to a city if God has not sent it? No more does the Lord God do anything without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets." Amos 3:6-7

There is much talk today about a French astrologer named Nostradamus. Did he predict the future? A lot of people think so. God, however, said no. According to the Bible, God's secrets are not revealed to soothsayers—either inside the church or out. *"You may say: the Lord has raised up prophets for us in Babylon, but thus says the Lord God Almighty, the God of Israel: Do not be deceived by the prophets among you or by your diviners; do not listen to the dreams they dream, since they prophesy lies to you in my name. I have not sent them."* (Jer.29:15). Jeremiah's words apply not only to fortunetellers like Nostradamus, they include the spurious visions of cult leaders as well. If so much is false, one might ask, can any vision be true? There is one cardinal rule we can trust for certain. That is, the future goes by the Book. Most major prophecies have already been made, and they were sealed in scripture long before Nostradamus and the other diviners and dreamers of our age were ever born. What we look forward to now centers on scripture's fulfillment. We want to know *when* and *how*. Still, the world loves its astrologers. It is curious that so many ignore the truly inspired like Isaiah and the other writers of scripture—visionaries that God has personally commissioned in the prophetic office—and instead flock around pagan seers whose writings are so vague any interpretation is possible for every sentence they utter. In the fifteenth century penning of Nostradamus, for instance, we are supposed to see Marilyn Monroe, John Kennedy, California earthquakes, flying saucers, submarines, airplanes, World War II, and just about everything else that superficially or momentarily interests us on earth. Notably missing from these insights, of course, is any revelation of the millenium, the global victory of Christ—the greatest story of the age—that is ignored. The prophecy of charlatans has no driving purpose—no noble goal. It is about entertainment. It was certainly not in the plan of God, for instance, that He instruct a 15th century magician about Marilyn Monroe. He has a much more important message for us. God's whole

purpose in prophecy is that we discover the need to repent in Jesus and save our lives. What the Holy Spirit has revealed to us in bible prophecy is that this world is coming to an end in a 'Day of God' that is approaching us now with increasing speed and that we need to prepare ourselves as quickly as possible for that moment so that we do not get swept away and destroyed by its divinely driven tidal wave of wrath against evil. Faith forestalls disaster. This is the ultimate meaning of all prophecy. When God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah, He told Abraham that just a small amount of faith would stay His hand and spare the city (despite all the evil that emanated from it). Jonah later confirmed this same message, proving that when prophecy is real it can increase a city's faith and save it from disaster. True prophecy can *change* the future. That is what is important to God. The prognostications of soothsayers are useless. They entertain but do not lead to faith. Worse, they steal from the signs and portents God Himself has sanctioned and made credible. If prophecy is to prove true, it must be built on Christ. The words of Ezekiel, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah and all the other prophets of the Old Testament would have faded into a Hebrew oblivion had it not been discovered that they contained divine descriptions of a Christian future. Whatever seals still remain screening the mysteries surrounding tomorrow, they can only be opened to the inspection of faith. The Bible is entirely about Jesus—and so God has empowered only those who have faith in Him to reveal its holy secrets. Peter wrote that prophecy can have no origin outside of God. "*When men spoke for God it was the Holy Spirit that moved them.*" (2 Peter 1:21). That same Spirit moves the congregation as well as the prophet. This is why corporate sight is more dependable than individual sight. Any prophetic interpretation not accepted by the majority of believers (although still possibly true) cannot be considered supremely valuable as far as the Body itself is concerned. That is why so many look to the Church for support when they read the Bible. The more believers who accept a prophecy in Christ, the more we can be certain that the Holy Spirit was its true author (2 Peter 1:20). This is why most Christians tend to hold themselves to the mainstream of faith.

We know what the future holds only because a chorus of voices, inspired by the word of God and moved by His Spirit, sounded in the pages of a Book and proclaimed it all in advance. We see those proclamations often centered on a repeating history. Mark Twain once said that 'history does not repeat itself, but it does rhyme'. Prophecy's purpose is to alert us to the rhymes we should be looking for. God has promised that He will never take any action on earth without first warning the people beforehand through His prophets (Amos 3:7). When we study the writings of the biblical seers, we find that this is true. Those warnings were sounded. A vast number of those prophecies have already come true, but

there are many that still lie ahead. That is the part of prophecy that is of crucial concern to us now. For instance, scripture is filled with prophecies that predict the end of the world. *"Come near and listen all you races, pay attention all you nations; listen earth and all that you hold; world, and all that comes from you. God is angry with all the nations...He has vowed them to destruction, and marked them down for slaughter."* (Is.34:1-5). Because of these prophecies, it is impossible to talk about Babylon without acknowledging its impending destruction. *"I mean to sweep away everything off the face of the earth. I mean to sweep away men and beasts, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, I mean to send the wicked staggering, and wipe man off the face of the earth."* (Zeph.1:2-3). *"The man of high estate will be tinder, his handiwork a spark. Both will burn together and no one to put them out."* (Is.1:31). *"Is it not the will of God Almighty that the laboring of peoples should end in fire, and the toiling of nations come to nothing?"* (Hab.2:13). These statements are not vague, and because so many prophecies of this nature exist in the scriptures there is no question that they will be fulfilled. Just as our spiritual soul has been exiled into a mortal body that is soon coming to an end, the same is true of the world itself. This world has its own Forest Lawn, and just like us, its life, too, is very short. And the analogy does not end there. Everyone knows that if we decide to live a life in the fast lane, we pit ourselves against nature and increase our odds of an early death. This is even more true of the world itself because it is held together only by the single thread of God's treaty of life. All that is keeping our planet alive today is faith in Jesus Christ. And that is waning fast. Scripture says that just before the End comes, the world will be enveloped, not just in armies, but in a time of intense darkness as well. The spiritual meaning of this prophecy of a nocturnal shroud is the collapse of faith—the extinguishing of the light of Christ on earth. Jesus confirmed this collapse when He described the last days as *"a time of darkness when no one can work"* (Jn.9:4). Today, in the wake of growing faithlessness, we can see Christ's prediction begin to take form. And it is this loss of faith, unless reversed, that will allow all the terrible events foreseen by the prophets to come true. It is as if the world has moved its game of tag out onto a freeway of fast moving cars. Our actions have increased our chances for disaster. The real meaning of all these signs is that the time of terror is reversible. We can change the outcome by turning back to God. But there is very little time left for us to do this.

Scripture has decreed the name 'Babylon' as the biblical cryptogram for this pagan world. That means the 'handwriting on the wall' that appeared in ancient Babylon just hours before it was destroyed is analogous to the signs and events destined to precede the day when the earth itself is to be destroyed. These signs were all predicted in advance and documented in terms so lucid in scripture they are impossible to misinterpret. Because those final

indicators have now begun to unfold in the events of our times, the Holy Spirit has been able to use them to show us the proof of the truth of Jesus and to warn us that we need to turn our lives over to His righteousness as quickly as we possibly can. They show that the time for repentance has grown exceedingly short. The Book of God is true and everything we see happening around us now is going just as that Book predicted. God has not hidden these indicators from sight so that we have to search for them. He has unveiled His portents on a world stage in full view of mankind. They come to us in the headlines of newspapers. The restoration of Jerusalem, the rise of Persia, the missiles and hydrogen bombs, the reign of violence. These are not secrets. Yet they do follow a script many people want desperately to ignore. So the secret is our doing, not God's. Scripture says that the end of the world will come in fire. *"I have brought fire out of you to consume you."* (Ez.28:18). Because this fire has two parts, the destruction of Babylon has two parts. Babylon is to be burned twice. First spiritually and then in the end, physically. The spiritual destruction of Babylon started two thousand years ago when the word of Christ began to spread throughout the pagan world. *"His tongue is like a devouring fire."* (Is.30:27). And once Christ's message has done its job, behind the Gospel's fire will come the second fire—the prelude to Armageddon.

"I will light a fire inside her towns; it shall devour all her surroundings." (Jer.50:32). Preached from town to town, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the spiritual fire of God which cleanses or destroys every human heart that it enters: *"A crucible for silver, a furnace for gold, but the Lord for the testing of hearts!"* (Pr.17:3). Because every person on earth must pass through this torch of heaven, scripture says that those who obey the word of Christ are like brands snatched from the flames (Zech.3:2). *"You tested us, God, you refined us like silver, you let us fall into the net, you laid heavy burdens on our backs, you let people drive over our heads; but now the ordeal by fire and water is over, and you allow us once more to draw breath."* (Ps.66:10-12). Putting the match to God's crucible, Jesus said, *"I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were blazing already!"* (Lk.12:49). The image of God's word blazing across the earth like a great fire was echoed by almost every ancient prophet of the past: *"The light of Israel will become a fire and its Holy One a flame—burning and devouring thorns and briars in a single day."* (Is.10:17). This unquenchable flame is the word that Jesus spoke: *"Now I will make my words a fire in your mouth, and make this people wood, for the fire to devour."* (Jer.5:14). These prophecies show that the world lives now only for the purpose of Jesus Christ. God is saving those who will leave wickedness, and He is doing it at the last minute, just ahead of a cataclysmic, world-ending catastrophe that has been fore-ordained in the heavens. The land itself is doomed. But we can live. The message from God is irrefutable: the salvation of Christ or fiery death are the only two

options we have. God has given us a choice. Either we follow in the footsteps of Jesus to a land of everlasting life, or we end up in the eternal furnace of death and disgrace. In scripture, the fire of God and the sword of God are equivalent terms: *"Son of man...prophesy...and say: The Lord God says this: Listen; I am about to kindle a fire in you that will burn up every green tree as well as every dry one; it will be an unquenchable blaze and every face will be scorched by it from the Negeb to the North. All mankind will see that it was I, God, who kindled it, and it will not be put out...All mankind is going to learn that I, God, am the one who has drawn the sword from its sheath; it will not go back again."* (Ez.21:1-5). The decision we make with respect to the Gospel puts us on either one side or the other of God's sword.

When the spiritual fire of God's Gospel has completed its burning across the world, the sixth trumpet will sound. Then the floodgates of the east will be thrown open at the Euphrates, allowing a vast horde of eastern forces to overrun the 'Babylon' we now inhabit. Once these forces have done their damage, they will ignite the terminal fire that Jeremiah and John predicted (Jer.51:58; Rev.17:16-17). It was not Nostradamus that first told us of these things, it was the prophets of the Bible. Serving as a prelude for the final days, the twentieth century has produced events which have brought all the citizens of the world—not just Christians—to the certain knowledge that the world could come to a flaming end within minutes at any time. Such a catastrophe is now only a push-button away and nothing but the power of God holds it back. The fact that the physical fires have already started—the vaporizing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, for instance, followed by greater fires tested all over the world—is probably the most telling prophecy of all. Most of us are familiar with pictures which document the fiery terror these nuclear devices unleash when they are exploded, and tens of thousands of them sit right now on top of cocked missiles in hidden silos all across the earth, quietly awaiting a moment now blocked by the hand of God. Coinciding with the reconstruction of Jerusalem and many other terminal portents prophesied, it is reasonable to conclude that God's Last Day has drawn very close to us. The times themselves have become so compelling that mortal prophets can add little to what we can all see for ourselves. Had Saddam Hussein risen to power in the Soviet Union instead of in Iraq, or had the appearance of Adolph Hitler and the atomic arsenal of today been reversed—had Hitler come just thirty years later—Armageddon might well have already come and gone. That is how close we really are. And with more and more countries clamoring to become 'nuclear', it is the whole world which now must depend on faith—not just Christians—because it is not mankind's logic that is holding back the wrath, it is only the power of God.

Some Christians believe that all prophecy ended with the resurrection of Jesus—that the Bible's prophecies were completely fulfilled in that event. There can be no doubt that God's message of salvation is perfectly contained in the Bible, but the revelation of God concerning this salvation has continued to unfold to our present day. Jesus said, *"I have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now. But when the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth, since he will not be speaking as from himself but will say only what he has learnt; and he will tell you of the things to come."* (Jn.16:12-13). In 'telling us about the things to come' the Holy Spirit continues to reveal the future to us in advance. Everything pre-announced by the scriptures is going to come true. This includes revelations given before Christ appeared and afterward as well—every prophecy God has decreed. Even the "mistake" in the Christian calendar has divine significance. The importance of the year 2000 remained unknown to us until the year it arrived. Only then did the Holy Spirit reveal its significance—that it structured the "third day", a day set by God in relation to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. Nine months into that 'third day' came 9/11, the day that signaled the rise of the East and the handwriting on the wall of Babylon.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the Christian Church has received a flood of vision and prophecy since the time of the Apostles—revelations which the Holy Spirit has brought to the Church through the words of Christian prophets. The greatest of these visions were the engines that drove the early Christian Councils. Even though many of these prophets are unknown to us, their visions have impacted every Church. Due to the scattered nature of God's Church, these prophecies are spread throughout the world and encompass every denomination. That God would scatter these revelations throughout the entire Body can be seen in the prophets of old. Elijah, for instance, was not Jewish. Neither were Elisha or Amos or Hosea. These non-Jewish prophets, along with others, belonged to the northern tribes. Yet Jews today cling to the words of these prophets (especially Elijah and Elisha) as if the blood that ran through their veins were as Jewish as their own. It is the same now. There is true prophecy in every church. While some of these visions are recognized by very few, there are other revelations which have been embraced by almost every Christian. The concept of the Trinity for instance is an idea that came to the Church through prophecy. The dual nature of the person of Christ—true man and true God—is another. There are thousands of examples like this in the history of the Church, including all the truths revealed by Paul, yet none of these prophecies have altered in any way the nature or structure of the message Jesus preached in the lands of Judea and its surrounding countryside. Prophecy has added to our understanding of God but it has not changed our pathway to salvation. This

proves that the Gospel can never be changed by prophecy, only brought into clearer focus by it. The greatest prophecy of all is that Jesus is Lord—and anyone who makes this declaration is a prophet. This statement is a prediction because the Lord's coronation has not yet taken place. Daniel foresaw that God would bestow the Kingship of New Jerusalem on Jesus at the day of the End, just before the Judgment. But that day is still ahead of us, so the only definitive regarding this coronation is the promise of scripture. Therefore we live now in a time of mystery. That is why our faith is the greatest prophecy of all.

It is God's intention that all the hidden truths He has designated for revelation be disclosed (Jn.16:12-13), and He has set a term limit for this unveiling (Dn.9:24). Since the end cannot occur until this disclosure has been completed, the sounds of divine revelation still continue. A clear example of this outside of scripture can be seen in Lucia's three visions at Fatima. We can assume that hers was a profound prophecy because its unveiling stretched across a hundred years and drew during that period the rapt attention of more than 2 billion Christians. For the same reason, it is not always important to God that revealed prophecy be accepted by either the Church or the secular world; only that it be publicly stated. Because once published, scripture is fulfilled. It is man's own law that legal declarations be published. Few have to read them to make these disclosures legal. They just have to be made available to be read by the people. It is exactly the same with the declarations of prophecy.

The source of all sound prophecy is the Holy Spirit. To whom did the Holy Spirit first reveal the doctrines that emanate from Christianity's major prophecies? Often we do not know. Nor do we know the initial web of Christians through which those prophecies traveled on their way to the ears of the church leaders who later argued them into doctrine. Such prophecies are the 'many things that Jesus had to tell us' which He said were too much for the disciples to contemplate during the infancy of the Church (John 16:12-15). It is this unfolding revelation that has brought the Church to its diverse understanding in our time. And it is an unveiling that is still going on. Just as the 'manna from heaven' continued to fall from the sky to feed the Israelite's throughout their whole journey across Sinai, and did not stop until they came to the river Jordan, so will the unfolding revelation of the Holy Spirit continue to be a part of the Christian message until the journey of mankind to Christ has been accomplished. God has sprinkled His insights throughout the Church. Some here, some there. No church receives it all, but all the churches receive a part. The word 'prophecy' simply means a revelation from the Holy Spirit. Sometimes it is about the future; other times the past. Sometimes it is about the nature of God and sometimes it is about the nature of

man. For this reason, we can see the prophecy of God unfold in the discoveries of science: especially in the secrets of nature and of the universe. God made all these things, too. Yet, most of us are aware of prophecy only when it concerns what is still to come. This is why we are compelled to search the words of the Book of Revelation and the other writings of scripture that point to the time of the end—especially now when the fulfillment of these prophecies is so close at hand.

27

The Book of Daniel Unsealed

*"Then I said, 'My lord, what is to be the outcome?'
 'Daniel,' he replied, 'go away: these words are to
 remain secret and sealed until the time of the End.'
 Dn.12:8-10*

As the only sealed book still left in the Bible, the Book of Daniel stands unique. *"Daniel, you must keep these words secret and the book sealed until the time of the End."* (Dn.12:4). With this declaration, God put aside a great body of prophecy, holding it hidden until the last days of the earth. In the wake of this order, the true meaning behind Daniel's words has remained locked in a spiritual quiet, awaiting the day of its unveiling—a day which has recently dawned. As the vestments shielding this hidden prophecy begin to fall away, the words of Daniel are coming to their own age—the unveiling of his message openly chronicling the last hours in the life of Babylon. Daniel's prophecies are about Jesus. That is the key to all its secrets. It is not a book about Moses. Daniel is not telling us about the past; his vision is about the future. It is only because Daniel's writing is in the Old Testament that his words seem to relate to the old covenant—to a restoration of the Jewish temple and all its Mosaic rituals in the last days—something commonly preached. But it does not. Daniel's words have nothing to do with the Mosaic covenant. Instead, they describe the Second Coming of Jesus Christ: *"Thrones were set in place and one of great age took his seat...a court was held and the books were opened. I gazed into the visions of the night, and I saw, coming on the clouds of heaven, one like a son of man. He came to the one of great age and was led into his presence. On him was conferred sovereignty, glory and kingship, and men of all peoples...became his servants. his sovereignty is an eternal sovereignty which shall never pass away, nor will his empire ever be destroyed..."* (Dan.7:9-14). What Daniel saw was Jesus Christ returning in power and glory with all the angels of heaven. This is why we must view Daniel's words in terms of the final fulfillment of Christianity on earth. Daniel's words describe the 'Second Coming' and all the events that are to lead up to it. Everything that Daniel said relates to the ultimate victory of Christ on earth. The Jews will be saved at that final moment, but their salvation will be concomitant with that of all the

saints because the covenants have been changed. The old covenant is gone and it will not come back, not even for a brief moment. This is why the Rebel's assault on the everlasting covenant established by Jesus is the central focus of all of Daniel's words. There is nothing 'everlasting' about the covenant of Moses (Jer.31:31-33)—it has already passed away as far as Christian scripture is concerned (Heb.8:7). No end-time revival of Judaism is even mentioned in Daniel's prophecies even though the terminal destruction of the city of Jerusalem and their citizens is the final objective—the unachievable goal. Daniel's vision plots the unfolding trail of destruction of the last days, detail by detail, as it leads from the two wars at the Euphrates to the fateful appearance on earth of the man the Apostle Paul has defined as the 'Great Rebel'. It is clear in Daniel's words that Jesus Christ and those who follow Him will be key targets in this Rebel's attacks (Dn.7:13-27). Before he can capture Jerusalem and the Jews, he must topple Christianity first. This assault is portrayed by Daniel as the world's final war against the children of God—a war engineered by a fourth kingdom of Persia—the Gog and Magog of the Book of Revelation (Rv.20:7-9). Both houses of Israel (Christians and Jews) will be involved in this conclusive war, but Daniel has combined them, assuming these two houses to be one and the same—the saints of God. We know from other prophecies in scripture that Jewish recognition of the divinity of Jesus is the key moment that follows this attack, coming after the Rebel and his forces have been obliterated by God. Recent history has shown that they were the primary victims in one of the earliest battles ushering in these end times—the event we now call 'the holocaust'. And they are destined to be at the center of the last visible remnant of the House of Israel on earth (Dt.4:30); but in order for that to happen, catastrophic warfare has to sweep away the vast Christian community first—a community that now numbers over 2 billion people. Every day that passes this number grows larger and with it the magnitude of that war. Numbers like these show that what will be crushed by the beast in this onslaught will be the power on earth of the Christian people. That is what Daniel has foreseen and described—the attack by the beast on the power of the holy people (Dn.8:24; 9:26; 12:7). Since Christians outnumber Jews by about 100 to 1, Jews today represent only 1% of the House of Israel on earth (Dt.4:27). This ratio will not change significantly in the few years that are left, so once the war takes shape in earnest, the true dimensions and scope of the conflict will become apparent to all. Many Christians at that time will fall away and join the pagans, but many others will continue to stand up for Jesus.

At the center of Daniel's words lies a description of the beast's assault on the temple and on its sacred liturgy. This attack on the sanctuary is the reason why so many have seen in Daniel's prophecies a resurrection of Mosaic worship at the end of time. But by viewing

Daniel through Jewish eyes, most Christians are ignoring their own liturgy. Jesus did not end the liturgical elements of worship,. Instead, He gave this sacred ritual a new management. That is why a liturgical church has dominated Christ's religion since the day of its birth. The pomp and ceremony that attached to this liturgy during the Middle Ages caused many Christians to question its holiness. There are some at the extreme end of this dissension who feel that not only are liturgical excesses incorrect, all church ritual is wrong and inherently evil as well. Jesus did not go along with this view: *"Alas for you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who pay your tithes of mint and dill and cummin and have neglected the weightier matters of the Law—justice, mercy, good faith! These you should have practised, without neglecting the others."* (Mt.23:23). Not only is the ritual of worship practiced in most Christian churches not wrong, because this liturgy is centered on the communion sacrifice, the life of the whole world is tied to it's perpetuation.

All this Daniel has shown in terms so clear they cannot be ignored. It is the communion sacrifice that holds back the Wrath, not a burnt bird or a roasted lamb. Satan's attack on the liturgy of the Church dominates much of Daniel's vision. *"From one of these...sprang a horn which grew to great size...It grew right up to the armies of heaven and flung armies and stars to the ground, and trampled them underfoot. It even challenged the power of that army's Prince; it abolished the perpetual sacrifice and overthrew the foundation of his sanctuary, and the army too; it put iniquity on the sacrifice and flung truth to the ground."* (Dn.9:9-12). *"He will take furious action against the holy covenant and...will favor those who forsake that covenant...Forces of his will come and profane the sanctuary citadel; they will abolish the perpetual sacrifice, and instal the disastrous abomination there."* (Dn.11:30-31). *"The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by a prince who will come...and for the space of one half-week he will put a stop to sacrifice and oblation, and on the wing of the temple will be the disastrous abomination..."* (Dn.9:26-27). It is not Jewish liturgy under attack that Daniel's words here describe; it is Christian liturgy. Transpose Temple to Church and what was unseen in Daniel suddenly becomes clear. God's 'Prince' of Jerusalem is Jesus Christ and the one His Holy Spirit has appointed to stand guard over the sacrifice. This is the Christian army's Prince whose power the beast will challenge. The beast will attack the Christian Church because the religious structure which Jesus established on earth through the Holy Spirit is the silhouette of perfection according to God. It is not an orphan looking for a Jewish home. Nor is it evil as Satan would have us believe. The fact that the world will come to an end when this liturgy is attacked is certain proof of it's enormous power. The potency of the perpetual sacrifice is such that Paul said people get sick and die just by eating this holy meal incorrectly (1 Cor.11:30).

When Jesus proclaimed about the words of Daniel, *"Let the reader understand"* (Mt.24:15), it was a signal to us, not just that we should understand Daniel, but also that we need to understand the close relationship between Daniel's words and Jesus Christ—the relationship between Daniel and the Christian Church. Examining Daniel's words in relation to Jesus brings us to a completely different understanding than when doing so in Moses. It breaks the seals that have long obscured the true meaning of this cloaked book. We can see this in every passage we read. The 'desolating sacrilege' that the Rebel will one day erect in the holy sanctuary, for instance, has nothing to do with compromising a Jewish altar built for Mosaic animal sacrifices. Instead, the placement of this abomination must be seen as an object making desolate the liturgy of Christian communion. It is something that will occur at a Christian altar, not at a Jewish altar. It has to do with the redemptive sacrifice of Jesus Christ, not with the bloody throat-slicing sacrifice of sheep, cattle or doves. Understanding this fact changes our whole comprehension of Daniel, because it shows that the 'sanctuary citadel' (Dn.11:31) which the Rebel's forces profane at the time of the end will be a major Christian church, not a newly constructed Jewish temple. This has profound implications. It means that the 'foundation of the sanctuary' that the beast will overthrow at the end is a structure that will relate to the Rock of Peter, not the rock of Abraham.

Before Jesus appeared, the foundation stone of the Jewish temple was the physical 'rock of Abraham'—the threshing stone on Mt. Moriah that David purchased from Arunah the Jebusite. *"But their rock is not like our rock"* (Dt.32:31). When Jesus changed temple worship to spiritual worship, he also changed the foundation of the sanctuary: *"Believe me, woman, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem...the hour will come—in fact it is here already—when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth: that is the kind of worshipper the Father wants. God is spirit, and those who worship must worship in spirit and truth."* (Jn.4:21-24). With these words, Jesus threw out all the stones and pillars of the past and replaced them with acts of compassion and mercy instead. The true 'foundation' of the sanctuary of God is faith in Christ. This is why Jesus replaced the stone boulder (the rock of Abraham) on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem with "Petros", a rock of human faith—Simon Peter. When Simon, filled with the Holy Spirit, suddenly realized that Jesus was the Son of God, he said, *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."* (Mt.16:16). At that moment, Peter became the first disciple of Christ on earth to suddenly realize that Jesus and God were identical. In a Church that would be built only on this revelation, Peter became the first stone in Christ's new temple. This made him the foundation stone of the Christian faith. Each of us become a part

of this Church only when we come to the same revelation. That is why Jesus, hearing this declaration from His disciple, told Simon, "*You are 'Rock' ('Peter') and on this rock I will build my church.*" (Mt.16:18). At that very moment, Mt. Moriah and the rock of Abraham in Palestine were immediately succeeded—replaced by the kind of living stones that God was looking for... "*the living stones which form God's spiritual house*" (1 Peter 2:5). The proof of this is that God abandoned the rock on the temple mount in Jerusalem, making no attempt to keep it from falling into the hands of Israel's most ancient antagonists—the people of the east—who hold it in their possession to this very day. God had no more use for that rock once Jesus came. The new structure that He was building was spiritual and could only be made out of human stones. That is why God made Simon Peter the true rock of Abraham. The stone that Jesus used as the foundation of His church had to be human. Just as Jesus Christ, himself, was human: "It was the stone rejected by the builders which proved to be the keystone." (Ps.118:22).

Because Jesus is the key to Daniel's words, every element in his prophecy can be examined in the light of the Christian faith. When Daniel wrote that the beast will "*throw truth to the ground*" (Dn.8:12), there is only one 'truth' that his words could possibly describe—the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There is no truth on earth outside of this Gospel. Daniel's prophecy shows that the beast will abolish the Gospel and forbid its existence in his empire. Because it teaches about Jesus, every Bible will be burned when this madman comes to power. We have already shown that when Daniel wrote of the beast abolishing the 'perpetual sacrifice' (Dn.8:11), he was alluding to the destruction of the perpetual offering of communion—the sacrifice that relates to Jesus Christ. He will abolish the offering of the Eucharist. For there to be altars and liturgy in these prophecies, there has to be a priesthood. This is significant. Judaism today has no priesthood and it has no perpetual sacrifice; nor has it had either of these for almost 2000 years—not since the destruction of the temple. But Christian liturgy has both and has had both since the very beginning. Jesus did not abolish either the office of the priesthood or the perpetual sacrifice (Mt.5:17). Instead, He transferred authority over them from the corrupt Jewish hierarchy—the Sadducees and Pharisees of Judaism who had rejected His Son—to the new tenants that he appointed to take their place—tenants that would bind the liturgy of worship to the commandments of God revealed by Jesus Christ (Mt.21:41). In this respect, even the High Priest still remains in office—but now he is a Christian, ordained by God to oversee and guard the perpetual sacrifice. The very fact that the priesthood and sacrifice continue to exist in Christianity and not in Judaism shows the transfer of authority from one covenant to the other.

What we see in Christian liturgy, then, is an extension of the same liturgical elements practiced by the priests of Moses, only refocused now on the ultimate sacrifice of all—Jesus Christ. The 'iniquity' that the beast will one day put on the sacrifice (Dn.8:11) must be seen as an 'abomination' that abolishes Christian communion and desecrates the altar from which it had been offered (Dn.11:31). Isaiah wrote that this action will initiate the curse that consumes the earth (Is.24:6). That is why Jesus warned that when we see it occur everyone should run for the mountains (Matt.24:15+). In fact, because Christian communion legally perpetuates God's peace treaty with the world—God's offer of peace to mankind—the desecration of this sacrifice will be the world's culminating act in its rejection of Jesus Christ himself. *"The earth is defiled under its inhabitants' feet, for they have transgressed the law, violated the precept, broken the everlasting covenant."* (Is.24:5-6). It is only this treaty of peace and its offer to the world by the Christian Church that holds back the Law's sentence, so its desecration by the beast makes inevitable the world-ending catastrophe that Jesus warned us about. Daniel has termed this sacrilege 'the abomination of desolation'—a phrase which means that everything will be made desolate because it is set in place. For it is at that point—the moment the abomination is erected—that God will say, 'Enough!' and bring this earthly creation to an end (Is.24:16). The Apostle Paul has already shown us the immense power that the communion sacrifice has in this regard: *"Everyone is to recollect himself before eating this bread and drinking this cup; because a person who eats and drinks without recognising the Body is eating and drinking his own condemnation. In fact that is why many of you are weak and ill and some of you have died. If only we recollected ourselves, we should not be punished like that. But when the Lord does punish us like that, it is to correct us and stop us from being condemned with the world."* (1 Cor. 11:28-32).

From the day of its formation, it was announced that the covenant of Moses was temporary (Dt.18:13-22). Even the Jewish elders knew that. In case anyone had forgotten, Jeremiah came along 600 years after Moses had first proclaimed it and reminded the people again. *"See, the days are coming - it is God who speaks- when I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel (and the House of Judah), but not a covenant like the one I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, so I had to show them who was master. "No, this is the covenant I will make with the House of Israel when those days arrive: Deep within them I will plant my Law, writing it on their hearts. Then I will be their God and they shall be my people."* (Jer.31:31-33). The covenant of Moses came into being as an interim law because of the compromise at Sinai, and it was destined to be broken by the sins of the people and replaced by an everlasting covenant formed in the Son of David. All these truths

were described in great detail in the Old Testament—a fact which shows that the Old Testament was pointing to Christian liturgy from the very beginning. This is why almost every word in the Old Testament can be seen fulfilled in the New. Since Christianity is the essence of the eternal covenant, faith in Jesus Christ is the whole meaning of the Bible. The temporary Law of Moses was structured on something not only predicted to pass away, but which did so almost 2000 years ago with the appearance on earth of the Son of God (Heb.8:13). This is why the 'everlasting covenant' that Daniel predicted the beast would attack with such fury at the end (Dn.11:30) can have nothing to do with Moses. Jeremiah's words reveal that not only has the old covenant been terminated, it will never return. God has made a new covenant with the world in Jesus Christ and that new covenant is everlasting and cannot be supplanted in any way.

The words inside the brackets "(and with the House of Judah)" in Jeremiah's prophecy (Jer.31:31) reveals that the Christ's new covenant applies to the Jews just as much as to the rest of Israel. This shows that in God everyone will end up a disciple of Christ. *"My servants are to be given a new name."* (Is.65:15). That new name is 'Christian'. No longer called Hebrew or Jew, the holy people now invoke the messianic title of God's divine Son. Everyone must acknowledge Jesus and accept His new covenant (Lk.19:27). *"By speaking of a new Covenant, God implies that the first one is already old. Now anything old only gets more antiquated until in the end it disappears"* (Heb.8:13). This shows that when the Jews regain their sight at the end of time, they will accept the new Covenant. Acknowledging Jesus Christ as their savior, the Jews will become Christians. On that day, Zechariah prophesied, *"They will look on the one whom they have pierced; they will mourn for him as for an only son, and weep for him as people weep for a first-born child."* (Zech.12:10-11).

Paul said that the blindness of the Jews was the mechanism that God used to save the pagans (Rom.11:11-12). Zechariah revealed that this would be exactly reversed at the end. In the last days the pagans, in their rejection of Jesus, will all go blind and that blindness will cause the restoration of sight to the Jews (Zc.12:3-5). In prophesying that reversal, Zechariah said that all the nations of the world would gather in the valleys of Palestine and make preparations for their final assault on the House of Israel. But at the last moment God would open His eyes on the Jews and suddenly they would be able to see Him as He really is—they will see Jesus. At that moment, the revelation that came to Peter will come to the remnant of the House of Judah gathered within the city of Jerusalem. *"When that day comes...the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'Strength for the Jews is in the Lord who*

is their God." (Zech.12:4-5). At that moment they will know that God has placed all their strength in Jesus Christ. They will clarify this revelation in the prophetic declaration Jesus predicted: "*Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*" (Matt.23:39). This is the culminating moment of prophecy, because it will complete the final prophetic utterance in the history of prophecy on earth. Immediately after this declaration has been made, Michael will call out the command and the End will be at hand. It was only their blindness to this fact that prevented the Jews from becoming Christians in the first place. And that loss of sight was a divine decree for the sake of the salvation of the pagans. When this divine decree is rescinded, the Jews will accept the kingship of Jesus with the same kind of fervor that Christians do now. The old Covenant will not come back. It has been replaced forever in Jesus Christ. The Jews and Christians will blend into one. The last to go into Babylon, the Jews will be the last to leave it. The final vestige of Israel's captivity will have then come to an end. And that will be the signal for Jesus to return.

Before God rules in favor of the saints, Daniel tells us that the beast of the End will crush the power of the holy people (Dan.11:28-35). "*He will destroy powerful men and the people of the saints.*" (Dn.8:24). This 'power' has nothing to do with an army of tanks and missiles and warplanes. The power of the holy people relates to the world authority of the Christian Church. This power is structured in the one who oversees and guards the perpetual sacrifice. Daniel's words are an announcement that the beast will put an end to the rule of Jesus Christ on earth. Historically, although Jesus was rejected by his own people, he was believed in by the world (1 Tim.3:16). In the fertile soil of this belief the Christian Church quickly became the most dominant religion on earth -- a position it has maintained to this day (See Graph 1). The Rebel of the last days will bring this world belief to an end. When he appears, the beast will remove the 'Anointed Prince' of the Church—the High Priest of Christianity—and in doing so bring to a conclusion on earth the '62 weeks' of Christian restoration—the time when all the squares and ramparts of holy behavior have been rebuilt in the righteousness of Christ. Under the Rebel's direction, the peg will be pulled out from its firm place and all the cups and saucers hanging on it will fall (Is.22:25). This will terminate the millennium of Christian rule on earth. This is how the power of the holy people will come to an end—through the destruction of the Church. The true power of the holy people is Jesus Christ. He is the force of God that holds up the Church. And not just the Church, but the whole world, because Jesus is the force that has kept the Wrath from descending on the earth all these years. The 'power of the holy people' specifically relates to the world's conversion into the Gospel and therefore to the rule of Christianity which has governed much of this earth for most of the last two thousand years. The planet's conversion to Jesus was

officially recognized by the world at the time of Constantine, almost 1700 years ago, when the Gospel of Jesus became the guiding principle of western civilization. It is difficult for many of us to see this power now because it is collapsing all around us so quickly; but even a casual look back into history reveals the immense power that the Christian Church wielded in the world up until the recent past. For almost two thousand years the Holy Spirit made the world bow to the authority of Christ's iron scepter (Ps.2). Just how fast this power is now eroding can be seen in the sudden disappearance of Christmas programs on television. The Charlie Brown Christmas show, a TV program in the 1960's and 70's which had the Peanut's gang doing a Nativity scene in an American public school, can no longer be shown on commercial television because it is now an anachronism. In crushing the power of the holy people (the ability of governments to rule in the ethic of Jesus) the beast will put out the light of the Gospel on earth and bring to an end all political rule structured in Christ's words. This has almost been accomplished. And it has occurred quietly—with barely a wimper of protest.

Christian 'power' has been made most visible to the world in the grandiloquent ceremonies of the major Christian churches. Proclaiming the victory of Christ in the world (and to the world), the majesty of these services are not appreciated today by many Christians. But for almost two thousand years—throughout the history of Christianity—such services projected to the people of this world a brilliant physical reflection, not just of Christ's victory on earth over Satan, but of the hidden spiritual glory and majesty of God's eternal kingdom in heaven as well. Officially termed 'triumphalism', these services trumpeted a glorification of God's Son so captivating and celebrative that it not only enthralled the world, it brought a vast number of the most powerful kings of the earth to their knees in humility and tribute to Jesus Christ as well. When Judas Iscariot and some of the other apostles observed Jesus being anointed with a jar of very precious oil (which could have been sold at a large profit and the money distributed to the poor) they were indignant at the injustice of the ceremony involved (Jn.12:4). How, they asked Jesus, could these other disciples justify wasting such expensive oil on Jesus' body when there were so many poor people to be fed? But Jesus would have none of their argument. He told them that the woman who had anointed his body with this precious oil had done a good work in the sight of God. He said, "*The poor you will always have with you and you can feed them whenever you want, but you will not always have me.*" (Mk.14:3-9). The same is true of Christ's Church. The ceremonies of the triumphal Church have been for the glory of God and to promote on earth an image of the majesty of Jesus Christ, and when these ceremonies are gone this fact will be evident even to those who once railed against them. The Christian

decorations that used to cover our cities and public parks at Christmastime are now only a memory, and those who tore them down have not allocated one penny of the money they saved to the poor.

After the beast comes and burns down all the cathedrals and churches of Christ throughout Europe and the Eastern Hemisphere, the poor will remain behind just as poor and unfed as before. More than that, their swollen ranks will then have lost the food of heaven as well. Because, at the very center of the majesty of the orthodox church service is the feast of God—the distribution of Gospel and communion to mankind. Amid hosanna's and rejoicing, and surrounded by the ceremonial trappings of a divine victory celebration, this feast is offered to the people of the world on a daily basis in every triumphal church. And at the very center of this triumphal liturgy are two foods: 'communion' and 'Word'. Because these are the two essential ingredients of the sacrificial meal offered to the world by the Christian Church, they are the two sacred elements of 'truth' and 'perpetual sacrifice' targeted for destruction by the beast in the disclosures of Daniel. The war against the majesty of Christian service surrounding these sacred elements is part and parcel of Satan's war against the Church. It mimics the tearing down of the Christian Christmas decorations in the city streets and parks, and coinciding as it does with Satan's return from the Abyss, it shows that Satan's power of deception has cast its dark shadow deep into the ranks of the faithful who are succumbing to his devious arguments with little protest. The church will not be strengthened when the expensive oil of triumphalism that has washed the body of Christ's Church over the past seventeen centuries is taken away. Instead its absence will expose the sacred liturgy encased within these ceremonies to Daniel's prophecy. When he crushes the power of the church and its service, the sacrifice and oblation that the Rebel will put a stop to (Dan.9:27) is the offering of the bread and wine of the communion feast, and the truth that he will throw to the ground is the Gospel that this offering represents. In destroying Christ's treaty of peace with the world, the beast will create a way for the kings of the east to initiate the second and final war against the Church. *"When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive all the nations in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, and mobilize them for war. His armies will be as many as the sands of the sea; they will come swarming over the entire country and besiege the camp of the saints..."* (Rv.20:7-9). And the precise steps that Satan will follow as he raises his beast to such power over God's Church is contained in the visions of Daniel, the prophet in whose words God has hidden the secret mysteries of the last days.

28

The Architects of Wormwood

"Make sure that no one traps you and deprives you of your freedom by some secondhand, empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world instead of on Christ." Col.2:6-8

The seven churches are supposed to lead us to faith in Jesus, not to themselves. Yet weak faith and strong theology often go together. Jim Jones in South America and David Koresh in Waco are recent examples of this—in their cases, intense theology gone berserk, and faith nonexistent. All churches are manifestations of theology. But unlike the two above, most are tempered by the peaceful and gentle love of Jesus. Despite the fact that all churches are formed in Him, Jesus did not come to teach us theology. He came to teach us how to gain eternal life. Foremost in this instruction was his command that we love our enemies. Contaminated by Satan's hate, this fact is often lost in religion. Theology, as we have seen, often *creates* enemies and encourages their formation. It does not forgive them. That is why it is so common to find the paradox of Christians professing the love of Christ in themselves, yet expressing that love by hating other Christians or other churches. Obviously, theology and God can, in some cases, lead us down different paths. Because of this, we must be very careful about our beliefs. God sent Jesus so that we would take His word into our heart and let that be our guiding principle and beacon for thought in our expression and knowledge of God. When we abandon His Word and let other principles be the expression of our concept of God, we court disaster. This can be very dangerous, especially for those who follow false prophets like Koresh or Jim Jones. In the hands of people like that, religion can be a trap. It can lead us to the very hell we are trying to escape. That is why Jesus set us free from ministers in the first place. He did not come to give the ministers more credibility, but to erase their credibility to such an extent that we would look to Him first, and listen to His commands before theirs. That is why He asked us—no, *commanded* us—to test all ministers by their fruits. Jesus did not do away with ministers because without them there could be no baptism and no spread of the faith. But He made their authority subservient to the Gospel. In the process, He took away their teaching

credentials—because now there is only one teacher—Jesus Christ. The ministers still have authority and we must obey them because they will be called to make an accounting for the way they look after our souls (and we are not supposed to make that job any harder on them) Heb.13:17, but Jesus has made two things abundantly clear: First, obedience to the Gospel comes before anything or anybody. And second, there is no salvation in the Law (theology). The ministers can baptize us, but their philosophies cannot save us. Eternal life only comes to those who put the word of Jesus into practice in their lives (Mk.3:35). Theology may be all right for this world, but it does not offer eternal life. And that is the bottom line—except for baptism, life after death does not come from any legal principle or theological premise. It comes only from our obedience to the words of Jesus Christ. It is the chance for life after death that Jesus offers us. The ministers and priests offer us a way to praise God and show Him respect, but only Jesus can offer us a way to join Him in eternity. What makes this so obvious is that the Jews had a *perfect* Law. When Jesus came to Jerusalem he found a people steeped in theological tradition. They attended religious services regularly, in fact, fanatically. They held their theological leaders in great esteem and they spent their entire lives wrapped up in the services of theological worship. They condemned sexual perversity and were devoted to family values. Yet Christ told them that none of this devotion or its rituals had any bearing on their salvation because all it did was speak to images. Instead of being a road to eternal life, their religion was a road away from life because it tolerated behavior that insured death while admonishing only legal flaws. Jesus explained that the single way to escape from this legal trap was to live in the Gospel he preached, and He showed in the stern way that He dealt with Judaism that religion by itself does not encourage this change. Religious ritual must be purified by the spiritual rules of the Gospel because only the Gospel offers an escape from death. So there is a great division in religion. Out of the Law (theology) comes all the false prophecy that ever existed on the earth and out of the word of Christ emanates the cure. For this reason—because salvation itself is what is at stake—we must understand clearly the difference between theology and the Jesus God sent us.

Many Christians have an innate fear of the Law yet few even know what the Law is. According to the Jews the Law is the Bible. The word 'Bible' is Christian and was coined long after Jesus had been crucified. Before that, the scriptures were called 'the Law and the Prophets'. This, remember, is the term Jesus used when *He* talked about the Bible. The part we call 'the Law' was composed by Moses and encompasses the first five books of the Old Testament: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Israelites termed these five books 'the Torah' (a Hebrew word which means law). As far as the twelve tribes were concerned, these five writings defined the essence of their entire religion. They

governed every aspect of Hebrew life. In them were the stories of Adam and Eve, the flood, the creation, Abraham, the Exodus, Passover, and all the rest. The Law contained all the admonitions and regulations about sacrifice and religious expression. Repeated in the Torah were the Ten Commandments which God had given Moses on Mt. Sinai. These ten statements from heaven really key the Law, because, as we have said before, in order to emphasize the difference between the Law and these ten directives by God, the Hebrew's were instructed by the Holy Spirit to build a structure called the Ark of the Covenant. Into the Ark went not the Bible, but only God's Decalogue—the commandments He, Himself, inscribed on stone. This happened so that the world would later understand the difference between the Bible and the Gospel which Jesus would later bring down from God out of heaven in the image of His Ten Commandments. The words spoken or written directly by God were called the 'Testimony'—a designation in scripture elevating them above the Law of Moses. For our purposes, therefore, we can see a Bible divided into three critical sections: Law, Prophecy and Testimony. Moses wrote the first five books—the part we call the Law. God and Jesus gave us the Testimony—direct words from heaven itself. All the rest is prophecy. This prophecy comes, not just in defined sections in the Bible, but spread all through the writings of scripture. When Paul appeared, he re-worded Moses' Law in terms of Christ, unifying the Law of Moses with the ultimate will of God. In doing this, Paul got rid of animal sacrifices and just about every other legal notion regarding theological justification. Instead of following Paul's formula, however, many churches have tried, in varying ways, to resurrect the Old Testament's principles of legal sanctification. Some say dancing is forbidden. Others say God forbids certain foods. Some teach that God worries about which day the Sabbath should be celebrated, or whether or not music should be played in church. Christian leaders have justified these rules because Jesus refused to separate law and faith completely. Jesus commanded that the two stay in contact until the end. *"Do not imagine that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete them."* (Mt. 5:17). Had Jesus totally separated the Law from faith, for instance, baptism would not be necessary, but Jesus showed that it is (Jn.3:5). When Law rules the Testimony, as it does in the Old Testament, God disappears. But when God's mercy rules the Law, as it does in the New Testament, Jesus reigns supreme. This is why God allowed the Apostles to change the Law.

The intent of God's Law was that we obey His commandments. The most important of these commandments, Jesus said, is that we live a life of love—love for both God and for our fellow man. His people, however, were using ritual as a means to live otherwise. In order to break this obsession for Mosaic ritual (to bring law and spirit into harmony), the

Holy Spirit moved the Apostles of the Church to take an extraordinary step. In a momentous meeting in Jerusalem, Peter and James, with the full approval of Paul and all the leading Apostles of the Church, issued a ruling releasing every Christian from the Law of Moses—freeing us forever from all the interlacing rules of the Old Testament. This was perhaps the most important Apostolic decree ever issued by the Church. While this decree seemed momentarily to violate Jesus' command that the Law not be abolished, it actually perfected the Law. Because, without realizing it at the time, Paul was restructuring the Law in a way that made it accountable only to Jesus Christ. The action taken by the Apostles releasing us from the rules of the Old Testament was a part of that restructuring. And once these actions became scripture, they could not be rejected. Jesus had given Peter full authority to take such a monumental action: *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: Whatever you bind on earth shall be considered bound in heaven; whatever you loose on earth shall be considered loosed in heaven."* (Mt.16:19). This permitted the Apostles to keep the directive of Jesus that Law and faith go together and at the same time free the Church from the strict and inconsistent rules of the Old Testament (the Law). This freedom, of course, does not apply to everyone—only to those who convert and are baptised into the faith of Jesus Christ. All others remain bound to the Law—especially to its decree that everyone who sins must die. It is to satisfy this decree that there is baptism. Christian baptism touches us with the blood of Jesus, marking us in the sacrifice He made in our name, so that His death becomes ours as well, satisfying the Law's demands with respect to our former sinfulness. That is the last act of the Law on us—the touch that frees us from the penalty demanded by the Law. It sets us free to follow Jesus on the path to eternal life that He mapped out for us.

Baptism takes us out of the Mosaic Law so completely that Paul said anyone who looks back toward that Law is in grave danger of losing their salvation (Gal.5:4). That is why anyone who comes now commanding obedience to the rules of the Old Testament in a Christian setting may be a threat to faith. Those who do this are acting in direct violation of Christian scripture—refusing to obey Peter's command. For this reason, obsession with the Law of Moses is one way we can always identify false prophets. Instead of preaching Christ's mercy, they sift through the Book of the Law (the Old Testament) and glean from it rules and regulations that the Apostles of the Church released us from two thousand years ago. Passing right through the New Testament, they bury themselves in the old and then they try to use those discarded regulations to attack the rest of the Church. This is what David Koresh did and it is a common practice in cults worldwide. It is easy to plunge so deeply into the theological concepts of the Bible that we zip right past Christ.

Isaiah cautioned that we should stick to basics in our search for God: *"Whether you turn to the right or the left, your ears will hear these words behind you, 'This is the way, follow it'."* (Is.30:21). The 'right' and the 'left' are all the different ministers and churches whose philosophical ideas so consume our thoughts during our adult religious life. The voice behind us is that of Jesus when His Gospel first touched us. This is the 'sunday school voice'. Notice that Isaiah speaks of this voice as coming from 'behind us'—from our past. The teachings of Jesus mark the 'way' that we must follow in order to achieve eternal life; and no matter how 'smart' we become in our supposed knowledge of God, the 'way we must follow' is simply that love-training we learned in the beginning.

In the Book of Hebrews it is written that the words of Moses were not God's own words, but were those of a 'guardian', written as a *reflection* of a vision. They were a 'copy' of what was real. Jesus is the True Father and Moses only the guardian. The books Moses wrote were metaphors of God's truth—not truth itself. They were written *in anticipation* of truth. This is why the words of Jesus take precedence over anything said in the Old Testament. We saw in an earlier chapter, that because the vision of Moses had produced a copy of truth instead of the real thing, the scriptures lay sealed in a veil of metaphor. Complicating this sealed message, over the years a process called 'tradition' poured forth an ever-changing theology into the Hebrew scene. According to the prophet Jeremiah, as these ideas evolved some leaked into the scriptures through the pens of over-zealous translators. *"How dare you say 'We are wise, and we possess the Law of God?' But look how it has been falsified by the lying pen of the scribes!"* (Jer.8:8). According to Jeremiah, then, the final result of this process found distorted 'additions' becoming a part of the Torah. As a consequence, the Bible ended up, not just with words inspired by God, but with ideas coming from the imagination of the scribes as well. Thus the scriptures held both wormwood and divinity in combination (Jer.23:15). And no one knew which was which, nor did they know how to separate the two. We cannot be blindly obedient, for instance, to a directive which commands 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' while trying to turn the other cheek. It is either one or the other. Jesus exposed the worst of these falsehoods in Matthew 5:20-48, and, indeed, in all of His commandments. A scripture containing error cannot endure. That is why the Old Testament is passing away (Heb.8:7-8). And that is also why Peter and Paul and the Apostles of the Church set us free from it's rules. The cure, of course, was Jesus Christ—the absolute perfection of God. *"You are worthy to take the scroll and break the seals of it, because you were sacrificed, and with your blood you bought men for God of every race, language, people and nation and made them a line of kings and priests, to serve our God and to rule the world."* (Rv.5:9-10). Breaking the seals meant

bringing to light the hidden message inside the scripture. This is why Jesus spent so much time when he preached his Gospel, separating the words of the Torah, dividing the inspired words of God from the words of men that had invaded it. He opened scripture's metaphoric code and shattered its seven seals (Rv.5:1-10). In doing this, Jesus lifted the cloak that had hidden God from the sight of the Jews.

The Jewish leaders were not impressed. In fact, they were horrified. Jesus had decimated the kind of Torah they were preaching, tearing out from it all its ritual and replacing its man-made rules with the spiritual laws of God—mercy, compassion and gentleness. It's entire ritual of sacrifice He took to Himself. Not recognizing that Jesus was God Himself in their midst (bringing God's own words in God's own voice), they clung to their garbled Law and to their stone temple—furious with Jesus that he would dare to restructure or find fault in either. In the process, they kept the imperfect guardian and threw out the true Father. God had appeared to them in person just as Moses had predicted He would—just as the compromise at Sinai had directed Him to appear—but the Jewish leaders rejected His offer of sacrificial forgiveness, as well as His message of mercy and justice and, instead, clung to their false images of God—a god ready to strike dead anyone who broke the Torah's rituals. These rituals had the people worshipping days of the week and clothing and food and a vast array of other traditions that God had not authorized. *"The worship they offer me is worthless, the doctrines they teach are only human regulations."* (Is.29:13). *"What I want is mercy, not sacrifice; knowledge of God, not holocausts."* (Hos.6:6). The Torah had people flocking by the droves to Jerusalem to slaughter hundreds of millions of birds and other animals. There was no mercy for these creatures, just a growing and bloody carnage made legal because it was authorized in the Bible. God deplored all this killing, and He stopped it cold when He went to the cross (Is.1:11). Bringing God's own Testimony, Jesus made ritual serve love. He told the Jewish leaders, *"You have made God's word null and void by means of your tradition"* (Mt.15:6). He accused these religious teachers of *"straining out gnats and swallowing camels"* with their rules (Mt.23:24). All the traditions they were promoting he said, had *"taken away the key of knowledge"* from the people. *"You have not gone in yourselves, and have prevented others going in who wanted to."* (Lk.11:52). Breaking the seals of scripture, Jesus revealed that all the ritual in the Old Testament was metaphoric. The Torah's didactic statements all had deeper meanings—meanings that revolved not around themselves, but around the mercy and love of Jesus Christ. This revelation put Jesus in direct conflict with those who held that the teachings of the Old Testament were absolute and needed to be accepted literally and followed exactly as they were written. There is a long and inglorious history in the Church of various ministers rising

up in defense of such wormwood. Jesus predicted that this obsession for pointless sacrifice would continue to the end. Filled with their own self-importance, ministers so inclined will continue to rise and bind heavy burdens on the people, Jesus warned (Mt.23). Obsessed with the spiritless rules and dietary restrictions of the Mosaic Law, there has been no end to the stream of prophets who have tried to tie us back them. This we have seen for ourselves—their appearance a continuing validation of Jesus' prophecies.

Over the years there have been many people with a primitive understanding of scripture who have incorrectly considered Babylon to be a Christian church—specifically the Roman church. Christian-bashing is not restricted only to attacks on Roman Catholics. The non-religious, for instance, often use the acronym 'WASP' to ridicule the Protestant Christians who founded the United States of America. Many Seventh-Day Adventists consider American Protestants the 'False Prophet' of the Book of Revelation, and the Catholic church the 'beast'. These kinds of attacks come from Satan, not God. The people who promote them are the architects of wormwood. It is easy to see how the devil can use pagans to attack the Church. What is harder to see as coming from Satan is the hatred within the Church itself. Why do such non-christian attitudes exist among people supposedly committed to loving their enemies? It is a true enigma, and it has its roots in the earliest days. Paul, for instance, in 57 A.D (only 24 years after the death of Jesus), wrote to the developing church in Corinth: *"I appeal to you, brothers, for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ, to make up the differences between you, and instead of disagreeing among yourselves, to be united again in your belief and practice. From what Chloe's people have been telling me it is clear that there are serious differences among you. What I mean are all these slogans that you have like: 'I am for Paul', 'I am for Apollos', 'I am for Cephas', 'I am for Christ'. Has Christ been parcelled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you?" (1 Cor.1:10-13). "What could be more unspiritual than your slogans, 'I am for Paul' and 'I am for Apollos'? After all, what is Apollos and what is Paul? They are servants who brought the faith to you. Even the different ways in which they brought it were assigned to them by the Lord."* (1 Cor.3:1-9). Despite this strong admonition, Paul's words did not stop the Church from dividing itself into cliques. For this reason, almost two thousand years later these same slogans are still with us. Only now, they are steeped in the tradition of the ages. 'I am for the baptist', 'I am for the Pope', 'I am for Luther', 'I am for Moroni', 'I am for Christ'. As the years have passed this rivalry has grown more sinister and caustic to the point of spiritual death. That is why our need to respect and support one another has now become so crucial. Jesus committed us to love one another. All the hatred and jealousy emanates from a lack of faith. Satan could not move us to embrace such behavior if our faith were strong. In their

weakness, many are unable to see how the love of Christ can be so large that it can encompass those they, themselves cannot come to love. That is why John was so insistent that we live a life of love. *"I am writing now...to plead: let us love one another. To love is to live according to his commandments: this is the commandment which you have heard since the beginning, to live a life of love."* (2 Jn.5-6). When we live in Christ's commandments we prove that we are the children of God.

We know Jesus Christ as the Prince of Peace. Every word out of His mouth called for humble and gentle behavior—for love, not just of neighbors and friends, but of enemies as well. He taught forgiveness and predicated His entire offer of sanctification would be based on our ability to carry that teaching out in our own lives: *"Yes, if you forgive others their failings, your heavenly Father will forgive you yours; but if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive your failings either."* (Mat.6:14-15). Countering this message of universal forgiveness and compassion for others is the warmongering of Satan. Satan's call to arms is hatred. We can hear it reverberating all across the world today—even in the churches. And because Satan is here in person once again, driving the hatred himself, it promises to become far more vicious and violent than it has ever been before. That is not good news. It means warfare—not just secular fighting, but religious wars as well. Using hate, Satan is polarizing the world into opposing forces and mobilizing everyone for battle. These forces cut across all boundaries—even religious ones. In the coming days, Christians are going to rise up against Christians and Muslims are going to rise up against Muslims and Jews will fight Jews. Many of these wars are described in greater detail in the chapters ahead. A favorite target of the hate-mongers is the Bishop of Rome. This is not surprising. In an age of growing anarchy, he is the most visible theological figurehead championing God's call to the obedience of Christ on earth. He heads a Christian nation that has over a billion citizens (almost a fifth of the population of the earth). That represents vast authority in a world that hates authority. Remember, all Christians come from a House called 'Israel'. The word means 'rebel'. It was bestowed on Jacob by God because he fought against the holy angel. Descendants of Adam and Eve, we are all born into his fight. The call of Jesus is that we leave this rebellion behind us. The call of Satan is just the opposite—that we let the hatred consume us.

Since Satan's deception is going to manifest itself in violence and armies (2 Thess.9:12, Mt.24:9-13, Rv.20:7-9), we must take great care that we do not become caught up in the wormwood that drives the formation of these elements on earth. Various cults have for years distributed throughout the country venomous tracts which heavily promote

Christian hatred and a call to warmongering. While their literature does not actually promote the murder of Christians per se (at least not yet) it does encourage intense animosity toward traditional churches and their doctrines. Because many of these tracts define a spiritual war between themselves and the rest of the Body of Christ, they have set themselves up on the side of Satan—as enemies of the Body. David Koresh, for instance, was isolating and arming his followers in preparation for just such a war. In his case Koresh saw God destroying in battle all who worship on Sunday and raising up in victory over them all who worship on Saturday. We can see the same kind of isolation, fear and militant fervor in the Essene community at Qumran. Both shared a common belief that they should arm and isolate themselves for an apocalyptic war between the forces of good and evil on earth—with good and evil being their idea of it, not Christ's published teachings. This kind of thinking encourages isolation and hatred of others, and is always wrong—especially for Christians. According to the Apostle John, it is the very essence of Satanism: *"Anyone who says 'I love God', and hates his brother, is a liar, since a man who does not love the brother that he can see—cannot love God whom he has never seen. So this is the commandment that he has given us, that anyone who loves God must also love his brother. "* (1 Jn.4:20-21). The enemies of God are going to die, not in battle, but at the Judgment. That is because war itself is evil and never comes from God. In the battles leading up to Armageddon, the people of God will not be doing the fighting, they will be caught in the middle. This is a major difference. Armageddon is the potential for a war that God has held back, not one that He is bringing. And the one who is holding it back is the anointed prince that oversees the perpetual sacrifice—the very person all these cults want so desperately to destroy. It is this same anointed prince that Daniel foresees the Rebel cutting off just before he destroys the city and the sanctuary (Dn.9:26). The implication is clear. Satan is fomenting a call to arms on earth and the principal target of that call is the leading shepherd of the Christian Church.

What all this shows is that the future is going by the book. It is happening just as the Bible predicted it would. Driven by the emissaries of wormwood, hate is separating Christians and putting them at each other's throat. When he stood at the side of God in heaven, the Bible tells us that Satan incessantly preached to God this same kind of propaganda. He kept telling God that the children He had formed for Himself were basically evil and that they would not obey Him if put to the test. God told Satan his charges were not true, but Satan was so obsessed with his jealousy and hatred of them that he fomented a rebellion in heaven and infected them all with his own evil spirit just to prove that their faith in God was the sham he thought it was. People who war against the Church on earth, yet claim to be Christian, are true agents of Satan because they preach his same doctrine. In fact,

that is their most characteristic sign—although they come in sheep's clothing, saying they love Jesus, they preach hatred and fear and launch persistent attacks on other members of the Christian Church. By aiming at the same target as the Rebel, they prove they are allies of the Rebel. As the last day draws nearer, aided by Satan's own cunning, they will show this by whipping up their adherents to such a frenzy hatred that many will actually engage in physical assaults against the peaceful people they disdain.

There are two ways to view the Christian Church. One is to see it in the satanic way that the cultist's do—as a vast pool of contaminated churches, poisoned throughout by evil. The other is to see it in all its parts as the divine work of the Holy Spirit—the sacred bastion of faith on earth—a holy island that stands out from the poisoned water of the pagan world which surrounds it. Those who picture the Church as significantly contaminated agree with Satan's argument to God that most Christians are just pagans in disguise. In their arrogance, they hold everyone not inside their own group in contempt. In contrast, those who see the Church as the architecture of the Holy Spirit consider the entire Church to be the work of God—a single Body made up of many differing parts, but each essential in its own way. This view accepts a Church in the image of what John wrote: *"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God."* (1 Jn.5:1). The people of hatred disregard such equanimity and view the greater Church only in terms of corruption. That is why cultists always call for most Christian churches to be reviled and abandoned. Their persistent attacks against the rest of the Body of Christ are all based on Satan's personal obsession (Job 1:9-12)—making them one with that obsession. It is the will of God that we build new churches, but it is not God's will that we tear down all the other churches to do so. The Holy Spirit built the church structure we now see on earth, not the devil; and the Holy Spirit formed it exactly the way God wanted it built. This includes all its parts and even its membership percentages. The Temptor has not been able to change that—not even by corrupting a few vultures and sending them inside the Church like Adolph Hitler's "fifth column". The beast works to *destroy* the church. That should be obvious to everyone. So all the hate tracts come from Satan's influence, not from the Holy Spirit. They are designed to try to tear down the work of the Spirit of God—to tear down the greater Body of Jesus Christ on earth. With his hate, Satan is pushing the rebellious toward the precipice of spiritual war. And it is this push that permits us to see the dividing line between this world and God. Jesus is that line. His peace ransoms us from the war being waged on us. We may belong to twelve different tribes, but we have only One Master who says that we must love each other. If we allow that love to become hatred, Satan will own us. Each one of us are being called to join sides in this war. Either to take into our hearts Christ's peace—

forgiveness and love; or to allow Satan's deceptive anger to live in there instead—all his hatred and fear. Christ warned that we must all be sifted by Satan and this obsessive urge to hate each other is one of the major screens he has employed in his sifting. As long as we live in the Gospel of Jesus we will be safe. If we stray from His commandments our safety will cease to be assured.

Jesus said the last days would abound with false prophets. Some, he said, would come with theologies so sophisticated they would be able to lead astray even the elect had God not taken away their power to do so. We can see clear evidence of this sophistication in the teachings broadcast from modern pulpits. By preaching sermons that embrace the world and glorify secularism and sexual aberration, some ministers have diluted the Christian message by mixing into it, floods of secular doctrine. False prophecy takes many forms, but it always leads to the disassembly of the Church. The only defense against such prophecy is to live and worship in the commandments of the Gospel. We must take Jesus and the Apostles seriously, and not stray from their teachings or support ministers who do so. Misconceptions about God are certain to occur whenever the material world is exalted, and today the material world is being glorified as never before. Jesus warned us about all these things and He said that as the Last Day draws near it will get even worse. *"If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is the Christ' or, 'He is there', do not believe it; for false Christs and false prophets will arise and produce great signs and portents, enough to deceive even the chosen, if that were possible. There, I have forewarned you."* (Mt.24:23-27). Since it is going to become so common in the days to come, knowing how to recognize false prophecy and those who preach it is essential. Jesus warned that these deviants would come disguised as sheep but inside they would be ravenous wolves. He said, *"You will know them by their fruits."* (Mt.7:15-20). Whether they come preaching a god of violence, or a god of money, or even a god who dislikes most Christians, their message is always the same—it is a fruit contrary to the Gospel Jesus taught. There is only one safety from the deceit of such propaganda—staying close to the message of Christ. If goodness, mercy and compassion live in us, so will Jesus, but if we carry hatred or a love of money in our hearts, we will harbor Satan there instead. Jesus called us to love our brothers, and not only our brothers, but our enemies as well—to treat all people by the golden rule. Leaders who do not exhibit or promote these fruits of compassion should be flashing red lights to every Christian. Especially now, when all that scripture has predicted is preparing to be completed. *"If, then, they say to you, 'look, he is in the desert', do not go there; 'Look, he is in some hiding place', do not believe it;' because the coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning striking in the east and flashing far into the west."* (Mt.24:23-27).

While prophecy can broaden our understanding of Jesus' message, it cannot change that message in any way. That is how we can tell good prophecy from bad prophecy. The only prophecy that is perfect is the word of Jesus Christ. And if only Jesus is true, then everyone else is flawed. The false prophets will never admit this (that their own prophecy is flawed) but Paul declared it categorically: "...if there are gifts of prophecy, the time will come when they must fail; or the gift of languages, it will not continue forever; and knowledge—for this, too, the time will come when it must fail. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying is imperfect; but once perfection comes, all imperfect things will disappear." (1 Cor.13:8). If Paul could say this about his own words—words which would later supersede Moses and become a part of the very Bible itself, how much more must this admonition apply to words spoken by the people who follow him? Our prophecy, then, is always imperfect—and so is our theology—just the opposite of the way we see it. Every church has flaws. Not a single one is perfect because only the Gospel of Christ is perfect. And it is the same with every prophet and minister. Jesus is the only perfection. When Jesus returns, everything else will fail or be paled by the perfection which has returned to us from heaven. This is why Paul said that we should not think about God or argue about Him on human terms. *"Now instead of the spirit of the world, we have received the Spirit that comes from God, to teach us to understand the gifts that he has given us. Therefore we teach, not in the way in which philosophy is taught, but in the way that the Spirit teaches us."* (1 Cor.2:12-13).

Despite Paul's admonition that we should *"teach spiritual things spiritually"* (1 Cor.2:12-13), we often compelled to engage the legal and join in the arguments about God on philosophic terms. We call these compromises, 'traditions'. Tradition and wormwood are closely related. Jesus said, *"By means of your tradition you have made the word of God null and void."* (Mk.7:6-13). He directed this statement at Jewish leaders, but Christians are just as guilty. For instance, Jesus preached obedience to his commandments, but a number of Christians have compromised this teaching by postulating that no action in the service of Christian behavior has any effect on salvation—the exact opposite of what Jesus taught (Mt.19:17). Glorifying spiritual malaise, this tradition has made Christ's own words null and void. It is true that church rules (works of the Law—i.e, theology) cannot save our souls. But our obedience to the commandments of Christ has a direct and pivotal bearing on our sanctification. Jesus said we must bear fruit in the Gospel or we will be cut down and thrown on the fire. *"It is not those who say to me 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven."* (Mt.7:21). Do we

receive a reward from God for the deeds we do in His name? Jesus said yes (Mt.6:1-6). More than that, He said we can be made lost by our deeds as well (Mt.15:10-20). *"For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with the angels, and, when he does, he will reward each one according to his behavior."* (Mt.16:27). The doctrine now evolving among rebellious Christians that they are exempt from God's rules is not grounded in the Gospel—it is tradition. And because it represents an acrobatic nullification of God's personal commandments, it is wormwood. Overall, we are left with two choices. We either obey Jesus Christ just as he told us to do, or we follow our theological models. Thus we come to the same fork in the road the Jews came to almost 2000 years ago. And that is no accident.

All these illustrations show the obvious—while church is good, and *vital* to the cause of God, not everyone in it or everything said in it is a positive part of salvation's process. God warned us to measure the words and actions of those who lead us—by using His Gospel as our guide for the evaluation. Christ's most scathing denunciations, for instance, involved some of the ministers at the top of the ecclesiastical pyramid—those who love wrapping themselves in pomp and show and taking the honored seats at feasts and who thirst to be called by titles. We still have such people with us—they exist salt and peppered here and there in every church. Jesus declared that the pyramid, for the most part, is upside down. The base is at the top and the pinnacle of holiness at the bottom. *"Many who are first will be last, and the last, first."* (Mt.19:30). This shows that the hierarchy of heaven is upside down. It is just the reverse of the one we now see on earth. *"For what is thought highly of by men is loathsome in the sight of God."* (Lk.16:15). This is why we see the kind of behavior on earth that we do. With everything upside down, God's world is just the opposite of ours. As a result, the strength of God's Church is at the bottom, not the top. This means that the vultures fly up while the most holy, like gold, usually settle to the bottom. The Old Testament says that *"Where goods abound, parasites abound"* (Ecc.5:10). Jesus said it this way, *"Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather."* (Lk.17:37). Wherever there are people giving away all they own to follow Jesus, the same place will abound with scavengers trying to get their hands on the discarded wealth. Jesus has heavily warned us about those who ride around in limousines and strut about at the top of the church in their gold jewelry and fine garments making all the traditions. Because God keeps the Law he said that *we* must honor it as well. This is why he told us to obey the ministers who preach about Christ (Mt.23:3). Obey them, but do not copy their behavior: *"For I tell you, if your virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven."* (Mt.5:20). This shows that we cannot please God simply by climbing

to the top of the church, because it is the last seat that carries the higher authority: *"Anyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and anyone who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Mt.23:11-12). Jesus underscored this again in one of His parables. He said that the holy man who went into church praising God for his own cleanliness and virtue in the eyes of heaven, was sent away unforgiven while the unclean sinner who sat at the back begging for forgiveness received the full sanctification of God (Lk.18:9-14). This parable shows that the mechanisms in our churches which reaffirm repentance and contrition are very important to our ultimate sanctification. Praise, alone was not enough for the man in Christ's story and it is not enough for us, either. This is why we must always measure what we hear by the words of Christ. *"Keep your eyes open, and be on your guard against the yeast (teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees"* (Mt.16:6).

Jesus came to change our behavior, not our theology. That is why he told the parable about the Good Samaritan. The Jews hated the Samaritans, not just because they were Assyrian foreigners who had been transplanted into Palestine, but even more because they had corrupted the Bible's Hebrew worship, borrowing pieces of it to dress up their own pagan idols and rituals (2 Kings 17:24 & 41). Attaching Jewish liturgy to pagan idols was unthinkable blasphemy. It was viewed as calamitous by the priests and rabbis of Jerusalem. In fact, in their opinion it made the Samaritans more unclean and more unfit for God than any other pagan people in the entire world. But God did not share this view. Despite their obvious and flagrant corruption of official theology, Jesus made the 'good Samaritan' the highest example of Christian morality on earth (Lk.10:30-37). This was not by accident either. He knew exactly how badly the Samaritans had desecrated Hebrew Law when He issued His directive. In making this statement, then, Jesus showed that it is not our relationship with a particular church or with the Law, or even with the Bible which saves us or ruins us as far as eternal life is concerned. It is only our relationship with Jesus and his Gospel which will determine our fate before God. Jesus could just as easily have termed his parable, 'the good Mormon' or even 'the good Jehovah's Witness'. It would still have come out the same. Jesus said that anyone who obeys His words will live forever. One of the Apostles said to Him, *"Master, we saw a man who is not one of us casting out devils in your name; and because he was not one of us we tried to stop him". But Jesus said, "You must not stop him: no one who works a miracle in my name is likely to speak evil of me. Anyone who is not against us is for us."* (Mark 9:38-40). These words apply to every person who comes to Jesus no matter which path he takes. Jesus said, *"Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice will never die"* (Jn.8:51). This statement by God is so encompassing that it is breathtaking! It applies to all Christians—to Catholics, Greeks and

Protestants alike. When the Antichrist comes, he will be *attacking* the Gospel, not preaching it. *"They burned down every shrine of God in the country."* (Ps.74:8).

It is important to remember that there are *twelve* tribes in the House of Israel, not just one. The spiritual blindness which came upon the Jews, descended on them primarily because they had rejected the idea that the other eleven tribes of Israel still had meaning to God. In an attempt to usurp God's Promise for themselves, they severed the bonds which tied them to their other relatives in the family of Jacob (Israel) and so a divine pall descended over them that made them blind to the message of Christ. They were unable to see God's other children (their own lost brothers and sisters in Jacob) because they didn't want to see them. It is the same with us, the rest of Israel. If we reject the other tribes as the Jews did—if we reject those whose faith in Jesus is different from our own—the same blindness will happen to us. Paul said that every person who believes in Jesus must be seen as a true part of Jesus who has expanded himself to reach everyone God intends to save. *"Anybody who is convinced that he belongs to Christ must go on to reflect that we all belong to Christ no less than he does."* (2 Cor.10:7). If God restricted Himself only to Mormons or to Seventh Day Adventists or to Jehovah's Witnesses, for instance (as those theologies often imply), only a fraction of Christianity would be saved and *billions* of Christians (over 99%!) would be lost. Not because of a lack of righteousness, but because of the Law—simply because they were in the wrong theology—the wrong Law. Jesus freed us from the Law by bringing us to faith. Perfection of faith makes a person like Christ, while perfection of theology only creates Pharisees. Jesus is now our master, not theology. Anyone who sincerely tries to obey the Gospel will not be turned away. When the Bible says that God has no favorites (Rom.2:10-11), it means just that. God does not have a favorite church and He does not have a favorite Christian. He does not hate one and prefer another. Everyone who tries to live their life in the Gospel of Christ is acceptable to Him. Babylon, therefore, is not a Christian church as Satan would have some of us believe. Babylon is this perverse secular world. *"You must not love this passing world or anything that is in the world. The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world, because nothing the world has to offer—the sensual body, the lustful eye, pride in possessions—could ever come from the Father but only from the world; and the world, with all it craves for, is coming to an end; but anyone who does the will of God remains forever."* (1 Jn.2:15-17).

There are thousands of different denominations of Christian churches in this world, yet Paul said that there are no divisions in Jesus Christ and for this reason, all the theological differences that we see on this planet now as a result of the scattering will disappear when the

Lord returns in His glory. These divisions were created by men, not by God. Jesus came to unite us. It is our own nature that holds onto the scattering. When God sent Christ, He removed all the barriers that had once stood between us and divine reconciliation. It is man who creates and holds onto all these barriers, not God. Some ministers, for instance, teach that babies should not be baptised. Others insist that a person go to school—sometimes for a year—before the church will agree to wash them in the blood of Christ. God did not teach such things. It is men who teach them. Man sets up all the barriers which block our way to God. The Holy Spirit is allowed to enter the new convert instantly as soon as the person asks to receive Him, but baptism of water is withheld until the recipient is made theologically eligible. In this way the ministers have made their own water more important and harder to get than the Spirit of God. This is why Jesus told the ministers, *"You bind heavy burdens on the people...and for the sake of your own traditions, you make God's word null and void."* (Mt.15). Jesus was talking to them about all the traditions which they set up to promote their own importance and to serve as a platform for their own views. He was telling these ministers that once they get some theological idea in their heads, down come the words of Jesus Christ to make room for it—creating gaps in the Gospel and putting up barriers between the people and God. God, however, set up no barriers between mankind and Jesus Christ—just the opposite, He tore all of these barriers down. He has proved this by offering identical salvation in every church regardless of the legal rules and regulations each of them have imposed. Lutherans, Baptists, Catholics, Greeks, fundamentalists, Episcopalians, Evangelicals, Jehovah's Witnesses. They are all saved in the same way, and by the same Jesus Christ. The baby receives the same grace through baptism as the knowledgeable adult, and the one who is baptised instantly, the same grace as the one who has to wait until the minister is ready.

29

Atonement and Grace

"The reason why those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned, is that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death."
Rom.8:1-2

The atonement Christ offered has a biblical structure which can be seen mirrored in the events of the Hebrew Passover. Because of this, the circumstances of the Passover must be seen as scriptural prophecy with Jesus representing the fulfillment of that prophecy. We have already noted that the Old Testament does not stand alone or isolated from the Good News of Christ. That is because everything in it was made for the appearance of Jesus. We can see now that the Torah foresaw Jesus, forming in its pages templates of events and circumstances that were soon to come to pass. The stories and descriptions chronicled by scripture are symbolic likenesses of divine truths whose meanings were later revealed clearly to the world in the words of the Gospel. Jesus brought the atonement and grace the world had longed for, and He brought it within the specifications set down by the Bible centuries before He was born. The Old Testament is the template that houses these specifications. Jesus made it clear that God demanded that the Church be built perfectly on that template. This template is the real 'code of the Bible'. Not irrelevant trivia like Marilyn Monroe or JFK in spurious encryptions or quatrains. Simply the Lord and the salvation He brought to the world in the name of God, a salvation built on the framework of Old Testament prophecy. It was no accident that Jesus was crucified during Passover (the holiday that celebrated Israel's escape from Egypt). For in the process of His resurrection from that crucifixion, He created Easter, the flight of a much larger Israel out of a far greater captivity to Babylon. When we think of the word "Passover" we normally think only of the Israelites leaving Egypt. Yet, there are three parts to that passover and each one of them is also called "passover". First there was the 'passover' of the Israelites by the Angel of Death when he was sent to Egypt by God to kill all first-born in the land whose houses were not marked in the blood of the paschal lamb. Second, the flight of the Israelites out of Egypt across the Reed Sea is also called 'passover'. Finally, a third 'passover' occurred when the wandering tribes traversed

the desert for forty years, seeking the refuge of a land that God had promised to them. We will examine these three parts in a moment. First, we need to briefly explain how the flight out of Egypt relates to atonement. The key, of course, is the mark of the blood of the paschal lamb. In Christ we understand that anointing as baptism. Scripture shows that baptism comes to us in three parts. John the baptist told his followers, *"I baptise you with water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am...he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* (Mt.3:11). Our escape out of Babylon, measured in these three baptisms, follows, part for part, the template of the Israelite flight out of Egypt in its three 'passovers'. The conclusion is obvious. Atonement is a process, not just an instant. In the early days of Christianity, church leaders saw no difference between baptism and salvation. They felt that baptism imparted a perfection that a person had to maintain rigidly throughout life. One slip or fall after baptism was seen as fatal. Later as church leaders came to grips with the reality of human behavior, and more important, increasingly aware of the Holy Spirit's true intentions, they became more lenient in their approach. A primary reason for this is that many Christians had begun putting off being baptised until old age—until they were on their death-bed—so that they could be certain that they could be made perfect at the last possible minute, minimizing, they thought, the risk of stumbling and losing their chance at heaven. Church officials came to realize through such behavior that baptism was just one part of a larger atonement picture.

The Hebrew flight from Egypt prefigured the structure of God's atonement process because it foreshadowed the exodus of God's people out of Satan's world and their journey to the kingdom of heaven. We saw that the first 'passover' occurred in Egypt when the Israelites painted the door-stops of their houses with the blood of the paschal lamb (Exodus 12:1-14). Since the Avenging Angel was sent to kill all of the first-born children in Egypt (all first-born children, not just Egyptian children), the blood of the lamb signaled which houses were to be 'passed over' and the children spared. This marking of the house with the blood of the Paschal Lamb formed the template in the Law of Moses for baptism in Christ. Like the mark of blood at the time of Moses, baptism keeps away the destruction of the Avenger. *"Wait before you do any damage...until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."* (Rv.7:3). *"...kill and exterminate them all. But do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead."* (Ez.9:6). While we are touched in water in a physical baptism, the 'mark' which corresponds to the true blood of Christ is spiritual. It is a mark of forgiveness that has cleansed our soul. Therefore, it relates to the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The second stage of Israel's 'passover' occurred in the Old Testament when God parted the waters of the Sea of Reeds and the Israelites 'passed over' the seabed out of Egypt. Like the

first passover (that of the angel of death), this aspect of the Exodus also formed a template for atonement in Christ. Peter described God's salvation of Noah and his family on an ark at the time of the Flood as a 'type' of the water which saves us at baptism (1 Peter 3:21). And here again in Egypt, is a rescue based on water. The Israelites passed through the walls of water, walking on prophecy's "dry land" to salvation, across the seabed. This, too, is a type of the salvation by water that God has decreed; because it fulfills the template. The third 'passover' was the forty year journey across Sinai that brought the Israelites to the Promised Land. This was a circuitous route that produced great trials for the Israelites, most of whom were constantly backsliding and continually complaining about the rigors of the journey. This journey corresponds to the baptism of fire because it constitutes a time of intense trial on a long journey to the kingdom of the Lord. The baptism of fire is the path of Christ's Gospel as we try to live it in our lives, throughout the balance of our lives on earth. Through the trials that come to us as we try to follow the commandments of Jesus in our lives we learn to choose God and reject the things of this world that once used to be our gods. It is fire because it is hard. Choosing Jesus requires real sacrifices because we have to reject many things our flesh dearly desires. Not only that but we must face the enmity of those who are antagonistic to Christ. Thus the baptism of fire comes to us in stages and continues in us, lasting our whole life long. For the Israelites coming out of Egypt, this fire was the difficult journey across the desert of Sinai, a journey made much more difficult by their persistent rebellion. A journey that should have only taken a few weeks took forty years because of their stubborn disobedience. During that time, discouraged by the hardships they faced many began to crave their prior lives. Turning back to Egypt, they cut themselves off from God's plan for them. By the power of faith, we have the protection of God's grace, like a wall that encircles us completely, to keep us safe from harm throughout our journey so that what happened to the Israelites will not happen to us. God's personal presence was with the Israelites as they departed Egypt. It guarded them as well. The Book of Exodus describes this heavenly presence as a 'pillar of cloud' (Ex.13:21-22; 14:19-20). In the salvation Christ brought, that cloud enters into each one of us personally as the Holy Spirit, the living water that flows from heaven. God's grace protects us just as it did the Israelites escaping from the might of Pharaoh's army. It enables us to stumble and not be destroyed as long as we get up and continue once again in the path of Christ. In his passover sequence, then, Moses has defined the atonement template on which God has constructed the three baptisms of Jesus Christ which complete our true salvation.

Our physical body is the house of our soul. For this reason it corresponds to the house each Israelite lived in while in Egypt. The Hebrew tribes left their Egyptian houses

forever that night in Egypt when they marked them with the blood of the lamb and followed Moses. And, by baptism, Paul taught, we die to our flesh (the house of our soul) the moment we are baptised. *"You have been taught that when we were baptised in Christ Jesus we were baptised in his death; in other words, when we were baptised, we went into the tomb with him and joined him in death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glory, we too might live a new life. If in Christ we have imitated his death, we shall also imitate him in his resurrection. We must also realize that our former selves have been crucified with him to destroy this sinful body and to free us from the slavery of sin."* (Rom.6:1-11). The water touches us with his death so that we can share his payment of the penalty of the Law in our place. This is why Jesus died on the cross. He was the perfection (God Himself in the form of flesh) demanded by the Law giving His life in payment for our sins. That payment, if we accept it (if we accept baptism—the mark of His blood on our "house"—our body) cleanses our soul so that the Holy Spirit can make His home in us—bringing us a new house to replace the one we have just left—a new body that can live forever. The avenging angel that God sent into Egypt was under orders to spare those who had painted the doorsteps of their houses with the blood of the lamb. The prophecy of Ezekiel has shown that the plague that killed all the 'first-born' in Egypt corresponds to an even greater plague destined to occur during the days of the new Covenant—this time to the whole world: *"God spoke to the man in white and told him, 'Go all through the city and mark a cross on the foreheads of all who deplore and disapprove of the filth practiced in it', and then I heard him say to the others, 'Follow the man in white through the city, and strike. Show neither pity nor mercy...kill them all. But do not touch anyone with a cross on his forehead."* (Ez. 9). Just as in Egypt, the plague that strikes the unbaptised is death itself. The death of the first-born in Egypt was preparing the world to understand the death of the first-born creation (the death of this world) that Jesus came to warn us about. We know that Jesus was telling us the truth because every scientist sees the same end—in fact, they see that the coming death will destroy even the universe one day. The only thing different between their prognostications and Christ's is the timeline. That is because the scientists are speaking about the planets and stars while Jesus is focused on mankind, whose furious stockpiling of hydrogen bombs lends credibility to the urgency He underscored.

The first-born creation is that which inhabits the earth. The second-born (or re-born) creation are those chosen to be resurrected by Christ into the kingdom of God—i.e, into the new creation. The first and second deaths relate to this. For instance, it is the death of the first-born creation that ends the world. The death of the first-born is the death of the flesh. We can rise out of that. The second death, however, is spiritual death and it is permanent. It

is the death of the soul, and it comes to anyone who refuses to follow Christ (Mat.10:28). For those chosen by Christ to enter the kingdom of God there is no second death. Their spirit is eternal and lives forever. Everyone born into this world is a part of the first-born creation, i.e., the flesh-born creation. Death comes to the first-born in about 70 years—a date attested to by prophecy. The kingdom of heaven that Jesus is calling us to journey to is the second creation (a spiritual creation) and to enter it we must be born-again a second time into a body that will live forever. That is why our flesh dies in baptism and is replaced by the Holy Spirit, so that we can shed our worldly body and be clothed in the garment of the kingdom of heaven—an eternal body that cannot ever die.

Baptism by water starts the atonement process, but by itself, is not enough for eternal life. We can see this as well in the 'Exodus' template. Even though the Israelites all marked their houses with the blood of the pascal lamb, not every tribal member who left Egypt survived to enter the Promised Land. *"Even though they ate from the rock that was Christ and even though they drank from the rock that was Christ, their corpses littered the desert because they failed to please God."* (1 Cor.10:8). Paul's words show that there is more to salvation than baptism—more to it even than communion. The blood of the lamb did not insure that the Israelites in Egypt would get to the 'Promised Land'; only that they would be safe to make the journey towards it. Living in Egypt, they, too, were subject to the same plagues that God sent against that country. This is why God had to protect them with His grace. There is a protection called grace that surrounds every Christian, but that shield, in and of itself, does not insure eternal life, only a safe journey. During that journey we must live in this world—a fact that puts us all in harms way. Those who return to the world's ways make themselves subject to the plagues that God's word brings against those who sin. This is exactly what we saw happen during the Exodus—all those Israelites who stumbled along the way and refused to repent. They failed to reach the Promised Land even though they had washed in the blood of the Paschal lamb and left Egypt. This shows that baptism of water alone does not insure that we will reach our destination if we do not change our ways. Grace is a variable. We can grow in it, but we can also fall out of it

In Jesus, Atonement comes from faith—a faith that leads the believer to take two essential actions—repent from sin, and convert into the righteousness of God (Mt.19:16-22; 7:21). This can be seen in the message that always preceded Christ's preaching: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand."* (Mt.4:17). *"...in his name repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all the nations..."* (Luke 24:47). In the physical world, the breath of life can occasionally be returned to a person by CPR. But, even in the

best of cases, it only returns for a little while. Like Ezra's wall, bodily cures, no matter how miraculous, soon pass away again. To keep the breath of life inside a person eternally, a 'CPR' of God is needed. That process is the atonement formula which Jesus brought down to us from heaven. The cure of God, Jesus said, is divine forgiveness. This is the cure of the soul. The real 'healing' of God is resurrection—eternal life in God's new kingdom. The cure Jesus brought was the healing of our mortally wounded soul so that we could be brought back to eternal life with God. Spiritual resuscitation in God follows the body's familiar formula but involves Christ's spiritual words. Confession, Prayer and Repentance (CPR) in Jesus Christ is the only model that works for heaven—instilling the eternal breath of life into man. *"At last I admitted to you I had sinned; no longer concealing my guilt, I said, 'I will go to the Lord and confess my fault'. And you God, you have forgiven the wrong I did, have pardoned my sin."* (Ps.32:5-6). This is the true meaning of God's call that we be baptised in a state of repentance (Mark 1:4). Following this formula, forgiveness is instantaneous and grace certain. *"Happy the man whose fault is forgiven, whose sin is blotted out..."* (Ps.32:1). The moment we vow in baptism to make a conversion to the righteousness preached by Christ, we are set completely free from the sin that locks our soul in death. Our soul is set free from our mortal body by the water and from Satan's spiritual infection by our repentance in Christ. This simple picture is complicated by the fact that we have to hold onto our conversion for life. While forgiveness is instantaneous, salvation takes more time. Paul called this 'holding on' a 'race'. Not a race of four-minute miles, but a steady long-term marathon done at a pace that can be sustained for life (Mt.13:20-21). It is during this race that Satan tries his hardest to separate us from the God we have received, so our faith must always be diligent. The essence of this diligence revolves around the Holy Spirit's instructions that we live in Christ's commandments. *"He who keeps the commandment is keeper of himself, but he who despises the word shall die."* (Pr.19:16). That means we must live in Christ and stay close to the cross from which emanates God's perpetual fountain of forgiveness through repentance. The same 'CPR' that brought us to life in Christ, keeps us alive in Christ for as long as we practice it. Because, while forgiveness itself is instantaneous, there is a process which leads to eternal life—a process in which progress is seen by God as perfection (Ps.101:2,6). This shows us an atonement process structured in a baptism of three parts (Mat.3:11).

Mortal death is not the only destruction coming. Beyond it there is a catastrophe even greater—one that will impact not just the body, but the soul as well. Every soul whose heart remains in Babylon will be destroyed. That is why the Spirit of Jesus in the scriptures implores us in so many passages to 'get away' from the world of our past. *"Go away, go*

away, leave that place, touch nothing unclean. Get out of her (Babylon), purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of God." (Is.52:11). "But...you are not to leave like fugitives. No, the Lord will go in front of you, and the God of Israel will be your rearguard." (Is.52:12). It is not enough for us to be baptised, we have to 'leave that place' and make our way to the haven of safety which God has created for us. The path that leads to this shelter is the Gospel Jesus preached. The 'Babylon' we must leave and get away from is the hedonism and violence that is the behavior of this world. And the only way we can depart from it is to leave behind the 'graven images' of gold and silver (BMW's, if you will, and the like) which Babylon craves and that formerly obsessed our own thoughts. We must stop behaving as we did before we learned of the Lord. We must live according to the commandments Jesus preached. "It is not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord', who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven." (Mt.7:21). Jesus did not take us out of the Law to leave us in anarchy. God did not leave us lawless. We have passed from a physical law into a spiritual law. "The reason why those who are in Christ Jesus are not condemned, is that the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death." (Rom.8:1-2). We live now in a higher law, having gone from one to the other in Christ. The new law is the Gospel of Jesus and the New Testament. It is a law that measures spiritual action rather than ritual action. And it pours out forgiveness through repentance and conversion. Atonement, then, is a baptism, not just of water, but of contrition and reform as well (Mt.3:11). The law of Christ requires obedience to righteousness. We must behave in Christ the way the Spirit commands, not as our unspiritual nature dictates (Rom.8:4). Jesus said, "Anyone who hears my words and puts them into practice will never die." (Jn.8:51). And again, "If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." (Mat.19:17). The fact that all Christians are bound to keep the commandments can be seen in the prophecies which foresaw their existence: "In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people...They will do no wrong, will tell no lies; and the perjured tongue will no longer be found in their mouths." (Zeph.3:12-13). Not only does God-like behavior manifest divine forgiveness, it proves it: "Her many sins must have been forgiven her or she would not have shown such great love. It is the man who has been forgiven little who shows little love." (Lk.7:47). Because perfection in God is difficult to maintain at a constant level, Jesus has provided the mercy of grace—a grace empowered by the measure we forgive others. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; because the judgements you give are the judgements you will get, and the amount you measure out is the amount you will be given." (Mt.7:1-2).

Despite the universal nature of God's action, the full impact of Christ on the world has never been fully appreciated or recognized. The rescue God created in Jesus has been largely misunderstood—each church seeing only itself in the picture. Yet the ingathering has unfolded precisely as God intended it to unfold since the very first day. It spans a period of almost two millenia, from the day of Pentecost to now. It flows from the pulpits of thousands of churches. On the grand stage of human civilization, through the preaching of these churches, untold billions of people have been able to hear God's plea that they change their behavior and convert to Christ. Jesus gave the churches a true value that allowed them to be conduits for a salvation they themselves had no power to give—a salvation where confession and contrition would be followed by real conversion. Because we tend to see salvation consummated instantaneously in a single and simultaneous event, atonement's three-fold nature is rarely perceived. But grace collapses in apostasy, just as it did for the Israelites who lost faith and turned back to Egypt during the 'passover'. Such failures prove that there is more to salvation than the instant of our conversion. When the Holy Spirit revealed that there are three baptisms in God, it confirmed this and brought to a focus the nature of atonement's true process. The three baptisms we must receive in order to be set free from Babylon not only parallel the schematic of the three 'passover's the Israelites' experienced in their flight out of Egypt, God has made them perfect by cloaking them in His grace. So instead of salvation being an instant in time, it is actually a process wrapped up in an instant called grace. If we stay in grace, the instant of our conversion is also the instant of our salvation, but if we fall from grace, we have failed the process. Stumbling is allowed, but falling out completely is not. In fact, it is for stumbling that God has emplaced mechanisms for renewal in our faith—the 'CPR' of confession, prayer and repentance that brings the 'breath' of God back into our souls when we are in danger of falling away.

A key question for Christians, then, is just what action constitutes a fall from grace as far as God is concerned. This is the question Jesus addressed both in his Gospel and in the Book of Revelation in John's letter to the seven churches. According to Jesus, the path is narrow (Mt.7:13-14). Even being 'lukewarm', he said, is deadly (Rv.3:15-16); and as far as preaching, curing the sick or taking communion in church are concerned, none are antidotes for profligate behavior (Mt.7:21-23). This shows that falling out of grace does not just mean becoming an atheist, it can also occur if we abandon the path Jesus set for us to follow—i.e., if our mercy turns cold and the world with all its graven deities (money, cars, real estate, and so on) once more become objects of our obsession. When Jesus said that those who find their lives will lose them, He proved that we cannot use our religion as a veneer to cover a life that is structured in other gods or other pursuits. Our complete existance must be

structured in God through Christ. Our whole focus must be on His words and His thoughts. *"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. The second resembles it: You must love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang the whole Law, and the Prophets also."* (Mat. 22:37-40). There are still Pharisees in God's religion—ministers whose conversion has turned to stone. Just because Jesus exposed them does not mean that they have gone away. If this can happen to ministers, it can happen to us, too. We must strive to insure that our faith remains loyal to the teaching of the Gospel so that our conversion does not end up like that. This is why we must take regular measurements of our faith, constantly comparing what we find in ourselves to the Gospel Jesus preached.

PART 8

THE CLOUDS OF APOCALYPSE

"Come near and listen, all you races, pay attention all you nations, listen, earth and all that you hold, world and all that comes from you. God is angry with all the nations, enraged with all their hordes. He has vowed them to destruction, and marked them down for slaughter."

Is.34:1-2

A Destruction has been Decreed

"A destruction has been decreed that will bring everlasting integrity." Is.10:22-23

When Jesus sounded God's message on earth he trumpeted an alarm from heaven that proclaimed a terminal destiny for this world in fire. Scientists have concluded a similar fate. But the inferno, according to Christ will come much sooner than those foreseen in scientific calculations. God sent Jesus to warn us of the immediacy of our plight and to provide an escape from its consequences. His message was urgent and clear—God had opened, for a brief time, a small window of escape from the fiery end promised by scripture. That path to safety is the word He spoke. Without this small aperture of divine rescue, there would be only one fate for everyone—global conflagration followed by eternal death. Perhaps the least understood part of the scriptures is God's decree concerning this annihilation—His decree that our planet is fated to be destroyed because of sin. Every bookstore is filled with pictures equating God with scenes of this world—with mountains, oceans, rivers and meadows filled with birds and butterflies—calendar type images portraying God in the serenity and sunshine of nature. Because of this, the goodness of God and the grandeur of this world seem to be inseparably joined, a fact which makes God's termination of it all virtually incomprehensible. Yet a closer look at the meadows and rivers and oceans shows us a nature not so serene. Birds are eating the butterflies, spiders lie in wait beneath the poppies, sharks fill the seas and disease and decay are universal. The entire world is tainted with dragon seed (Mat.13:24-30). Satan's corruption is everywhere, and it cuts to the very core of creation itself. According to Jesus, the serenity we see on the surface here is only a fragmentary glimpse of a God-world that lies somewhere else. Reaching that new world is imperative because scripture is clear, nothing can survive here long. God has set aside a day for its universal destruction. Brought on by wickedness, it is a wrath that has already begun to strike, and which will end in a cosmic holocaust greater than anything this universe has ever known. Foretelling this cataclysmic End, Jesus came as God's messenger to warn us of its imminent approach, and as God's salvation to show us how to avoid its

impact. The presence of Christ in this world, then, is an ultimate act of mercy on the part of God. Jesus, the Royal Son gave up the glory He shared with his Father and came down to the world as a mortal man in order to offer his life to save mankind from a sentence of certain death. The magnitude of His sacrifice defies comprehension, but instead of welcoming him with praise and veneration for bringing God's salvation to earth, He was mocked and scorned by the people He warned, and subjected to a miserable death. Even so, his mission of mercy and his offer of reconciliation have remained ever since, unchanged. But his message is clear. There is little time left. *"Work while you still have the day, night is coming when no one can work"* (Jn.9:4). *"The world with all it craves for is coming to an end..."* (1 Jn.2:17). We can see indications of this end almost anywhere we look now—the signs of it have grown increasingly severe. And there is more to this divine wrath than simply the end of human life on earth. We do not have to dig very deep into scripture's prophecies to discover that not just the earth is involved in this catastrophe, but a part of heaven as well. *"I looked to the earth, to see a formless waste; to the heavens, and their light had gone."* (Jer.4:23-24). The destruction will include all the stars in the sky—everything that we can see, even with telescopes. *"The heavens will vanish. You will roll them up like a cloak"* (Heb.1:11-12). *"The heavens are rolled up like a scroll and their armies all drop like leaves—like falling fig leaves...for my sword has drunk deep into the heavens..."* (Is.34:4-5).

The destruction of the world is not new. The flood is proof of that. But the event that lies ahead will make Noah's day pale by comparison. It will not only destroy the world and beyond, it will be irrevocable—when it happens there will be no coming back to this world as Noah did. More important, Jesus warned that it will be spiritual as well as physical, so that not just the body, but our soul, too, will be destroyed if we do not act according to His directions and follow His route of escape. The spiritual destruction of the soul did not happen in the past. As we saw in Chapter 3, the souls of those whose bodies perished in the destruction of Eden did not die in the flood. They remain alive to this day (1 Peter 3:18-20). All of that is destined to change. When Paul described the man who had been caught up in vision into the highest heaven (2 Cor.12:2), he revealed that there are heavens which we can see and heavens that we cannot see. While it is certain that all which we can see will perish with the earth, a part of the invisible world will also succumb to the wrath that is coming—a part that has never been destroyed in the past—the spiritual side of the lower creation. This does not mean that all of heaven will be involved in the catastrophe, of course. But it does mean that the holocaust of the last days will destroy any soul that is not wrapped in the grace of the Holy Spirit. God created everything to live. *"To be—for this he created all. Death was not God's doing, he takes no pleasure in the extinction of the living. It was the devil's envy*

that brought death into the world." (Ws.1:12-15, 2:24). That is why Jesus sent his Spirit into this world. The Holy Spirit is God's divine water from the third heaven. Because this spiritual 'Living Water' is eternally alive, when we allow it to flow into our own soul through faith, we clothe ourselves in a grace that makes death impossible. If we follow Christ's path to its end (to the end of our earthly lives), we will escape the searing catastrophe of this world's death and live forever. Those who look at this earth and universe, thinking that it all began over 15 billion years ago, and decide from this that the End which Christ predicted must still be a long way off, are being deceived. They forget to remember that God made this entire creation with a single word from His mouth: *"By the word of God the heavens were made, their whole array by the breath of his mouth...He spoke and it was created; he commanded, and there it stood."* (Ps.33:6-9). If what God created was made so instantaneously by a word from His mouth, it seems clear that He can speak another word and undo it all just as quickly. *"...when he shouts, the world disintegrates."* (Ps.46:6). Like the long predicted earthquake that never comes; suddenly it happens. The harvest stops abruptly, the gates bang shut and then it is too late to repent. *"The harvest is over, summer at an end, and we have not been saved!"* (Jer.8:20). *"...the grape harvest is over, gathering will not come again."* (Is.32:10). Jesus said that at the very end of the destruction, after the Wrath had come and gone, God would appear with all the angels of heaven to judge everyone on earth according to their deeds. (Mt.16:27).

The only ones who will survive are those who hear the commandments of God and are faithful to them (Jn.12:47-48). *"The sheep that belong to me listen to my voice; I know them and they follow me. I give them eternal life."* (Jn.10:27-28). Jesus is the only path God has provided the world to skirt the catastrophe that is coming. No one has to die in the blazing catastrophe soon to unfold. The power of escape is in Christ's words (Mt.7:21-27). Through repentance and conversion into these words, God will be able to save us completely from everything that is predicted, and bring us to everlasting life. From the very first moment that Adam and Eve fell under the corrupting influence of Satan, all mankind has existed in a state of separation from God. The word 'religion' itself bears witness to this separation. 'Religion' is a word that comes from the root 're-ligare'—'to bind back'—indicating that religion is mankind's attempt to reunite itself with God. Scripture teaches that we were being held prisoner in Satan's dungeon of darkness, trapped in a prison of sin by Satan's strength (Jer.51:44). Jesus came to rescue us from this jail of darkness by first bringing us to life on this earth in a temporary body so that we might witness His life and Gospel, and then, by copying it, escape the imprisonment and death sentence that has ensnared us. *"He has pulled me out of the horrible pit, out of the slough of the marsh, has*

settled my feet on a rock and steadied my steps." (Ps.40:2). That is why each of us is born on earth—so that we might see the escape that Christ has offered us. Our soul has been called out of one prison—the darkness of Satan's dungeon—and placed in another—this world (Babylon)—so that we can see the pathway of escape and take it while there is still time to do so. *"Sending his word and curing them, he snatched them from the Pit."* (Ps.107:20).

All the talk in scripture about the destruction of this planet is God's way of warning us that even though He has lifted us out of the darkness of Satan's dungeon into life here, this world is not our escape. When God brought the Israelites out of Egypt they found no promised land. Instead, wrapped in sin, they ended up in Babylon, a second captivity. It is the same concept here. God raised our souls out of Satan's dungeon and gave them life in this world, but only to learn that our true escape demanded obedience to the righteousness of Christ. That is why God insists that we understand this world as still a part of Satan's captivity—a place called Babylon. Jesus Christ is our escape. God has sent Jesus to *"mark a cross on the good"* (Ez.9:7), beginning at God's own sanctuary—Jerusalem (Ez.9:6), and proceeding from there to the farthest ends of the planet (Jer.25:15). Coming right behind Christ is mass destruction—the end of the world. Before that destruction comes, the entire earth will have been offered repentance and forgiveness in the mercy of Jesus Christ: *"Wait before you do any damage...until we have put the seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God."* (Rv.7:3). We can see now the Gospel of Jesus being preached to all parts of the earth, not only in person, but by radio, television and satellite. The prophecy has been fulfilled. Not only that, but all the governments of the earth that just so recently continued to embrace Christianity have now rejected Jesus out of hand. Not a single government on earth outside the Vatican now supports Jesus Christ. *"On these grounds is sentence pronounced: that though the light has come into the world, men have shown they prefer darkness to the light because their deeds were evil."* (John 3:19). Many, like the United States even refuse to allow Jesus' name or His Father's name to be mentioned in any classroom. Moreover, this government insists that God had nothing to do with creation itself and have passed Supreme Court-approved laws commanding no doctrine to the contrary be mentioned in academic circles. Very little is left to hold back the Wrath predicted. That is why, if we do not take the escape Jesus has offered us, we will be lost. We cannot go back to where we were before. Not just this world, but Hades, too, is being committed to the flames (Rv.20:14). For this reason, we only have two choices; To follow Jesus or to end up in the burning lake. *"This burning lake is the second death; and anybody whose name could not be found written in the book of life was thrown into the burning lake."* (Rv.20:15).

One might laugh at the idea of a "burning lake", but remember, every scientist on earth believes that this earth will die when the sun expands into what they call a "red giant star" so large that the earth will be swallowed up into its fiery surface. Science, then, has proved the physical counterpart to the very burning lake foreseen by scripture in its metonymic sight. There seems no escape from that burning fate for anything we can see around us—the mountains, the forests, the ocean—everything is to be committed to the flames. And those who reject the safety offered by Christ along with them.

When we were lifted up to life on this earth we found ourselves born on a battlefield. There is a huge spiritual war going on here and we are caught right in the middle of it. On one side are the armies of God and on the other, the forces of Satan. This extraordinary war is being fought inside our own bodies. It is a war for our souls. This is why the scriptures are filled with terms of combat. According to the Bible, those who choose for Christ join the war against Babylon and become soldiers for the good, fighting side by side with the angels of God. Our sword in this battle against wickedness is the word of God. The martyrs are those who have fallen. Though wounded in the flesh, they have all been raised to eternal life in the spirit because they obeyed God. Daniel has termed these fallen Christians 'saints' because they have held onto their sanctification all the way to the end of their flesh (Dn.7:18-22). Opposing these saints are the people who choose to join the battle on the side of Satan—i.e., all those who select to remain in sin. The Church has selected days which fall on the first and second of November to honor these saints. These special days come in the winter months, an allegorical time in scripture that involves the dying months of creation. Throughout history, God has consistently combined momentous circumstances in Christ with the celebrations in the Old Testament which have commemorated or predicted them. In the case of the days that honor the saints (days which are mocked by Halloween), however, no old covenant correlations exist. For this reason, we cannot use scripture to unveil any end-time model, except to document the possibility that the Holy Spirit had a particular pattern in mind when instructing the leaders of the Church to define the celebrations on the days that they did, especially since one of these days, that honoring the fallen saints, seems to have been relocated to November from a date first set in the springtime. The Old Testament model that does relate comes a few weeks earlier and commemorates the end of the harvest. It is called the 'Feast of the Tabernacles'. This is an 8-day feast celebrated during the 7th Jewish month (called Tishri). The first day of each Jewish month begins on the new moon. The first day of Tishri is the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashana)—the day of the ancient Hebrew celebration called the 'Feast of Trumpets'. It usually falls sometime in September in the Christian calendar. Between that day and the Feast of Tabernacles is a day

called Yom Kippur—the highest holy day in the House of Israel's calendar. Also called the Day of Atonement—Yom Kippur is considered to be the Day of God. It is celebrated on the 10th day of Tishri. The 8-day Feast of Tabernacles begins on the 15th of Tishri. Because of the lunar overlap between Christian and Hebrew calendars it is usually celebrated during the Christian month of October. It seems certain that the celebrations in the month of Tishri correlate with the end of the world. They relate to the end of the harvest and to ploughing. The inclusion of Yom Kippur completes the trilogy of days commemorating the three parts of the Godhead: Easter for the Son; Pentecost for the Holy Spirit; and the Day of God for the Father. These three great feast days in the Hebrew calendar were locked in place by the Torah of Moses long before any knowledge of the Son or the Holy Spirit was known. Christians celebrate two of these days, but the third—the Day of Atonement—is not celebrated, perhaps because that momentous Day of God has not yet arrived (Dan.7:9). Another possibility is that the shining light of Christ over the last 2000 years represents God's Day on earth—a day stretched into almost two by God's grace. This must be considered the Day of Atonement as well, because it is the time offered by God when men can repent and be saved from their sins. This Day of God on earth will culminate in the day described in the Book of Daniel (Dn.7:9-14), when God takes His place on a throne above the city of Jerusalem and the Judgment of the world begins. Just before winter, in the dying hours of daylight, the 'October 31st, halloween night celebration that passes the following morning into the saints day celebration (November 1st) highlights an intensely pagan 'night' with all its revelry and spectre of death, and greater participation, immediately followed by a 'daylight' filled with rich reward for the saints of God in their ultimate victory over Satan. This 'time of tribulation' (night of Satan) followed by victory occurs at the cusp of 'wintertime', after the harvest and ploughing celebrations of Tishri have ended. All the darkness, mayhem and mass death that Satan's night is able to produce on this earth will be followed by glorious resurrection for those who remain true to the holiness of their new lives in Christ.

Marking a cross on the good, Jesus brought his sword to Babylon, slicing the community of man into two parts. *"Did you not split Rahab in two, and pierce the Dragon through?"* (Is.51:9). Isaiah's reference to Rahab concerns the prostitute—Babylon. The name plays on the harlot in Jericho who hid the messengers of the Lord at the time of Joshua (Josh. 2:1-24). With his word, Jesus not only killed Satan, the dragon of Babylon, but he split Rahab (Babylon itself) into two parts with his Gospel (Is.51:9)—drawing the Church out of it and leaving what remains behind. *"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth: it is not peace I have come to bring, but a sword. For I have come to set a man*

against his father, a daughter against her mother..." so that "a man's enemies will be those of his own household." (Mt.10:34-36). The Jerusalem that was rescued is that part of Babylon which hid the messengers of God in their heart—and thus imitated the action of Rahab at the time of Joshua. Scripture says that because Rahab did this—because she took the messengers of God into her house—her life and the lives of all those in her house were spared (Joshua 6:17-25). It is the same with Babylon. Those in Babylon who take the true messengers of God—the Holy Spirit and the word of Jesus Christ—into their hearts and make a home for them there will be rescued from the disaster that lies ahead.

31

At Harvest's End

"As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes." Mt.24:37-40

"The Day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then with a roar the sky will vanish, the elements will catch fire and fall apart, the earth and all that it contains will be burnt up." (2 Peter 3:10). *"So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house."* (Mt.24:42-44). It is written in the Book of Revelation that God's Day will be preceded by seven trumpet blasts (Rv. 8-11). Between the sixth and seventh of these trumpets one of heaven's most powerful angels will come down onto the earth and read from a scroll in words so loud that the sound of his voice will be like a lion roaring (Rv.10:1-3). Immediately after this happens, a divine thunder will peal across the earth seven times, foretelling all that is to come. This symbolic imagery, inspired by the Holy Spirit, comes to us through visions of the Apostle John. While he was in prison on the Isle of Patmos, John was briefly lifted up by the Spirit into heaven to see the events of the Christian future. Just as the End was about to occur in his vision, there came the blare of six horns and then, a mysterious thunder. Of this, John wrote: *"At this, seven claps of thunder made themselves heard and when the seven thunderclaps had spoken, I was preparing to write, when I heard a voice from heaven say to me, 'Keep the words of the seven thunderclaps secret and do not write them down"* (Rev.10:4). It is not know whether these words were made secret forever, or whether the Father sealed them until their own time and they will be made known in the days to come,. Since God always reveals His plans in advance through His prophets, these seven rolls of heavenly thunder echoing across the land may well be the warning voices of those who are destined to announce to the people of the

world the events of the tribulation just before they occur. It seems likely that the seven thunderclaps are the words of the seven prophets assigned to reveal on earth the last secrets hidden in the scriptures. Associated with the fire and brimstone of the last days, these are messages no one wants to hear, but which will rumble across the earth at God's command—presaging the troubles to come, like the peals of thunder which announce the coming of a great storm. These thunderclaps will sound the final warnings concerning heaven's approaching fury. Each clap of thunder will grow louder than its predecessor, signalling the steady advance of the divine tempest. Standing amid the trumpeters, and echoing the thunder of heaven, will appear those God has selected to broadcast the Wrath's approach. One will sound like Billy Sunday and another like Billy Graham. One by one they will come—all those God has appointed to stand guard at the wall and herald the coming Dawn. Most of the warnings from God's last-day sentinel's will be ignored, and all will be ridiculed. Immediately after the seven prophets have concluded their messages, the final trumpet will sound and the world will be destroyed (Rv.10:7, 11:14-19). In John's vision, right after the seventh and last thunder sounded, the voice of the angel boomed out, "*The time of waiting is over...*" (Rv.10:7). Abruptly God's secret intention was fulfilled and the Son of Man came to His coronation. Seven, as we have seen, is a symbolic number in the Bible—a number which stands for fulfillment and completion. In this respect, the seven thunderclaps seem to relate to the final completion of Christian prophecy on earth. More than seven will appear—and certainly many others who will be false (Mat.24:11). But the faithful, having been forewarned, will know the difference between them. Fulfilling the vision of Daniel, the disclosures of those that are true will "*set the seal on vision and prophecy*" (Dn.9:24). Their announcements have already begun to reverberate across the earth. It is not to terrify mankind that God wants these messages broadcast, but in order that those who are asleep might awaken and repent.

Since this century's cannonade of doomsaying has coincided with an amplified understanding of the divinely sealed Book of Daniel, we must conclude that the moment of God's return is not far away. As we have seen, the Holy Spirit personally sealed Daniel's words, and ordered that their meaning be revealed only when the End itself had arrived, so their abrupt clarity in our time is a clear indication that the days surrounding God's Judgment are looming just beyond a near horizon. Jerusalem has been rebuilt; the Jews have returned to Palestine and the Gospel now covers the earth by satellite. There are wars and rumors of wars and cosmic signs of disaster in the heavens. The Middle East is stirring. Everything is coalescing now to show that the ominous sounds surrounding the circumstances of the last hundred years are real. All around us have appeared the darkening clouds of a world in

desperate trouble—this century's unmistakable signs of planetary disaster—signs which have given us certain warning that the final trumpet of God is now about to blare in the cosmos.

Again, the key to all the signs is warfare. Satan is a being of violence and the seven plagues will all come wrapped in his image. Having tumbled the Church from its exalted post, a commanding position it has held on earth for almost 1700 years, the devils troops are now poised to assault the people encamped inside. Daniel and John have both warned that the last days will be sandwiched in armies—armies full of destruction and spreading across the entire earth. The Bible clearly defines the days immediately adjacent to Christ's return as a time of global ruin—a time of havoc unlike anything that the world has ever witnessed before (Rev.17:16-17). While Armageddon itself localizes on the mountains and plains of Israel, the warfare preceding this gathering—the warfare precipitating this gathering—will sweep across all lands and involve every person on earth. *"When that time comes no grown man will know peace, for many troubles will inflict all the inhabitants of the country."* (2 Chron.15:5). The prophet Joel said that the forces of brutality in the last days will involve a *"vast and mighty host, such as there never has been before, such as will never be again."* He added, *"The country is like a garden of Eden ahead of them and a desert waste behind them...a mighty army dressed in battle array."* (Joel 2:2-4). Scripture terms this horde of desolaters the instruments of God's wrath. In their march across the world they will bring human civilization on earth to a bloody and fiery end. All this terror has been held back by the treaty of peace which Jesus made with the world at the hill of Calvary. All these armies lie in wait just outside the wall of Christ's protection. As the people abandon that protection, they tear down the barrier that blocks the wrath. *"The gates of your country stand wide open to the foe."* (Nahum 3:13). Having rejected the inner power of the Gospel, the people of our world have rent gaping holes in God's protective screen. That is why the current century has come to us wrapped in so much violence and bloodshed. The first four trumpet blasts have already occurred (Rv.8:6-13). So, too, apparently, has the fifth (Rv.9:1-3). And now the kings of the East are stirring—a sure sign that the sixth is about to be blown as well (Rv.9:13-15). The fire and blood of world warfare, the wormwood of false prophecy and the darkness associated with the Gospel's rejection in the east have initiated processes on earth that are leading us to the very fields of Armageddon. Accompanying these processes, and driving them is Satan's return from the Abyss. The seven voices then, each in their own way, are rising up to proclaim the coming of war—the last war. There is little else on the horizon for those who have forsaken the ways of God. The world has left the path of Christ and has begun to spin out of control. Soon all the signs of nature will mirror this change of direction and the consequences it promises. Ezekiel warned that the false prophets would

proclaim peace, but there would be no peace (Ez.13:16). And there has been none. Nor will there ever be again. World War I ended only to bring the madness of Adolph Hitler. World War II ended only to bring the Soviets and the specter of nuclear holocaust. Now the Soviets are gone and the next terror has already started forming in their vacuum—an angry and violent Middle East—the people of the sixth trumpet. Caught in the middle of all this chaos will be the final remnant of God's people on earth. So where in all this, one might ask, is the rapture? If this century has begun the tribulation, who are all these that are left? This is the rapture. This is the way it will come—at the hands of the violent. Just as it always has. *"Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm...and by violence is everyone getting in."* (Mt.11:12, Lk.16:16). That is why the good will all end up in hiding. *"Go into your rooms, my people, shut your doors behind you. Hide yourselves a little while until the wrath has passed."* (Is.26:20).

Like a background drumroll beating out a counterpoint to the world's current affairs, the voices of those assigned to proclaim the final warnings of God are sounding now all across the land. Augmenting their voices, the signs of heaven continue to grow larger and more ominous. Because Jesus promised that all these portents and signs would occur, almost every Christian watches for them, some filled with anticipation and others with foreboding as they occur. *"Think of the fig tree and indeed every tree. As soon as you see them bud, you know that summer is now near. So with you when you see these signs happening: know that the kingdom of God is near. Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth."* (Lk.21:29-36). One part of this prophecy relates to the shortness of our own personal life, while the other points to the end of the planet. Not only are we living in a doomed body, but in a doomed land as well. In both cases, the Babylon we have been called to leave behind us is in its last days and exists now only so that God can rescue the last remnants of the hidden House of Israel out of it. As soon as this rescue has been completed, Babylon will pass away in a shower of fire and be replaced by God's new creation. *"...in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will lose its brightness, the stars will come falling from heaven and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory..."* (Mark 13:24-26). This is the future for all who refuse to repent—a future that the Bible has clearly announced in advance. Yet that announcement continues to be clouded by false expectation. When Jesus warned his disciples to *"watch yourselves or your hearts will be coarsened by debauchery,*

drunkenness and the cares of life..." (Lk.21:35), he knew that the magnetism of this world was so corrupting that it would deceive many people and cause them to stray from the truth of God which He had come to proclaim. That corruption is in the process of corroding everything around us. As the people of Christ have become more and more comfortable in this world, there has been a growing pressure in the Church to try to downplay these warnings. So despite all the signs and prophecies, the idea that the entire architecture of human civilization might suddenly be terminated in a catastrophic blast of judgement and fire is not popular today and the concept is strongly rejected by many Christians. Those who are comfortable in this world argue that its destruction in fire implies a hopelessness to life, as if all the secular things that we are building on earth and working for here have some kind of lasting meaning. Remember, Jesus said, *"Those who find their lives will lose them."* Salvation is not in this world's architecture, it is only in the word of God. There is a certain kind of comfort in the idea that the world itself continues to live even though each of us dies along the way. But this kind of thinking gives the world a greater value than the people. Just the opposite of what Christ taught. We can pretend in our own deaths that all the material things we have been toiling for are for the benefit of our children. But when the earth itself burns up, who is the heir, and what value is the inheritance? *"Lord, you yourself have proclaimed that this place will be destroyed, that no one will live here ever again, neither man nor beast, but that it will remain desolate forever."* (Jer.51:62). By seeing a world that is perpetually renewed rather than one that is about to die, mankind views contribution as the thing that counts, not conversion. We can see this most clearly in the way the world approaches art. The world says that pornography is acceptable if it serves the cause of art—as if art itself were on a higher order than the commandments of God. Thinking in this vein, the world cannot conceive of a God who would allow all this 'art treasure' to be burned up as if it were simply trash. Perhaps nothing illustrates the difference between man and God as much as this. The only thing that can last is our conversion into the righteousness of Jesus Christ. We must change the direction of our life, giving up all those pursuits that have taken us nowhere and replacing them with a lifelong journey in the footsteps of Christ. Jesus has offered us something far better than the vanishing things we treasured before we knew Him. For many, this concept is difficult to comprehend because it is so sweeping and so foreign to those who love this world. We are like the poor man who has suddenly been offered the keys to a mansion. We want to drag the cardboard box we have been living in into the mansion with us, not realizing what has happened. This is true of the body we inhabit and of the world that we now live in. True hopelessness, then, is in rejecting Jesus Christ and building up the world. The world and all of its works are coming to an end but those who follow Christ will live forever. So the only hope is that we escape, because the world itself

cannot escape. This is why Isaiah described Christ's first appearance with these words: *"A voice commands: 'Cry!' and I answered, 'What shall I cry?'—'All flesh is grass and its beauty like the wildflower's...The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of God remains forever."* (Is.40:6-8).

As the time draws near, the Bible has attested that the warning signs of destruction's final approach will increase. God intends there to be nothing vague about the 'handwriting on the wall'. He wants it to scream its message in headlines. The closer the storm comes, the louder will be the sound of those assigned to proclaim it. Those who understand God will need no translator. The message will be clear, and, for those who choose the world over Christ, chilling. *"God... rains coals of fire and brimstone on the wicked, he serves them a scorching wind to swallow down."* (Ps.11:5-6). *"The Lord God says this: the wide ramparts of Babylon will be razed to the ground, and her high gates will be burnt down. Thus the laboring of the peoples comes to nothing, the toiling of the nations ends in fire."* (Jer.51:58). God had Jeremiah throw these very words into the Euphrates river as a forewarning of the end (Jer.51:63). The final End begins at this prophetic river—at the very same place where the handwriting appeared on the wall the night before ancient Babylon was destroyed. This is where the forces of the east are being held back by God's hand, awaiting that fateful day and hour when they will be unleashed from their bounds and allowed to inflict on Babylon all the devastation scripture has decreed (Rev.9:15). This is where civilized history began, and this is where the End will begin as well. At the Euphrates river—at the very waters of Babylon where long ago the Jews sat and wept at the memory of their lost Zion (Ps.137:1-3). Once flowing out of the Garden of Eden, this river is the site of the tower of Babel where the first scattering began, and it is the precise location of the Jewish exile on which all the symbolism of the dispersion rests. Babylon is the birthplace of Abraham, and, in the distant past, the birthplace of civilization itself. God has manifested all of these major events in a single place on earth in the Middle East—in the precise location where the name 'Babylon' was first born. There are many reasons why most Christians are unsettled by the developments that are now taking place in this area. This is the gateway of Gog, the Bible's acme of pagan terrorism and violence—the man of Evil who is to come and declare open war on the Church. The gathering of the forces of the east at the banks of this river, then, is a clear part of the handwriting on the wall of the palace of Babylon. In fact, almost everything that has happened in the twentieth century seems to have been a part of this final warning: The two wars. The shaky time of peace between them. The attack on God's special people by a terrifying world leader. The confrontation between east and west, with the fate of civilization hanging in the balance. The signs in the sun and moon and stars—

intensified by our growing knowledge of exploding suns and galaxies, black holes, antimatter, dying stars, radiation, cometary debris and asteroids hurtling aimlessly at incomprehensible speeds through space, smashing catastrophically into anything that floats in their way. Even the fire from heaven which terminates the second war must be included in these signs. After watching that line of asteroids smash into Jupiter, who could ignore such cosmic blasts? There is an uncanny similarity between the descriptions of the final days prophesied in scripture and the major events and discoveries of the last hundred years. This astonishing century began with the kind of signs the Bible has long predicted for the end of the world. In 1906, the city of San Francisco was jolted and burned to the ground by an enormous earthquake. Two years later a great comet lit up Europe like daylight as it blasted into oblivion a thousand square miles of forest in Russia. Two years after that, the world passed through the tail of Halley's comet—an event which filled many with terror, a terror intensified by countless stories in the world's newspapers proclaiming that the tail of this huge comet was filled with poison gas and would kill everyone on earth. Preachers rose up everywhere proclaiming the end of the world. With prophetic events cascading around them, and preachers promising the worst, thousands sold their homes and headed for the hills in preparation for their meeting with with Lord. But the meeting wasn't that soon. First was to come a kind of allegory of the last days. History has recapitulated prophecy in a thematic way in our time, in events that appear to parallel the descriptions John has given us: The two wars. The shakey time of peace between them. Why? The intent of the Holy Spirit is to make these themes familiar to us—to confirm the character of the times we are now entering. God has structured images using historical events that are visible to everyone—as a symbolic handwriting that the whole world can see and understand. It is God's way of giving the world advance warning of what is about to follow: the termination of the shakey peace Christ established on earth and the real second war that will bring that peace offer to an end. It is God's way of showing the world that all this is merely a prelude to what is yet to come. That is why the entire world in this century has been awakened to the real possibility of a sudden end to planetary life. God always sends His warnings beforehand. *"No more does the Lord Yahweh do anything without revealing his plans to his servants the prophets."* (Amos 3:7). And no one today can deny that these messages have not been sent or heard. Few of these prophecies have come from the lips of obscure and bearded messengers wearing robes and sandals. The most dynamic have appeared in the blaring headlines of the world's newspapers.

The relationship of these events to those of the prophecies brings us to an inevitable conclusion: it not only can happen, it has already started. We can see the end coming at us

now from all sides wherever we look. Even things that once were beautiful have now become instruments of the terror. *"They will be struck with fear, where before there was no dread."* (Ps.14:5). The ozone layer which protects us from the radiation of outer space is being dissolved by chemicals in the atmosphere. The gentle rains have turned to acid and are killing the world's forests and vegetation. Even the bees have turned violent. Global warming is increasing. Radiation and deadly toxins are leaking into the rivers and groundwater. The oceans are dying from pollution and thousands of animal species are disappearing from the continents. As the glaciers melt from the increasing heat, raising the world's oceans to levels not seen in millions of years, great floods, intense hurricanes and deadly tidal surges are now inevitable. Vast populations all across the planet are about to be displaced. It is in our nature to understand only things that are familiar to us. It is this familiarity—made manifest by the similarity between this century's events and the descriptions in the ancient prophecies—that have produced a growing apprehension in Christians all over the world that the promised time is now at hand. By repeating these themes in a format that can be easily seen and understood by everyone on earth, the Holy Spirit is making familiar what is hidden in the prophecies, helping to bring them into focus, not just in our minds, but in the minds of the whole world as a clear warning that the time is drawing close. *"Babylon, that pearl of kingdoms...shall be overthrown by God...It's time is almost up, its days will not last long."* (Is.13:19-22). *"The world with all it craves for is coming to an end; but anyone who does the will of God remains forever."* (1-John 2:17).

32

A Last Call to Faith

"I am the resurrection. If anyone believes in me, even though he dies he will live, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." Jn.11:25-26

Many still find it difficult to see the gates of heaven closing and God's offer of reconciliation drawing to a close. But the prophets have sounded their warning. History, they say, is preparing its final moments even as we speak. The secret rebellion is a secret no more (2 Thes.23:7). The Great Revolt is unfolding all around us. And as it envelopes the world in its crushing embrace, its reign of violence will smash Babylon's gateway to heaven, shuttering forever the portals Jesus opened for our escape. Those doorways will never reopen again. (Is.24:12). Despite its nearness, because we live for such a short time, many of us will mercifully not see the final terrors described by scripture. But even those fortunate enough to escape the worst of the tribulation must endure, just as our ancestors did, a true corollary of these terminal events. Jesus said that the end of the world *"will come down on every living man on the face of the earth."* (Lk.21:35). His words confirm, then, that the end of the world actually began when Jesus initiated His preaching in Galilee. This is why the apostles have termed the entire period of Christ's offer, 'the last days'. And it proves that as far as God is concerned, the last days encompass all the years between the first and second coming of Jesus. The wrath has been held back and these days exist so that everyone on earth can have time to repent of their sins and escape the coming judgement. Each of us has only the days of our own lifetime to accomplish this escape. The end of the world correlates with the day of our last breath, and this is what Jeremiah's vision—the 70 years—was designed to tell us. We have only a short time to accept the terms of peace offered to us by God through Jesus, and if we fail to make this conversion before we die, the world will end for us just as surely as if every part of Armageddon had been played out in our lives (Rev.16:15). In fact, few of us can understand even our own deaths when we are faced with its occurrence. That is why we always respond to it the same way no matter how powerful our faith had been before. In this response we silently voice the same kind of words that Jesus did: *"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"* (Ps.22:1). Yet the end of the

world has been going on in this way, seen but unseen, since the day of Pentecost. This is why everyone should be concerned about the end of the world. It is a very real event in all of our lives. If not as Armageddon, it comes in the image of landscapes with names like Forest Lawn. Billions of people on earth have already passed through such portals. The 'last days' began when Jesus walked the hills of the Holy Land, and every person who has passed away on earth since the moment He first appeared has had to enter into the circumstances He voiced. There is no difference between those deaths and the ones destined to occur under the trampling feet of the troops of Gog (Ez.38). This indicates that the final end (the tribulation preceding Armageddon) is merely the grand finale to an event that has been ongoing since the day of the crucifixion. Those of us who are alive today are no more special to God than any of our older brothers and sisters in Christ who lived and died before we came. All these visions in scripture were for them as much as for us. We need to remember our common unity with the end of the world whenever we read any of the prophecies. The mark of the beast for instance (Rev.13:15-18) is not an isolated contamination restricted only to those Christians who happen to be on earth at the time of the Rebel. It is a universal mark that has threatened all the people who have ever lived on the earth since the first days of Jesus Christ (Rev.13:8). It is a spiritual marking that is the antithesis of Christian baptism. Certainly the Rebel will introduce such a brand when he comes, but his tattoo will only be the physical manifestation of a spiritual mark that has always designated those who love this world more than God.

Since the end of the world comes down on every person during their own lifetime, our short life here completely determines how the final judgement will affect us. The Book of God is being written in our lives every minute and hour we live. From the moment that Jesus first appeared, our lives in this world have been completely integrated with God's purpose to bring each of us, in our rebellion, before the light of Christ to make a decision whether to follow Jesus or the world—whether to remain in Babylon, or to follow Jesus Christ to the Jerusalem of heaven. Once that decision has been made, and held onto, God removes us and brings those who are in line behind us up to the front to make the same decision. This means that no matter which church people have been in over the last two thousand years, Christ's work has been perfectly accomplished in their lives. Christianity, therefore, is not evolving—it is not forming itself into some perfect state or church—nor was it ever. While our whole view of salvation is an obsession with getting into or out of this or that church, God is rescuing us outside of this quest. Our call to walk in the commandments of Christ's Gospel is our only chance for eternal life. For almost two thousand years, God has been cuing up a vast world population and bringing it, one by one before Jesus to make a

decision about His offer of reconciliation. This process did not start fifteen centuries after Christ was crucified—it did not start with Joseph Smith or Martin Luther. This examination of the world by the Holy Spirit has been going on since the day of that first Pentecost, fifty-one days after Jesus was lifted up on the cross—almost two thousand years ago.

On a sunny Friday in Jerusalem almost 20 centuries ago, the sky turned suddenly dark at noon and stayed so for three hours, until the middle of the afternoon (Mark 15:33-34). We celebrate that day now and call it 'Good Friday' every time it reappears on the calendar. Many ponder why we should call a day so horrendous as the crucifixion of Jesus 'good'? It is called that because our chance for salvation occurred the moment it happened. He died for us. He took our sins on Himself so that the penalty that condemned us to eternal death could be removed. He gave His life that day so mankind might live forever. He sacrificed His life so that we would not have to die. This was the greatest good that ever happened on earth and it is the greatest good that can ever come into our lives. That is why the symbol of the cross has such a place of honor in the Christian religion. It represents the mechanism of our salvation by God. *"...ours were the sufferings he bore, ours the sorrows he carried. But we, we thought of him as a person punished, struck by God, and brought low. Yet he was pierced through for our faults, crushed for our sins. On him lies a punishment that brings us peace, and through his wounds we are healed. (Is.53:4-5) We had all gone astray like sheep, each taking his own way, and the Lord burdened him with the sins of all of us. Harshly dealt with, he bore it humbly, he never opened his mouth, like a lamb that is led to the slaughter-house, like a sheep that is dumb before its shearers never opening its mouth. (Is.53:6-7). "By force and by law he was taken; would anyone plead his cause? Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death. They gave him a grave with the wicked, a tomb with the rich, though he had done no wrong and there had been no perjury in his mouth. God has been pleased to to crush him with suffering. If he offers his life in atonement, he shall see his heirs, he shall have a long life and through him what God wishes will be done." (Is.53:8-10).* By turning our lives over to Jesus we can live forever because of what He did for us on that incredible Friday afternoon. He brought us reconciliation with God. That is what the word 'religion' means. 'To bind back' or 'to reconcile'. Jesus bound us back to God. He brought us redemption and salvation, taking our sins onto Himself, bringing us reconciliation with God. Because of Christ's action and purpose, Christianity is the only "religion" on earth to fulfill the meaning of that title.

It is a narrow road he marked out for us to follow, and a hard path. Yet He made the yoke easy and the burden light. All we have to do is convert our lives from the wicked

pursuits we have chased since childhood and convert into His Gospel, and obey its simple directives. We must abandon the anger, the hate and the greed and live, instead, a life of love and forgiveness. There isn't any ritual to this. Only repentance and conversion. There isn't any secret knowledge in this. There is just Christ and His Gospel of peace. There isn't any theology in this. There is simply resurrection and eternal life—escape from death. That is the miracle of Christ. He has raised us out of the clutches of death and given us all the opportunity to live forever! As soon as the entire world has been raised up by God and given an opportunity to be reconciled with Him through Jesus, His purpose for holding back the wrath from this earth will have ended. Then, suddenly, the circumstance of the Exodus will re-occur. At that critical moment, the 'Pharaoh' of this world (the beast) will begin attacking Christianity's rear-guard just as his counterpart, the Pharaoh of Egypt did at the time of Moses when his heart suddenly hardened and he led his troops after the departing House of Israel as they crossed the Red Sea. And just as the Red Sea did then, the waters of the wrath—which have been held back by the power of God all these years—will come crashing down on his whole army and sweep them away in the earth's conclusion.

That moment will come soon. All the signs are converging. The last call to faith has been sounded. Already Babylon's ravagers are on their way. And unless they are blocked and held back by a deep and committed return to faith by a world which is abandoning faith, nothing can prevent their imminent attack. God tried to cleanse this earth, but couldn't (Jer.51:7-9). That is why God has created a new heaven and a new earth. It is because Satan has corrupted this world so completely that God cannot save it. That is why Jesus warned us about its impending destruction. He did not come to cure the world—He came to get us out of it before the judgment Day of God arrives and puts an end to it completely. *"You must not love this passing world or anything that is in the world. The love of the Father cannot be in any man who loves the world...because the world, with all it craves for, is coming to an end..."* (1 Jn.2:15-17). That End is precisely what Christ came to warn us about—the day of Judgment when the world is going to be utterly and completely destroyed. Nothing can prevent that destruction. It is just as inevitable as the waters that crashed down on Pharaoh's army. All that God can do is create an escape and hold the devastation back (in the way that He held back the two walls of water of the Red Sea for Moses and the Israelites when they fled Egypt) until everyone who wants to be rescued is rescued. He can rescue us from the Wrath, but He cannot prevent this deadly vengeance from occurring. There is a time set for that occasion and it is a moveable time, predicated on our own behavior. But it is inevitable. If we live in Christ, this wrath will have no effect on our lives; because the death that kills eternally is not the first death. As long as our soul remains alive in Christ, we will live. God

will raise us up in a new body that is imperishable. We will not have to fear the second death. The earth is doomed by wickedness. The prophets have all borne witness to this: "*On the day of the anger of God, in the fire of his jealousy, all the earth will be consumed. For he means to destroy, yes, to make an end of all the inhabitants of the earth.*" (Zeph.1:18).

Satan's corruption here is so complete that God cannot correct it—He can only come and rescue us before the world is destroyed, and take us to the place of safety that He has prepared for us—a place far away from this earth. "*After I have gone and prepared you a place, I shall return to take you with me...*" (Jn.14:3). If we obey him, he can raise us up there just as easily as he raised us up here a few decades ago. Our obedience to His command is faith. Our faithfulness is what makes His 'power to save' work in us. The reign of Christ on earth had only one meaning. That meaning was God's intent to remove us from this wicked world. Jesus did not come to set up a future utopia on this planet. The perfect reign of Christ is in heaven (Rev.20:4), not on earth. If God could cleanse the world of sin and create a global paradise here He would not have to destroy the world in the catastrophic way scripture has defined. The only utopia this world will ever know is the reign of the Church—the victory of all the churches built in His name. And even that limited triumph took a great doing by God to accomplish. For over 1700 years, God's holy Church has sheltered us from the power of Satan, hiding us behind its protective doors while it has fought the devil's forces on our behalf. This time of shelter is the age of the peace treaty of Christ—an era of protection from the Wrath made possible by Satan's incarceration in the Abyss. It was an age unique on this planet when the kings and queens who ruled the earth commanded the Gospel to be preached to all their subjects. Yet even at its zenith, with Satan locked in chains and all the people going to the houses of worship Jesus had established on earth, corruption showed the reign of the Church to be a troubled time (Dn.9:25). That corruption confirms that this world cannot be made perfect, and that now, with Satan rising from his long sleep in the Abyss and coming out to work his power of deception once again, wickedness has been returned to its plinth. The mortal wound is healing. During the days to come it will be quite evident that the reign of Jesus and His Gospel in this world has come to an end. It is only then, when it is all over, that the world will realize that Christ's millennium has come and gone. At that moment, when the gates to heaven have been shuttered in earth's darkness and the flames of brutality sweep the earth, a lament will be heard among those who are left: "*The harvest is over, summer at an end, and we have not been saved!*" (Jer.8:20).

Immorality is Satan worship. We do not need to look for devil rituals to find evil behavior. We can see this Satan worship happening now with the political and social

acceptance of rebellious and immoral behavior. These alterations reflect a sea change in the will of our society. We can see the impact of this vividly in the appeasement of the churches as their various leaderships acquiesce to the changing morality of the people. Their argument is that if they do not compromise the Gospel by making these concessions, they will not stay relevant. With an eye on public opinion then, they are redefining sin, turning wickedness into a new kind of morality and claiming that their actions are the will of God. But scripture declares that such actions are often fatal: *"There is a way that some think right, but it leads in the end to death."* (Prov.16:25). Or again, *"The priests teach whatever they please and my people love it! But when the end comes, then what will you do?"* (Jer.5:31). As scripture tells us, when the Israelites were in the desert, they became impatient for Moses to come down from the mountain. In their restiveness they rebelled and demanded of Aaron that he build them a golden calf—a sacred cow that they could worship in a journey back to Egypt. Bowing to this 'public opinion', Aaron, the brother of Moses and the high priest of the House of Israel fashioned for them the pagan idol they insisted upon (Ex.32). The Holy Spirit has used this circumstance as an illustration of the world's revolt against God. This incident defined the mentality of the rebellious people that Moses approached when he came down from the mountain with the Ten Commandments. It was to just such a people that Jesus later appeared in Palestine 2000 years ago, and the prophets say it is to a similar people He will return at the end (1 Macc.1:11-15). In their hatred for the law and discipline of Jesus this future people will command that their churches fashion for them the idols of Babylon—idols bathed in violence, wickedness, and self-will (2 Tim.3:1-5). The actions of Aaron clearly demonstrate that many of the churches will comply with the people's demands (Rev.3:1-6). We have seen indications of this already. In 1981 the Salvation Army withdrew from the World Council of Churches because that coalition of Christian churches began supporting armed guerrilla warfare in Africa. In 1991 the Greek Orthodox Church suspended relations with the National Council of Churches and the Episcopalian Church because the latter two organizations began promoting gay and lesbian priests and ministers. *"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness...For this, as stubble is prey for the flames and as straw vanishes in the fire, so their root will rot, their blossom be carried off like dust, for rejecting the Law of God Almighty, and despising the word of the Holy One of Israel."* (Is.5:20-24). The words 'caveat emptor' mean 'buyer beware'. Jesus applied a similar caveat to the churches and to its ministers, warning us all to beware the teachings of the Pharisees who lead us. *"...to those who have been corrupted and lack faith, nothing can be pure—the corruption is both in their minds and in their consciences. They claim to have knowledge of God but the things they do are nothing but a denial of him; they are outrageously rebellious and quite incapable of doing*

good." (Tit.1:15-16). It was for just this reason that Jesus denounced the ministers so intensely: *"Alas for you scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You who shut up the kingdom of heaven in men's faces, neither going in yourselves nor allowing others to go in who want to."* (Mt.23:13-36). "You will know them by their fruits", He warned. Many of the Israelites who followed Moses out of Egypt tried to return to Egypt. And this is the way it has been with Babylon as well. A great many have left Babylon only to circle back to it again. Paul warned, *"I know quite well that when I have gone, fierce wolves will invade you and will have no mercy on the flock. Even from your own ranks there will be men coming forward with a travesty of the truth on their lips to induce the disciples to follow them. So be on your guard..."* (Acts 20:29-30). Salvation is from Jesus, alone. It does not come from any other source. It does not come from any minister, prophet or church. That is why Paul said: *"Remember the maxim: 'Keep to what is written.'" (1 Cor.4:6)*. This means, 'stick to the red letters'. This maxim is the inner power of the religion we call Jesus and is the only hope our world has of avoiding the catastrophe which is now looming so ominously just across history's horizon.

Appendices

APPENDIX 1

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

- 3761 B.C. According to Jewish tradition, the date Adam & Eve were created in the Garden of Eden.
The Jewish New Year is based on this year.
(October, 1995 for instance, will be 5756 in the Jewish calendar).
Cain, Able and Seth.
The Patriarchs before the flood, including Enoch and Methuselah.
The flood destroys Eden.
Noah and the ark.
Noah's 3 sons, Japheth, Ham and Shem repopulate the earth.
The tower of Babel & the dispersion of Babylon throughout the world.
- 1850 B.C. Abraham and his family arrive in Canaan.
Hagar, Abraham's slave mistress gives birth to Ishmael.
Hagar and Ishmael banished from Abraham's camp and return to Euphrates.
Ishmael's blood descendants are the Arabs.
All Muslim's, including the Persians trace ancestry to Abraham through Ishmael as well.
In her 90's, Sarah gives birth to Issac.
Issac's wife gives birth to Esau and Jacob.
Esau sells his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of lentils.
Jacob wrestles with an angel so God changes his name to 'Israel' (A rebel allowed to survive).
Jacob (Israel) has 12 sons:
Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamine.
- 1720 B.C. Joseph, Jacob's youngest son, sold into slavery to Egypt by his brothers.
Joseph has two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.
Joseph saves his father and his 10 brothers from famine—making a home for them in Egypt.
Joseph elevated to Patriarch, removing him from the other tribes of Israel.
Jacob elevates Ephraim and Manasseh to same status as his sons, creating the 12 tribes of Israel (13 tribes, actually, but Levi was elevated to status of priesthood, leaving 12 to divide up the land).
Hebrew captivity in Egypt (500 years).
- 1250 B.C. Moses leads the exodus.
- 1210 B.C. The 12 tribes of Israel reach the Promised Land.
Joshua invades Palestine.
The time of the Judges (200 years).
The temple at Shiloh (The first Hebrew temple in the Promised Land).
- 1040 B.C. The birth of Samuel the prophet.
- 1000 B.C. David becomes king of Judah.
David defeats House of Saul, Reigns as king over all Israel.
- 950 B.C. Solomon, David's son made king of Israel.
The Temple of Solomon built in Jerusalem.
- 931 B.C. Solomon dies.
Jeroboam, an interloper & Solomon's son, Rehoboam fight for his throne.
The schism. The 12 Tribes of Israel split into 2 houses.
1. The House of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) follow Jeroboam.
2. House of Judah (the 2 southern tribes—Benjamine & Judah) follow Rehoboam.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 941 B.C. The call of Isaiah
Appearance of the prophet Micah
- 721 B.C. The House of Israel (the 10 northern tribes) are taken into captivity by Assyrian invaders, and disappear into the lands of the far North, vanishing from the world scene.
- 630 B.C. The appearance of the prophet Zephaniah
- 627 B.C. The call of the prophet Jeremiah
- 600 B.C. The prophet Habakkuk
- 598 B.C. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin taken to Babylon.
The prophets Jeremiah & Ezekiel.
Jeremiah takes the Ark of the Covenant to the Dead Sea & buries it in a cave.
- 587 B.C. On the 10th of Loos, Solomon's temple burned down by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon.
More deportations to Babylon.
- 539 B.C. The handwriting on the wall.
Cyrus the Persian conquers Babylon.
- 538 B.C. The Edict of Cyrus freeing the Jews from Babylonian captivity.
- 537 B.C. The second Jerusalem temple started. The walls rebuilt.
- 530 B.C. Daniel the Prophet in the court of the king of Babylon.
- 520 B.C. The Second Temple built (after the return from Babylon) 520-515 B.C.
The prophet Zechariah
The prophet Haggai
- 400 B.C. Ezra and Nehemiah.
- 340 B.C. The Book of Chronicles (both)
The prophet Joel
- 333 B.C. The prophet Jonah
Tobit
- 331 B.C. Alexander the Great conquers Syria and Arbela; ends the Persian empire.
- 323 B.C. Alexander the great dies in Babylon (i.e., in present-day Iraq).
- 319 B.C. Judea ruled by Egypt (the Lagides).
- 270 B.C. The Greek Bible (Septuagint) translated at Alexandria Egypt by 70 Hebrew scholars. This translation was authorized by the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem in order to give Jewish exiles a scripture in the language of their exile.
- 250 B.C. Active Hellenization of Palestine.
The Book of Esther
The Book of Ecclesiastes
- 197 B.C. Antiochus the Great conquers Jerusalem.
Judea ruled by Syria (The Seleucids).
- 189 B.C. Antiochus III (the Great) defeated at Magnesia by the western general Scipio
His son Antiochus IV Epiphanes held hostage in Rome
- 187 B.C. Antiochus the Great killed during the pillage of the temple of Elmais
Seleucus IV Philopator (son of Antiochus the Great) becomes king

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 175 B.C. Antiochus IV Epiphanes has Heliodorus assassinate his brother Seleucus IV Philopator. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (a precursor of the beast) comes to power. Jason, working with Antiochus, becomes high priest. He introduces Greek reforms into Jerusalem.
- 172 B.C. Menelaus, another Antiochus friendly priest, appointed high priest to replace Jason. Onias, High Priest of Jerusalem Temple assassinated by Menelaus.
- 167 B.C. The Great Persecution of the Jews begins.
Massacres at Jerusalem.
The Syrians build the Citadel to guard the temple.
Decree issued abolishing Jewish practices and establishing cult of Zeus in Temple.
In December, the first pagan sacrifices abominate Jewish altar.
- 166 B.C. The priest Mattathias takes refuge in Modin with his five sons (The Maccabees). This priest gives the signal for the attack. The Hassidaeans join him. Judas Maccabaeus leads the revolt after Mattathias dies.
- 164 B.C. In December, the temple purified. The feast of Lights (Hannukah) begins.
The Jewish persecution ends.
Death of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
The Book of Daniel in its present form.
- 145 B.C. The Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes appear.
- 63 B.C. Pompey of Rome conquers Jerusalem.
- 50 B.C. Ben Sirac writes the Book of Ecclesiasticus.
- 37 B.C. Herod the Great king of Judea. Appointed by Roman Senate.
- 31 B.C. Augustus becomes emperor of Rome.
- 20 B.C. Herod begins construction of massive Jewish Temple.
- 6 B.C. Birth of Jesus in Bethlehem.
Massacre of the innocents by Herod.
Joseph and Mary take Jesus to Egypt.
- 4 B.C. Herod the Great dies.
Joseph & Mary leave Egypt and take Jesus to Nazareth in Galilee & settle there.
- 6 A.D. Caesarea, a town on Mediterranean coast, made capital of Judea by the Romans. Jesus (12 years old) questions the scholars and doctors of the Law for 3 days in Jerusalem.
- 14 A.D. Augustus, emperor of Rome, dies.
- 27? A.D. John the Baptist starts his ministry.
Jesus begins his ministry.
- 30? A.D. Jesus crucified.
(The crucifixion of Jesus occurred in either 30 A.D. or 33 A.D.).
- 36 A.D. Martyrdom of Steven in Jerusalem.
- 37 A.D. Tiberius, emperor of Rome, dies; Caligula becomes emperor.
- 39 A.D. Paul in Damascus.
- 41 A.D. Caligula assassinated.
- 43 A.D. Paul and Barnabus in Antioch.
Agrippa beheads James—imprisons Peter.
- 43 A.D. Agrippa beheads James; imprisons Peter.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 48 A.D. Christian Council of Jerusalem.
Pagan converts exempt from Jewish Law practices, setting them free from the Torah.
- 50 A.D. First Gospel written down?
Paul's letter to the Thessalonians.
- 54 A. D. Nero becomes emperor.
- 57 A.D. Paul's letter to the Philipians?
First Letter to the Corinthians.
Letter to the Galatians.
Second Letter to the Corinthians.
- 58 A.D. Paul's letter to the Romans.
James made head of the Jerusalem church.
- 60 A.D. Paul's voyage as a prisoner to Rome.
- 61 A.D. Paul in prison in Rome until 63.
Letters to Colossians, Ephesians, Philemon, possibly Philipians.
Acts of the Apostles; Gospel of Luke (between 61 and 63 A.D.)
- 62 A.D. James, head of Jerusalem church stoned to death.
Succeeded by Simeon, said by some to be the son of the Virgin Mary's brother.
- 63 A.D. Paul set free. Some traditions say he made a trip to Spain.
- 64 A.D. First letter of Peter.
The Gospel of Mark?
- 65 A.D. Paul's first letter to Timothy and Possibly to Titus.
The Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the Apostles?
Scholars say that this Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles were produced as Paul's defense against a renewed attack on Christianity by Nero.
- 66 A.D. Jews defeat a Roman battalion and set up a rebel government in Jerusalem.
Major exodus of people of importance from Judea.
A great fire, said to have been let by Nero destroys most of Rome
Nero said to blame the large Christian community in Rome for the fire
Nero launches purge of Roman Christians.
- 67 A.D. Peter crucified in Rome (64 or 67).
Vespasian with 60,000 man Roman 10th Legion attacks Galilee.
Paul imprisoned in Rome.
Paul's letter to the Hebrews.
Second letter to Timothy.
Paul beheaded in Rome.
- 68 A.D. Nero dies.
- 69 A.D. Vespasian returns to Rome to become emperor in Nero's place.
Before leaving his post on the Mt. of Olives, Vespasian turns the battle of Jerusalem over to his son Titus.
- 70 A.D. Titus lays siege to Jerusalem and destroys it.
August 29 (the 10th of Loos), the temple burned and razed to the ground.
Many Jews taken into slavery.
- 73 A.D. The siege of Masada. The Jewish war ends.
Jewish Rabbi's establish Academy of Jamnia, later begin work on Hebrew Bible.
Rabbi's Begin work on Talmud, codifying Jewish oral law into writing.
Greek (Old Testament) scriptures officially renounced by Jewish Rabbi's

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 95 A.D. John exiled to Patmos.
Final draft of Book of Revelation.
- 100 A.D. John dies at Ephesus.
- 107 A.D. Simeon martyred in Jerusalem.
- 132 A.D. Second Jewish revolt.
Jewish zealot, Simeon Ben Koseba proclaimed 'Messiah' by Rabbi Akiba who renames him Bar Kokeba (Son of the Star).
- 135 A.D. Second revolt put down by Roman army, Ben Koseba killed.
Jews forbidden to enter Jerusalem. Judea ceases to exist as far as Jews are concerned.
The Temple mount in Jerusalem made into a sanctuary for Zeus and Hadrian (emperor worship).
Temple of Zeus erected near cave at Bethlehem—the birthplace of Jesus.
- 311 A.D. Eastern Roman emperor, Galerius, declares religious freedom for Christianity in his part of the empire.
- 313 A.D. Constantine issues Edict of Milan granting toleration to Christianity in western Roman empire.
Constantine becomes Christian, is the first Christian emperor.
Constantine's mother builds Christian churches in Jerusalem, including Church of Holy Sepulchre.
- 325 A.D. Council of Nicea. The doctrine of the Trinity to counter the heresy of Arius which states that Jesus, though divine, is not God's equal.
- 391 A.D. Theodosius orders all Roman pagan temples closed. He issues a proclamation declaring Christianity the official religion of the Roman empire. Paganism is outlawed. His decree terminates the Olympic Games and the temples associated with them at Mt. Olympus. From this moment on, the only god allowed anywhere in the Roman empire is the God of the Christians.
- 410 A.D. German invaders conquer Rome. They adopt Christianity.
- 476 A.D. Western Roman empire ceases to exist. Barbarian rule of Rome by German kings. Converting to Christianity, these barbarian kings extend the domain of the Church into northern Europe, dissolving the Teutonic and Celtic religions that formerly held sway there.
- 615 A.D. Persian Sassanid Empire conquers much of the Eastern Roman Empire. Their armies reach the Bosphorus (separating Turkey from Europe), before being driven back and defeated.
- 632 A.D. Mohammed dies. Muslim religion born.
- 650 A.D. Muslim Arabs sweep to victory in a great march west to destroy the 'infidels' of Christianity.
Arabs conquer Mesopotamia, Persia, Palestine, Egypt and the islands of the Mediterranean.
Arabs push west, conquer North Africa.
Arabs unable to conquer Asia Minor (Turkey).
- 711 A.D. Arabs conquer Spain, push into France.
Arabs defeated by Christian's in France at battle of Tours (732).
- 800 A.D. Germany's king Charles the Great (Charlemagne) founds the Holy Roman Empire.
- 859 A.D. Muslim Arabs conquer Sicily and invade Italy, advancing toward Rome before being pushed back.
- 1054 A.D. Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholics split into two separate churches. East and West divided.
- 1071 A.D. Seljuk Turks invade and conquer Asia Minor, renaming it Turkey.
They convert Turkey to Muslim empire, reducing territory of Greek Christian church by half.
This Islamic 'Ottoman empire' invades Europe but is driven back to Turkey after reaching Vienna.
- 1096 A.D. First Crusades begin. Christian wars against Islamic control of Jerusalem.
- 1099 A.D. Crusaders capture Jerusalem, give Christians control of the holy city.
- 1187 A.D. Saladin recaptures Jerusalem, returning city to Islamic rule.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 1291 A.D. Christians lose battle of Acre, leave entire Middle East to Muslim rule.
- 1492 A.D. Columbus discovers American continent.
- 1517 A.D. Luther, a Catholic priest, breaks from Roman Catholic church, posts 'thesis' on church door.
 Decrees salvation by faith alone. Says theological rules cannot save.
 Nullifies church sacraments.
 Declares Bible above both church and Pope as highest authority on earth.
 Decrees right of individual interpretation of scripture.
 Rejects Greek Old Testament and declares its books invalid—promotes Hebrew O.T.
- 1529 A.D. Lutheran Protest drawn up. Protestant churches born.
- 1545 A.D. Catholic Council of Trent (1545-1563) tries to reform Roman church and quell the protest to no avail.
 This Vatican Council decrees faith necessary, but retains church sacraments as essential components of the Christian religion.
- 1563 A.D. Fierce religious wars between all the burgeoning new faiths spreads throughout Europe (1563-1648).
 Colonization of America speeded by those seeking freedom from European religious turmoil.
 Democracy (an ancient Greek form of rule by the people) rediscovered.
- 1775 A.D. Constitutional Congress in America led by Thomas Jefferson restates a 'rule of Democracy' that is closely tied to Christian ethics.
- 1776 A.D. United States of America founded.
- 1830 A.D. Mormon church founded by Joseph Smith in Fayette N.Y.
- 1865 A.D. American Civil War ends.
 Slavery abolished
- 1896 A.D. Olympic Games reappear in the world. They had been absent since the Roman emperor Theodosus cancelled them and closed their associated pagan temples in 396 A.D (1500 years earlier).
- 1901 A.D. Pentecostal movement begins. Aimee Semple MacPherson; Billy Sunday; etc.
- 1903 A.D. Airplane invented - Orville & Wilbur Wright
- 1908 A.D. Comet strikes Russia. Thousands of miles of forest levelled.
- 1914 A.D. Germany leads the planet into world war (the first world war in history).
- 1917 A.D. British (Allenby) takes Jerusalem—Islamic rule in Palestine ends. Turkish Ottoman empire is destroyed.
 Balfour Treaty allows Jews to return to Holy Land ending 1800 year lockout.
 Fatima Visions in Portugal—Lucia de los Santos—5/13
 Communists sieze power in Russia—10/13.
 They set up a secular state there after overthrowing the Czar and breaking apart the former monarchy's Christian church affiliations.
 USA declares war on Germany
- 1918 A.D. Pandemic flu kills 50 milolion worldwide
 Germany defeated. World War I ends—11/1
- 1929 A.D. Mussolini secularizes Italy, evicting church from state government
 Coins phrose: "Separation of church and state".
 Forms Vatican City as symbol of separation
 Sets stage for cancellation of Constantine's edic of Milan
 Cancels Theodosus' decree in the site whre it originated.
 A great depression sweeps the world.
- 1930 A.D. Secular, totalitarian regimes rise to cover Europe and Asia (Spain, Russia, Germany, Italy, Eastern Europe, China, Japan, etc) as Christian authority is stripped from many governments.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 1933 A.D. Adolph Hitler comes to power in Germany (7th head of the beast)
- 1939 A.D. Adolph Hitler leads Germany and the world to the brink of a second world war. The 'Holocaust' begins. At least nine million Jews systematically executed by Hitler and his draconic associates over the next 6 years.
- 1941 A.D. Japan makes World War II global by attacking the U.S. at Pearl Harbor and assaulting Southeast Asia. This is the first major eastern attack on western civilization in almost a thousand years. U.S. declares war on Japan and Germany simultaneously.
- 1945 A.D. Atom Bomb invented and dropped by U.S. on two Japanese cities. The "unknown light" foreseen by Lucia of Fatima World War II and the Jewish Holocaust come to an end.
- 1947 A.D. UN votes to partition Palestine into 2 states, giving Jews a homeland for 1st time since 135 A.D. "Cold War" begins—pits Communism versus Democracy. World civilization alerted to 'doomsday clock'—with close to midnight by Bulletin of Atomic Scientists.
- 1948 A.D. Jewish nation of Israel founded by U.N. mandate—5/14.
- 1949 A.D. Jordan occupies West Bank
Egypt occupies Gaza.
Neither grant Palestine autonomy to the lands.
- 1950 A.D. Communists launch war in Korea.
- 1953 A.D. Hydrogen bomb invented. Several exploded in S.Pacific. Thousands are stockpiled in underground silo's in massive arms race with Soviet Union. The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists advances the hands on its 'doomsday clock' up to a point only 2 minutes before midnight.
- 1954 A.D. Supreme Court orders school desegregation
- 1957 A.D. Federal troops sent into Little Rock Arkansas to enforce federal desegregation order.
- 1960 A.D. World population reaches 3 billion people.
- 1963 A.D. God and prayer outlawed from U.S. school system by Supreme Court. —6/18
Martin Luther King leads freedom march to Washington D.C.—8/28
John Kennedy assassinated in Dallas Texas—11/23.
- 1964 A.D. Good Friday earthquake and tidal wave—both argest n USA history—3/27
Vietnam War essentially begins with Gulf of Tonkin incident —President Johnson
PLO formed to destroy Israel
- 1966 A.D. Drug crises sweeps America. Millions of youth begin smoking marijuana; use heroin, LSD, etc.
Vietnam War rages
- 1967 A.D. Israel's 6-day war —defeats neighboring Arab countries—Egypt, Jordan, Syria.
Israel occupies Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank and Golan Heights
Vietnam war continues to rage
- 1968 A.D. Martin Luther King assassinated—4/4
Robert Kennedy Assassinated—6/5
Vietnam war continues to rage.
Nixon replaces Johnson as president of USA—11/2
- 1969 A.D. U.S. astronauts land on the moon.
Vietnam war contines to rage
- 1972 A.D. Vietnam war rages on
Nixon/Agnew re-elected
Watergate break-in climaxes Nixon Vietnam protest paranoia

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 1973 A.D. Vietnam war ends. 50,000 U.S. dead; 153,000 wounded—1/27
U.S. Supreme Court legalizes unrestricted abortions.
Watergate hearings begin
Yom Kippur war—Israel defeats Egypt/Syria invasion of Israel—10/6
- 1974 A.D. Nixon escapes impeachment by resigning presidency. Ford president
- 1975 A.D. Communists drive USA out of Vietnam.
- 1977 A.D. Menachim Begin elected Prime Minister of Israel
Begin favors Ariel Sharon plan for building Israeli Settlements in Arab lands
Settlement constructions begin in Egypt Sinai, Gaza and Jordan's West Bank
- 1978 A.D. Israel invades South Lebanon but withdraws in favor of 6000-man U.N. force.
Pope John Paul II of Poland elected—1st non-Italian Pope—Charismatic and beloved by world.
Jimmy Carter elected USA president.
- 1979 A.D. Israel Begin & Egypt Anwar Sadat sign peace treaty brokered by Jimmy Carter, US president.
Treaty ends 30 years of warfare between Israel and Egypt
Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini captures U.S. embassy in Tehran. Takes 93 employees prisoner.
- 1980 A.D. Mt. St. Helen's explodes—5/18
Israel annexes East Jerusalem, claiming all of city & affirming it their capitol.
- 1981 A.D. Reagan inaugurated president.
Iran releases captured embassy employees
Pope shot in St. Peters square by Turkish gunman on Fatima day—5/13 (Attack opens book of Daniel)
Virgin Mary appears in Medjugorje, Yugoslavia
Israel destroys atomic reactor in Iraq—6/7
Anwar Sadat, Egyptian president, assassinated in Cairo—10/6
AIDS plague begins.
- 1982 A.D. Israel returns Sinai to Egypt
Israel removes settlers from their homes in Sinai
Ariel Sharon invades Lebanon. —6/6
Lebanese refugees massacred in Beirut—9/14. Sharon put on trial in Jerusalem—exonerated
(Habakkuk 2:16-17 prophecy)
Britain legalizes homosexuality
- 1984 A.D. U.S. Congress rejects bill to allow prayer in public schools.
- 1986 A.D. World drug crises continues to mount. 'Crack' cocaine use and urban crime become rampant.
Russian nuclear reactor explodes in Chernobyl
U.S. Space Shuttle Challenger explodes
- 1989 A.D. Violence in Israel over occupation of Gaza and West Bank
- 1990 A.D. Hubble Space Telescope launched—searches for cosmic signs in the heavens
- 1991 A.D. Gulf War near the Euphrates contemporizes the visions of Daniel.
Troops fly across world to Euphrates river without feet touching the ground.
Iraq Scud missiles hit Israel
Saddam Hussein defeated but allowed to remain in power in Iraq.
Slovenia secedes from Yugoslavia after bitter fighting.
- 1992 A.D. Soviet Union dissolves—Democracy sweeps to victory over communism.
Berlin wall comes down as E. Europe ends Cold War.
Leningrad renamed St. Petersburg. Fatima vision fulfilled.
Yitzhak Rabin elected Prime Minister of Israel —6/23
Bosnia-Herzegovina vote to secede from Yugoslavia blocked. War begins. Sarajevo destroyed in siege.
- 1993 A.D. Peace agreement signed between PLO and Israel—Rabin brokered peace.—9/13
Limited Palestinian self-rule authorized

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 1994 A.D. The 2000th Anniversary of the birth of Jesus (Possibly 1996 A.D.).
 U.S. Supreme Court outlaws the Ten Commandments from courthouse display.
 In one of the most startling 'signs from the heavens' during this century, cometary fragments the size of mountains bombard the planet Jupiter in a cosmic display of ominous portentions.
 Evangelical Christian political power makes itself heard in US—gives congress to Republicans.
 Carl Rove "contact sport" politics employed
 President Clinton brokers peace between Israel and Jordan—10/26
- 1995 A.D. NATO warplanes bomb Bosnia Serbs in attempt to quiet Balkan unrest
 U.S. Supreme Court bans school prayer
 U.N. Science Council issues apocalyptic warning over Global Warming.
 Holes in Ozone layer lead to pandemic increase of skin cancers
 Yitzhak Rabin assassinated by Israeli extremist who favors settlements in Arab lands.
- 1996 A.D. The 2000th Anniversary of the birth of Jesus (Possibly 1994 A.D.).
 The president of Russia leads Easter mass in resurrected Moscow church.
 Israel-Palestine resume fighting after Rabin assassination
 May 14 - U.S. Supreme Court rules in favor of sweeping gay rights.
 Nov. 4 - U.S. Supreme Court re-affirms decion to ban school prayer.
 Hubble Space telescope discovers over 50 billion new galaxies
 Netanyahu elected Prime Minister of Israel—5/29
 U.S. Supreme Court reaffirms ban on school prayer—11/4
- 1997 A.D. April - Comet Hale-Bop appears in dazzling celestial display.
 The U.S. Supreme Court Outlaws Religious Freedom Act,—6/25
 kills Federal measure Congress had enacted to protect the freedom of religion in America.
 U.S. Supreme Court forbids Internet Decency Act from becoming law.—6/26
- 1998 A.D. President Clinton argues against the School Prayer Ammendment.—5/30
 Right to Prayer Amendment defeated in U.S. Congress.—6/5
 Los Angeles court rules against man who purchased rental space on school billboard, saying he may not post the Ten Commandments there.
 Scores of Churches burned down across the United States
 Explicit sex talk and savage violence rampant on family TV shows and in movies.
 The U.S. House of Representatives votes to impeach President Clinton for immoral behavior in office.—12/20
 Belarus and Russia agree to unite their countries into a single state.—12/25
 Pacific Ocean's largest 'El Nino' current wreaks havoc on earth, producing sweeping fires, famine and drought in many places; huge floods in others.
 U.S. spacecraft lands on Mars
- 1999 A.D. World population tops 6 billion people.
 Coming millenium is dreaded.
 Year-2000 computer failure fears across the world dominate newspaper headlines.
 'End of the world' prophecies flourish in magazines, books and on the internet.
 Hate crimes grow - mass shootings occur in schools, church and synagouge.
 Great earthquakes in Turkey and Taiwan leave thousands dead.
 500-year flood devastates eastern U.S.A.
 Wars and rumors of war continue unabated
 include Kosovo, Indonesia, Timor, Somalia, Cechnya and Iraq.
 The year 5760 in the Jewish calendar begins. —9/10
 (241 years remain until the year 6001 -- i.e., the 7th day begins
 Muslim Albanians flee Balkan warfare
 60,000 NATO troops; 20,000 American soldiers try to quell violence
- 2000 A.D. The 2000th year in the Christian calendar.
 Vatican reveals 3rd prophecy of Fatima to world (assassination of Pope) —5/13
 Netanyahu loses landslide election to Ehud Barak. Hard liners take power in Israel —5/17
 Resurgence of Intifada in Israel. Bloody era in Israeli-Palestinian fighting begins—Sept.
 Ariel Sharon increases Israeli settlements in occupied Arab territor for security.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 2001 A.D. The 'third day' of Christ begins - i.e, the millennium of Christ's Return: Ex.19:10-11; Hos.6:2.
 Official beginning of 3rd millenium of Christianity
 Arab-Israel peace process disintegrates
 U.S. Supreme Court reaffirms ruling making 10 Commandment displays illegal on public land or property
 9/11—N.Y. Twin Towers fall in flames to Muslim terrorists from the East. Pentagon damaged.
 Handwriting on the wall of Babyon as East attacks West. (Dn.5:23-28).
 President Bush compares 9/11 to "Pearl Harbor". U.S. on war footing.
 Major business recession begins, sparked by fall of World Trade Center towers.
 Stock market crash—tech stocks collapse
- 2002 A.D. President Bush gives Christians strong vocal support, countering secular attacks
 Israel invades Paletinian towns—declares war on terrorism —3/29
 Palestinian terrorists capture Bethlehem Church of Nativity (Christ's brithplace) Turn it into fortress.
 Church of Nativity riddled with bullets and artillery shells during protracted seige.
 U.S. Supreme Court ok's Child Pornography virtual images—Rules them legal—4/16
 California Court rules U.S. 'Pledge of Allegiance' unconstitutional—must be banned.
 Congress ok's American Domestic Defense Office (Homeland Security)
 Business community rocked with major scandals and corporate fraud. Enron, etc.
 Bush declares rage—wants to invade Iraq & topple Saddam Hussein.
 U.N. votes to send inspectors back into Iraq to search for weapons of mass destruction.
 U.N. cool to U.S. intent to invade Iraq.
 Homosexual child-sex charges shroud U.S. Catholic Church in scandal
 President Bush authorizes massive U.S. troop buildup in Middle East.
 North Korea announces intent to reopen atomic reactors—December
 Four U.S. naval carrier groups (the "Ships of Kittim") ordered to Middle-East.
- 2003 A.D. Palestine West Bank nears collapse as Israeli tanks combat units, and warplanes continue war.
 North Korea threatens war against U.S.—pushes hard its nuclear agenda.
 150,000 U.S. troops ordered to Middle East—1/12
 Ariel Sharon, pro-war hard liner, elected Prime Miinister of Israel.—1/28
 U.S. space shuttle Columbia disintegrates on re-entry. Wreckage falls all over Texas.
 Western world alliance threatened with collapse over NATO-U.N. rift.
 American Pledge of Allegiance ban upheld by Circuit Court of Appeals—2/28
 U.S. invades Iraq—Second Gulf War begins—3/19
 Statue of Saddam Hussein falls—4/9
 Looters sack Baghdad.—4/14
 Christian Easter services conducted in Saddam Hussein's palace—4/20
 King of Sheshak last to drink from the cup of Jeremiah. (Jer.25:14-30)
 On aircraft carrier in San Diego, President Bush declares end to combat, but not the war.
 Combat in Iraq continues.
 U.S. Supreme Court legalizes anti-sodomy laws—declares gay behavior legal—6/26
 American Combat deaths in Iraq (149) surpass first Gulf War totals—7/18 (Dn.8:3)
 Sign of war in the sky
 Planet Mars (the war God planet) makes closest pass to earth in 60,000 years—8/27
 Israel begins to construct security fence to wall off Palestine & protect settlements
 Crosses on public lands dismantled across the United States per court orders.
 Italy orders crucifix removed from school.
 Episcopal Church ordains 1st openly gay bishop—11/2
 Explosions on sun largest ever witnessed—11/4
 Massachusetts ruling paves way for gay marriage—11/18
 U.S. combat deaths total 472—12/3
 Israeli wall through Palestine speeds toward completion—12/31
- 2004 A.D. San Francisco mayor ok's gay marriage in California in defiance of state law—thousands married-2/12
 U.S. Supreme Court bans use of public funds for education leading to religious degrees—2/27
 Crucifixion movie "Passion of Christ" sparks Anti-christ protests across the nation.
 Arab founder of Hamas assassinated in Gaza by Israel—3/21
 Gulf war insurgency begins—kidnappings, beheading and militia counterattacks begin—April
 U.S. ok's forbidden Israeli settlements in Palestine in treaty with Sharon called the "Gaza Pact".—4/14
 (On these settlements, see: Jer.42:13-18; 44:12-14)
 U.S. Army accused of torture—Abu Graib prison atrocities surface.—5/2
 Massachusetts legalizes gay marriage—5/17
 U.S. Supreme Court refuses to rule on "Pledge of Allegiance" .
 New Iraqi government established—6/28. War continues.

Appendix 1—Chronology

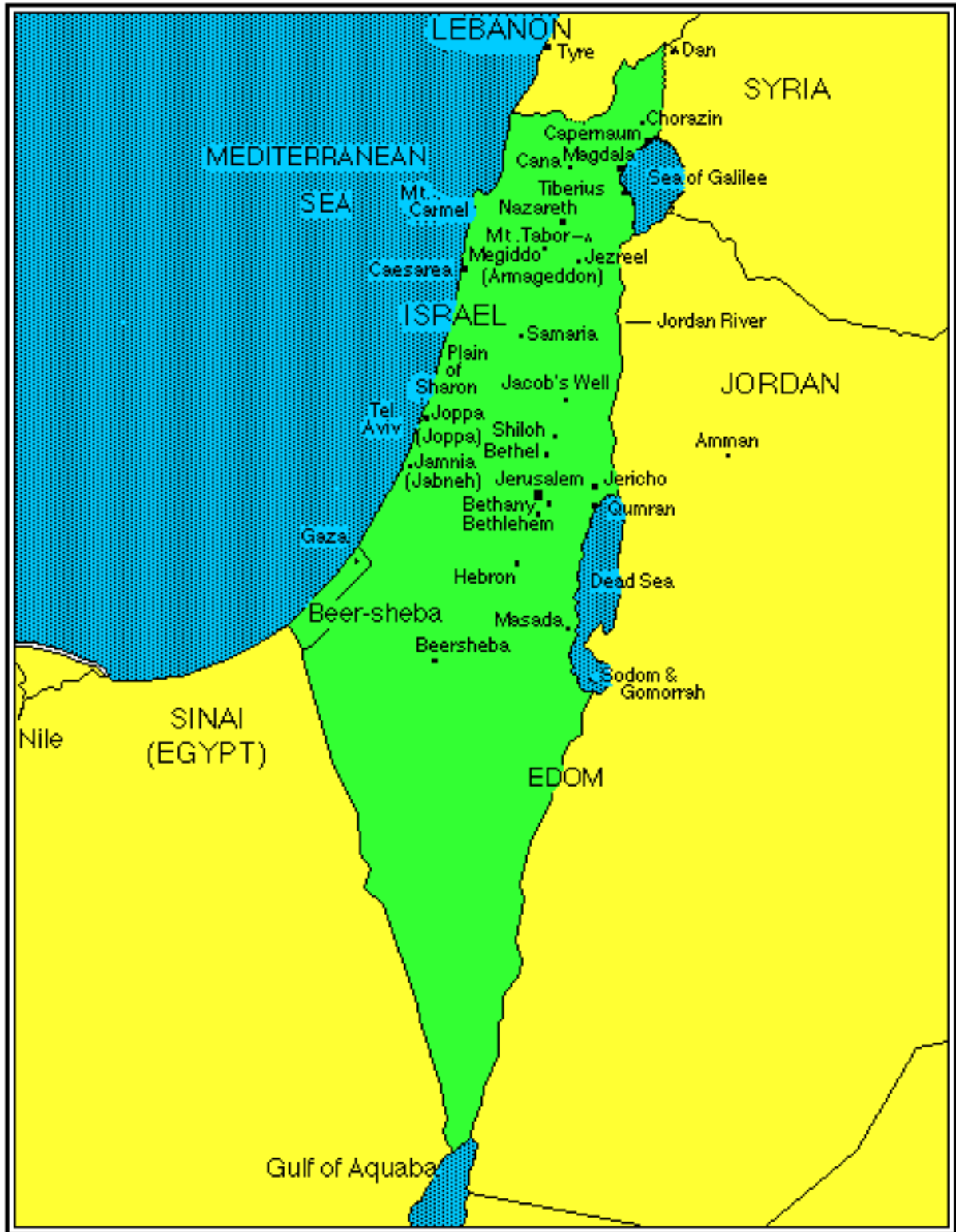
- 2004 Contd Los Angeles removes obscure cross from county seal under threat of ACLU Anti-Christ lawsuit.
 U.S. Supreme Court strikes down law prohibiting Child Pornography.—6/29
 World Court at Hague rules Israel's Wall illegal—7/9
 Muslim extremists attack Russian schoolchildren—blow up hundreds.
 Congress rejects amendment to "support God"—9/28
 Christian block helps President Bush win reelection to 2nd term—11/2
 Yassar Arafat, Palestinian leader, dies in French hospital—11/11
 Largest Tsunami in history sweeps across Indian Ocean—kills up to 300,000 people—12/26
 Second Gulf War continues—1324 Americans dead.
- 2005 A.D. Mahmoud Abbas chosen president of Palestine—1/29
 U.S. cancels search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq—1/12
 President declares "Bush Doctrine"—Democracy to rule globe—by force if necessary—1/20.
 Iraq election a success. Voter turnout exceeds 60%—1/30
 Sharon and Abbas meet in landmark summit & pledge peace & a return to 1993 Oslo Accords—2/8
 Sister Lucia of Fatima dies—2/13
 Israeli cabinet approves eviction of 8500 Jewish settlers from Gaza strip.
 Syria moves its troops out of Lebanon under pressure from West—3/8
 California judge ok's gay marriage—3/15
 Gulf War's 3rd year begins—3/19
 Pope John Paul II dies in Rome. Ceremonies last for days before world-wide TV audience.—4/2
 Pope Benedict voted to govern 1.1 billion Catholics
 U.S. Supreme Court reaffirms 10 Commandment ban except in Texas.—6/27
 Canada and Spain legalize gay marriage—June
 Israel evicts Gaza settlers—August
 Hurricane Katrina ravages New Orleans. City extinguished. Population relocated across nation.
 Tens of thousands sit on bridges for days. President Bush unaware of catastrophe for a week.
 Gulf Coast decimated. Rebuilding efforts stall as assistance & funds evaporate.
 Ban on U.S. "Pledge of Allegiance" upheld by San Francisco Court of Appeals.
 Earthquake centered in Pakistan rocks 3 nations. 80,000 dead, 3.5 million homeless.—10/18
 Iran president issues call to "Wipe Israel off map"—10/28
 Muslim teenagers riot in France, set fires across nation.
 Allstate Insurance announces 8 of the 10 largest disasters in U.S. history happened in last 4 years.
 Kansas Board of Education votes to approve "Intelligent Design"—11/8 Rule later overturned.
 White House claims torture tactics and illegal spying ok.
 Controversy over Christmas name change to "holiday"—secularization of Christmas grows.
 Pennsylvania judge bars "Intelligent Design", calling it a limited sectarian belief, not science.—12/19
 Britain (N. Ireland, Scotland, England & Wales) legalizes gay marriage.—12/19-21
 Christmas and start of Hannukah fall on same day this year. 1st time since 1959.
- 2006 A.D. Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffers massive stroke—1/4
 Iran announces intent to build nuclear weapons
 U.S. Supreme Court ok's assisted suicide in Oregon—1/17
 Terrorist group Hamas elected to control Palestine. Peace process ends abruptly.—1/26
 Bombing of Mosque in Iraq brings country to edge of civil war between Shiite and Sunni Muslims.
 Gulf War's 4th year begins—3/19
 Over 2300 American's + 200 coalition forces killed, 200,000 to 600,000 Iraqi civilian deaths
 estimated. Journalist deaths in Iraq top Vietnam total.
 Evangelical leaders meet in Washington to discuss war on Christianity in America.
 Eastern world security alliance gains 7th nation—4/25
 Iran joins Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Ubekistan, Tajikstan and Kazakhstan in mutual defense pact.
 Take-down order of San Diego Veteran cross blocked by U.S. Supreme Court pending ruling.
 California judge allows "In God We Trust" to remain on U.S. coins—cites "ceremonial deism law.—6/12
 Anglican Church in England rules against Episcopalian Church ordination of gay bishop.—6/27
 Israel attacks Palestine—jails 1/3rd of Hamas cabinet over kidnapping of soldier—6/29
 New York state's highest court rejects gay marriage.
 Israel strikes Lebanon in major assault after soldiers kidnapped at border.—full-scale war unfolds—7/12
 Cease fire between Israel & Hezbollah in Lebanon war leaves both nations in flames—8/14
 Episcopal church in Pasadena targeted by IRS for preaching against war—9/16
 Muslims riot, set fires across the world after Pope Benedict says their religion promotes violence.
 NY Times prints full-page advertisement condemning God and Christianity—9/24
 Democrats sweep both houses of congress in anti-war ticket victory.—11/7
- 2019 A.D. The 70th anniversary of the rebuilding of Israel.

Appendix 1—Chronology

- 2030 A.D. The 2000th Anniversary of the Crucifixion of Jesus. (Possibly 2033 A.D.).
The 2000th Anniversary of the first Pentecost.
- 2070 A.D. The 2000th Anniversary of the destruction of Herod's Temple. The 2000th anniversary of the Jewish dispersion to Rome (the diaspora).
- 2240 A.D. At the beginning of the 7th month in the Hebrew calendar (in September).
The dawn of the 7th Millennium in the Jewish calendar -- the year 6001. (creation's 7th day begins).

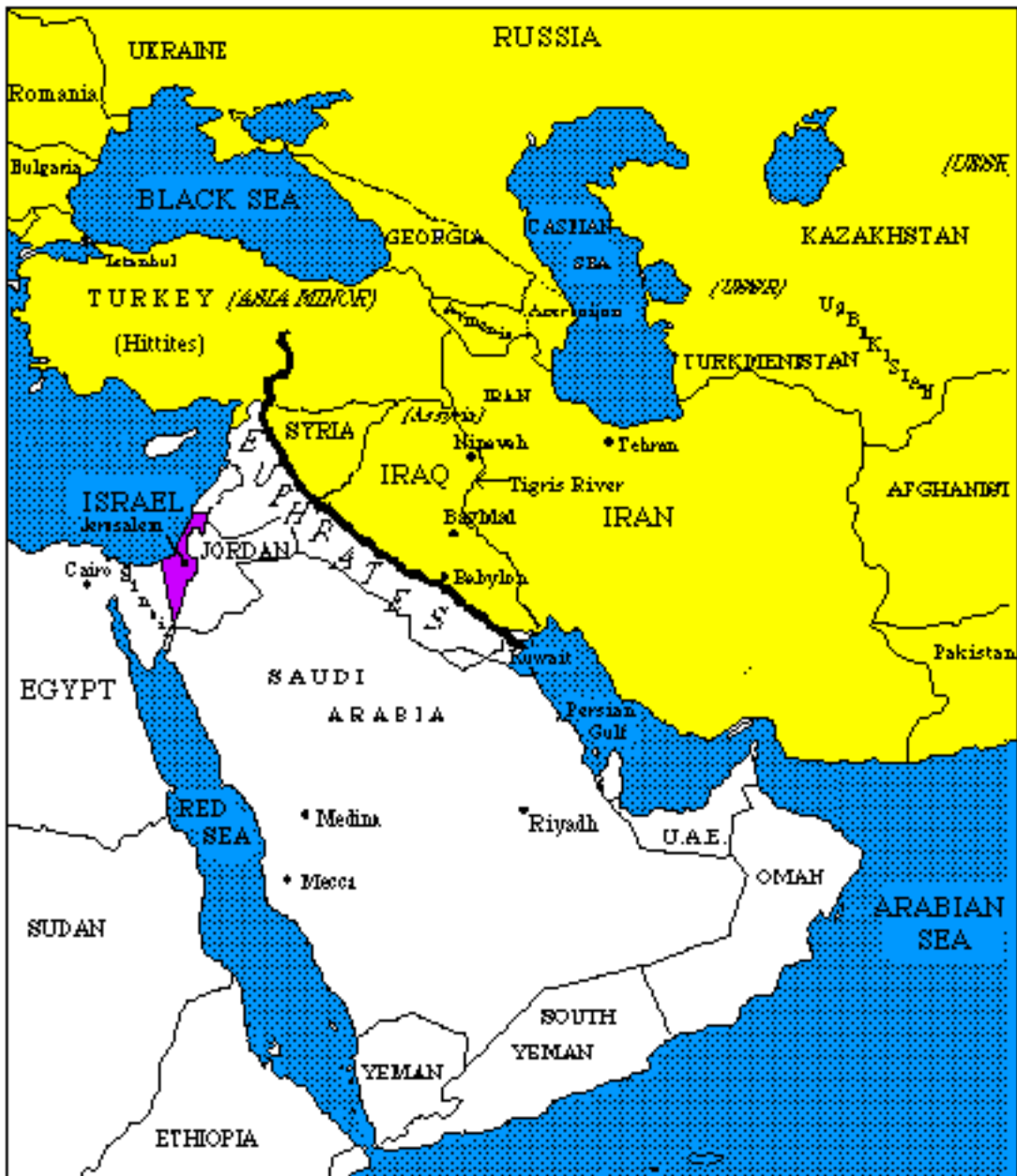
According to scripture, the seventh day is a day of rest. As such its arrival will officially end the 6000-year "toiling of the nations". The importance of this date was made arbitrary by the prediction by Jesus that the days of the end will become so wicked that God will have to cut them short. Therefore, it seems certain that the end of the world will occur before this date, i.e., sometime before 2240 A.D.

HISTORIC ISRAEL—THE HOLY LAND



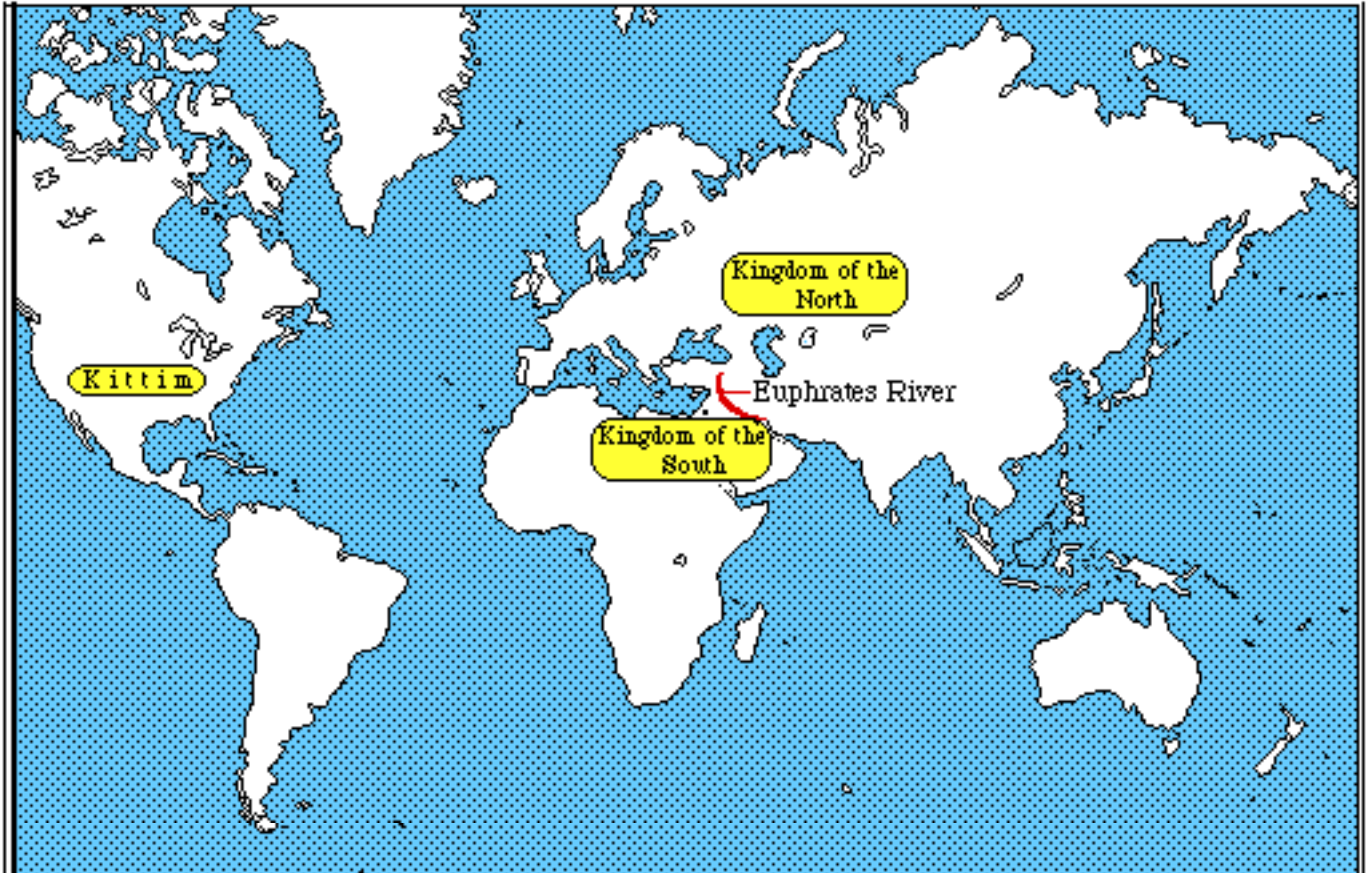
THE LAND OF ISRAEL and the nations which surround it. Place names used are those which are either biblical or most familiar. Most areas and towns in the land of Palestine carry multiple names, owing to a long succession of conquering armies.

EUPHRATES RIVER AND THE MIDDLE EAST



THE EUPHRATES RIVER VALLEY and the nations which surround it—the battleground for the world's last war. Scripture predicts that this river will be the initial division between the North and the South when the nations of the world begin to align in preparation for the battle of Armageddon. At the end of the fighting, just before the last battle, Jesus will return with His Father in the glory of all the angels to take His throne at the moment of Judgment in the skies high above Jerusalem.

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH THE TWO KINGDOMS IN THE PROPHECIES OF DANIEL



WORLD MAP showing the likely relationship between the kingdoms of the North and South as described by the prophet Daniel when they ultimately align the Euphrates River in preparation for the great warfare of the last days. The 'ships of Kittim' will oppose the kingdom of the North as the dragon of scripture mounts its final attack against the people of God.

EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN



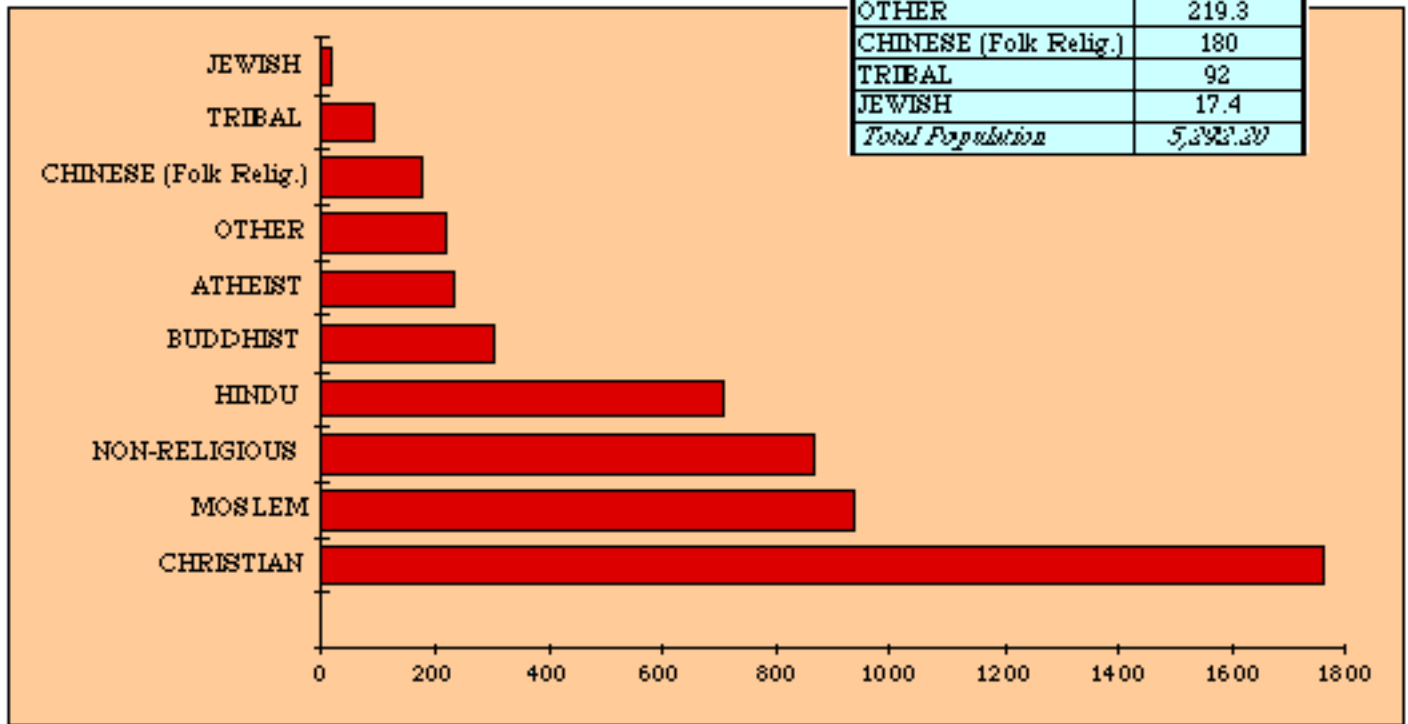
THE LANDS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA will be heavily involved in the activities of the 'beast' when he rises to power. This great Rebel, and the eastern king who precedes him will conquer most of the countries visible on this map. Ultimately, the beast will set up his headquarters in Rome and it will be his attempt to move it from there to Jerusalem that will be the mechanism for the final gathering of the world's armies at Armageddon.

THE WORLD'S MAJOR RELIGIONS BY SIZE

RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF THE WORLD
(In Millions)
Adapted from the World Almanac 1992

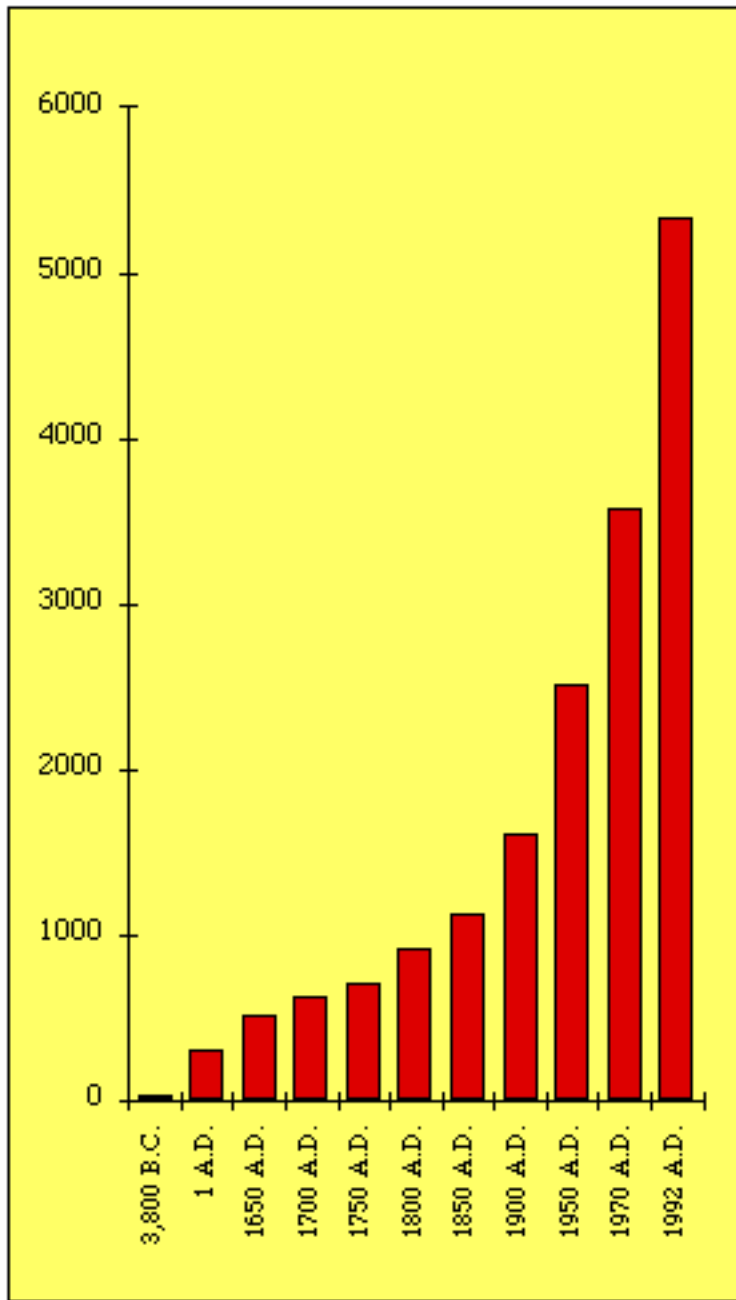
Worldwide (In Millions)

CHRISTIAN	1758.8
MOSLEM	935
NON-RELIGIOUS	866
HINDU	705
BUDDHIST	303
ATHEIST	233
OTHER	219.3
CHINESE (Folk Relig.)	180
TRIBAL	92
JEWISH	17.4
<i>Total Population</i>	<i>5,392.30</i>



Some may find it surprising to discover that Christianity is not a minority religion in the world. As this graph illustrates, Christians far outnumber all other faiths and groups. Statistics from the World Almanac in 1992 showed that at the height of the millenium, the Christian population on earth measured one-third of all the world's inhabitants.

6000 YEARS—THE AGE OF HUMAN CIVILIZATION

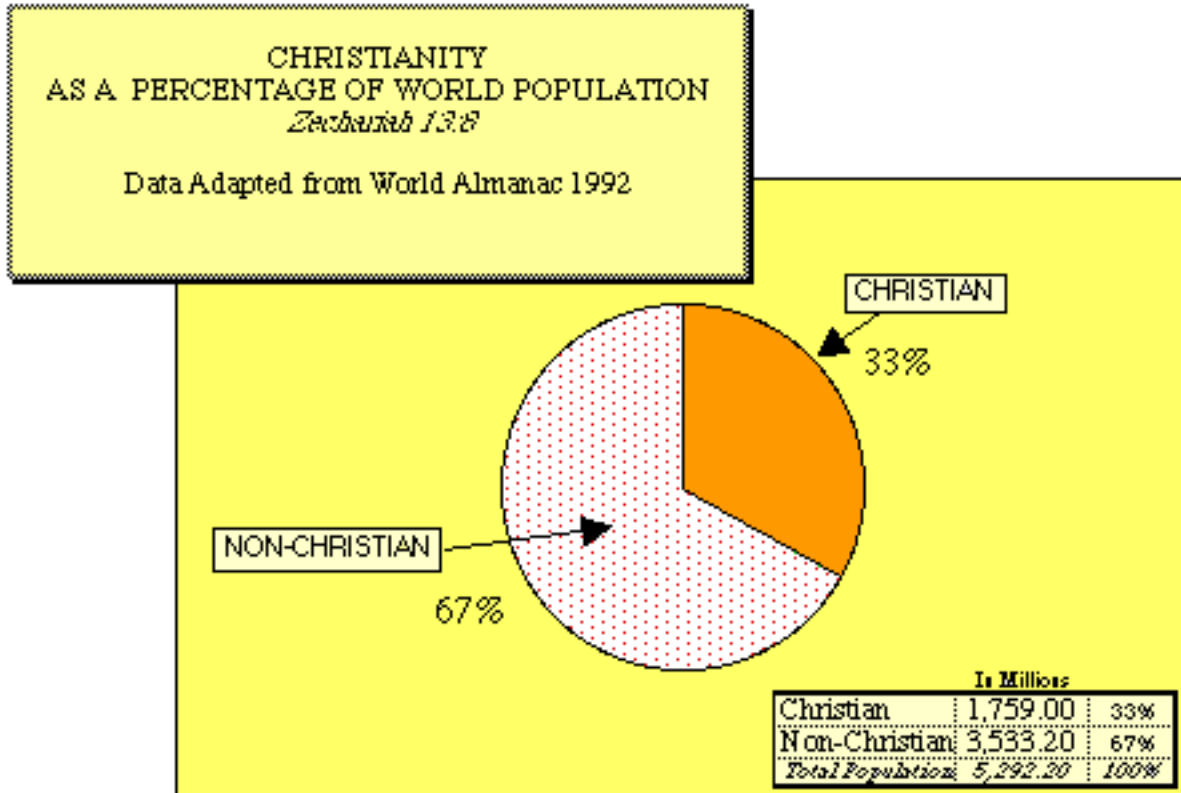


The 6000 Years
 World Population Growth
 During the Biblical Era
 3,800 B.C. to 1992
 Adapted from World Almanac - 1986

Biblical Year	Christian Year	Population In Millions
0	3,800 B.C.	25
3751	1 A.D.	300
5411	1650 A.D.	510
5461	1700 A.D.	625
5511	1750 A.D.	710
5561	1800 A.D.	910
5611	1850 A.D.	1,130
5661	1900 A.D.	1,600
5711	1950 A.D.	2,510
5761	1970 A.D.	3,576
5763	1992 A.D.	5,333

JESUS CHRIST APPEARED ON EARTH very early in the history of human civilization as far as the world's population is concerned. The Bible says that God sent Jesus down from heaven when all was in readiness for harvest. As the figures above show, because of the logarithmic nature of the world's population growth, Christ's message has been able to touch virtually all of humanity in only 2000 years.

ONE-THIRD SHALL BE PURIFIED

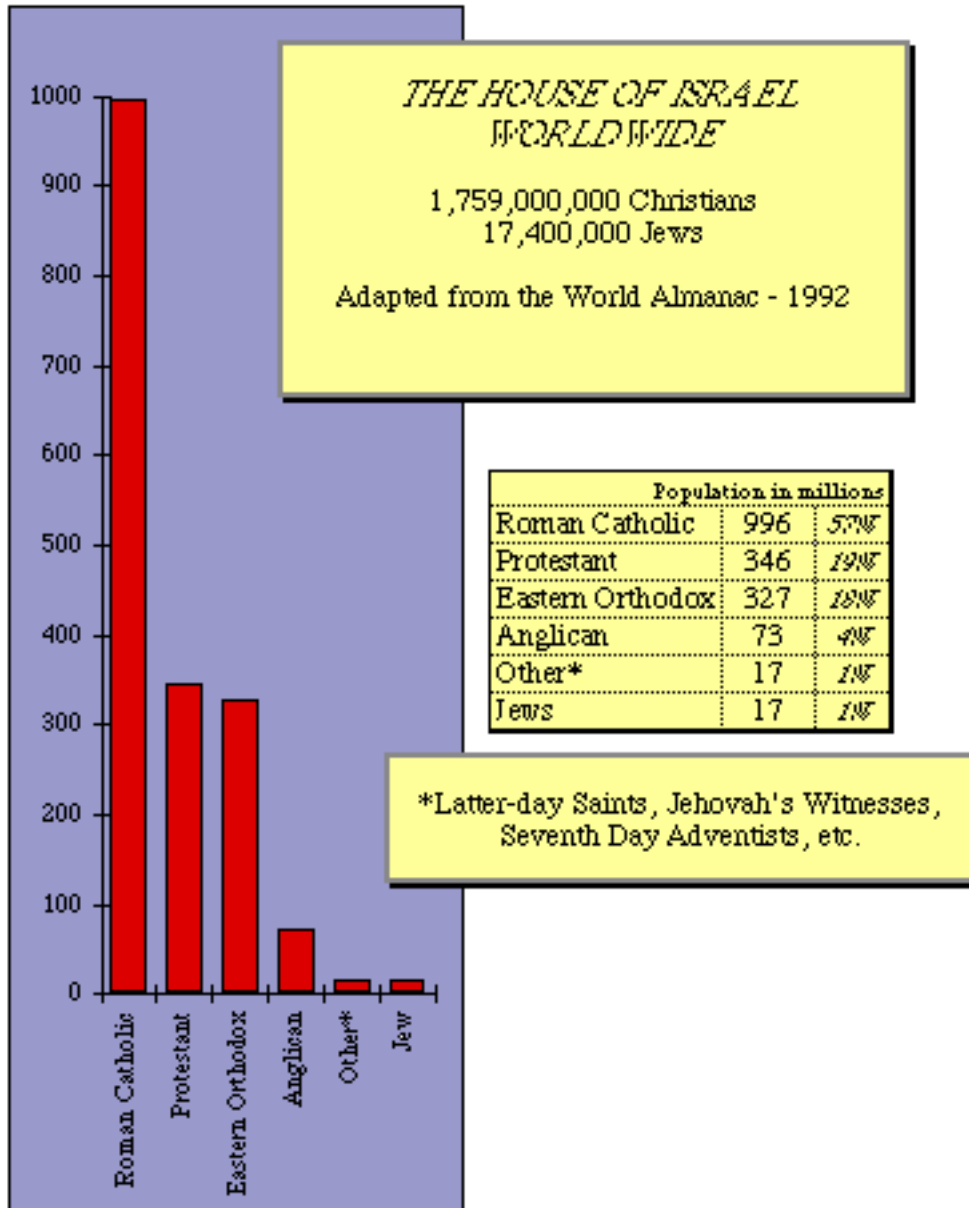


PROPHECY

"**Awake sword, against my shepherd** and against the man who is my companion—it is the Lord God almighty who speaks. I am going to strike the shepherd so that the sheep may be scattered...and it will happen throughout this territory that two-thirds in it will be cut off and the remaining third will be left. I will lead that third into the fire, and refine them as silver is refined, test them as gold is tested. They will call on my name and I shall listen; and I shall say: 'These are my people; and each will say, 'The Lord is my God'."

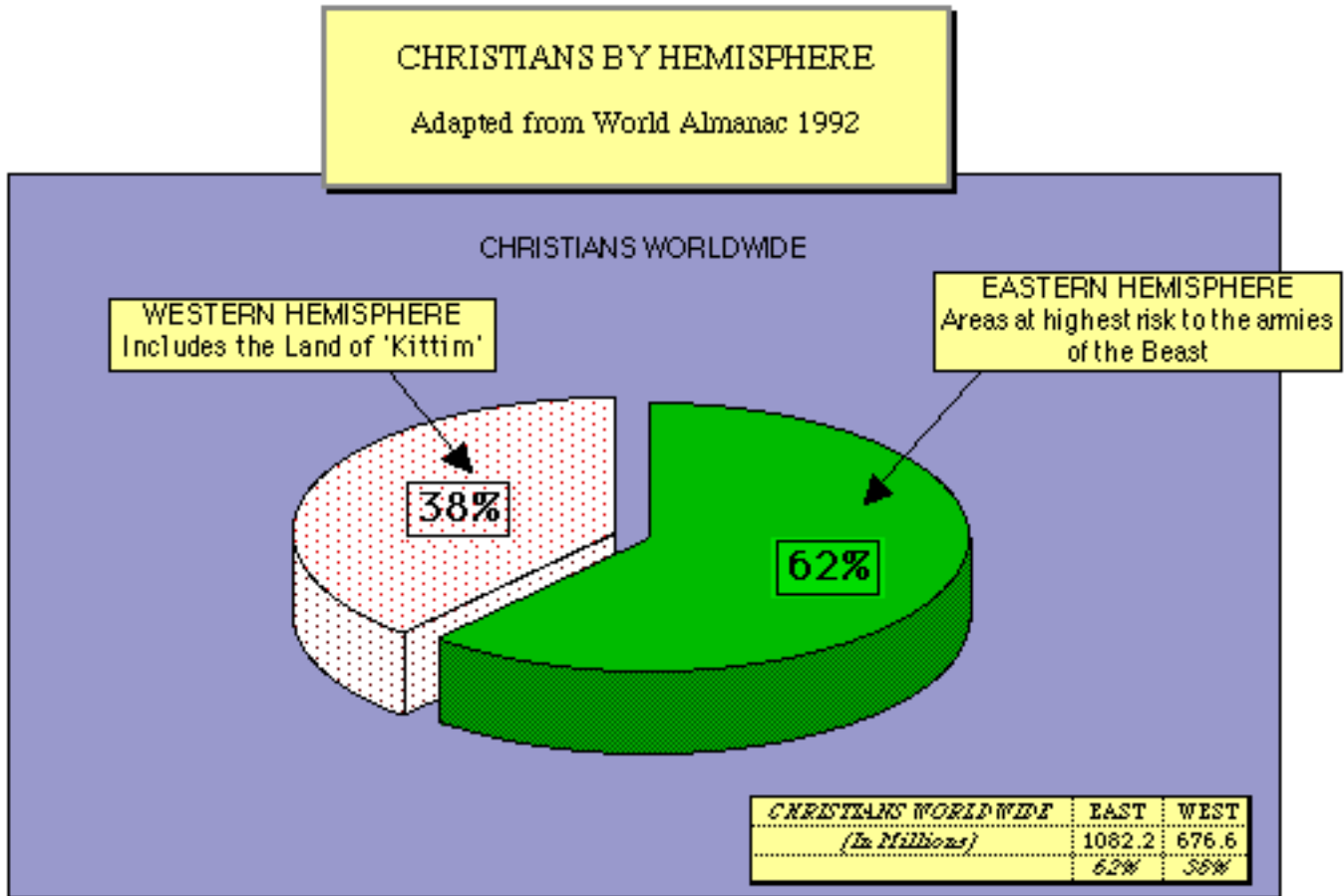
Zechariah 13:7-9

THE DIVIDED HOUSE OF ISRAEL AT THE PEAK OF THE MILLENIUM



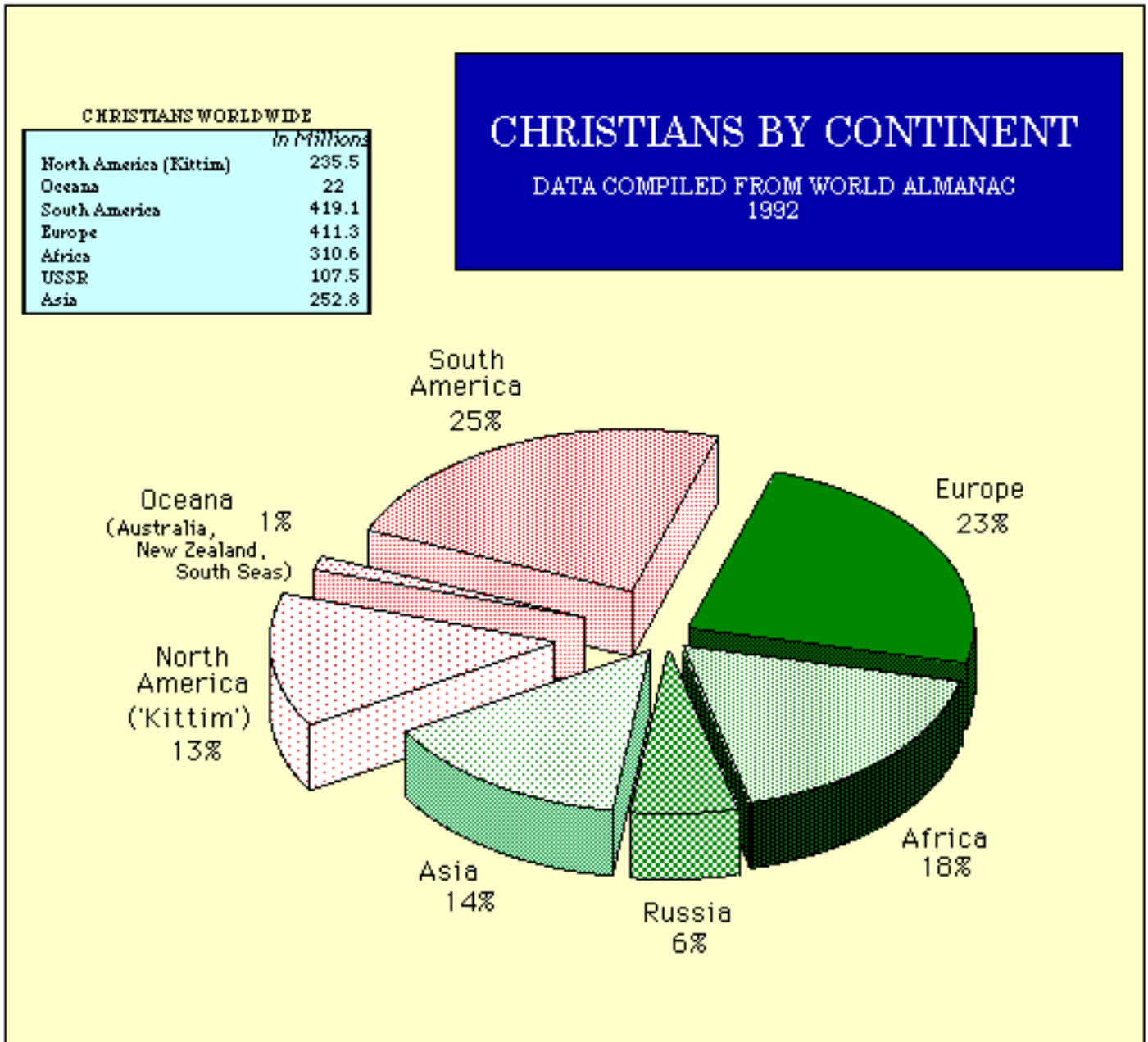
THE MILLENIUM AT ITS PEAK. One third of the population of the earth had joined the House of Israel according to 1992 World Almanac statistics. Today, as more and more people forsake their pledge, and join the growing secular movement, these numbers have begun to decline and are expected to drop drastically—falling most precipitously, it is prophesied, during the years of the terrible tribulation predicted by the Bible just before world's end.

CHRISTIANS IN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN HEMISPHERES

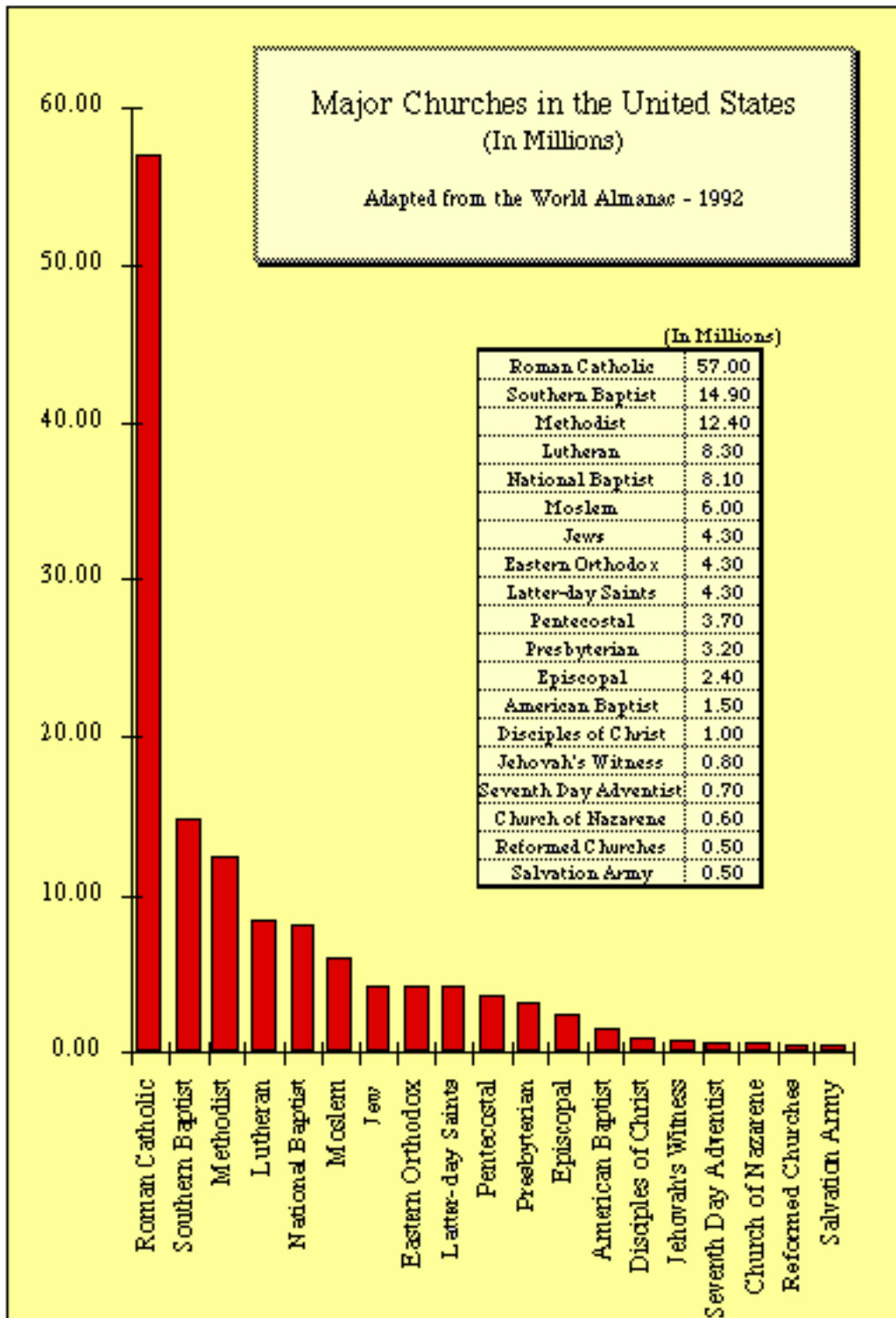


According to the Bible, the 'beast' is destined to rise in the Eastern Hemisphere, somewhere near the Black Sea. Daniel has prophesied that he, and the kings and nations surrounding him will turn the lands of this hemisphere into rubble in their mad and violent rampages, so heinous that scripture terms this combat the 'tribulation'. These militant campaigns will harshly impact the entire House of Israel and include even the subjugation of large areas of the Western Hemisphere. The ships of a western nation called 'Kittim' are destined to halt the advances, but nothing at that point will be able to prevent what follows, because all these events, the Bible says, will set the stage for the world's final end.

CHRISTIANS IN THE EASTERN AND WESTERN HEMISPHERES, BY CONTINENT

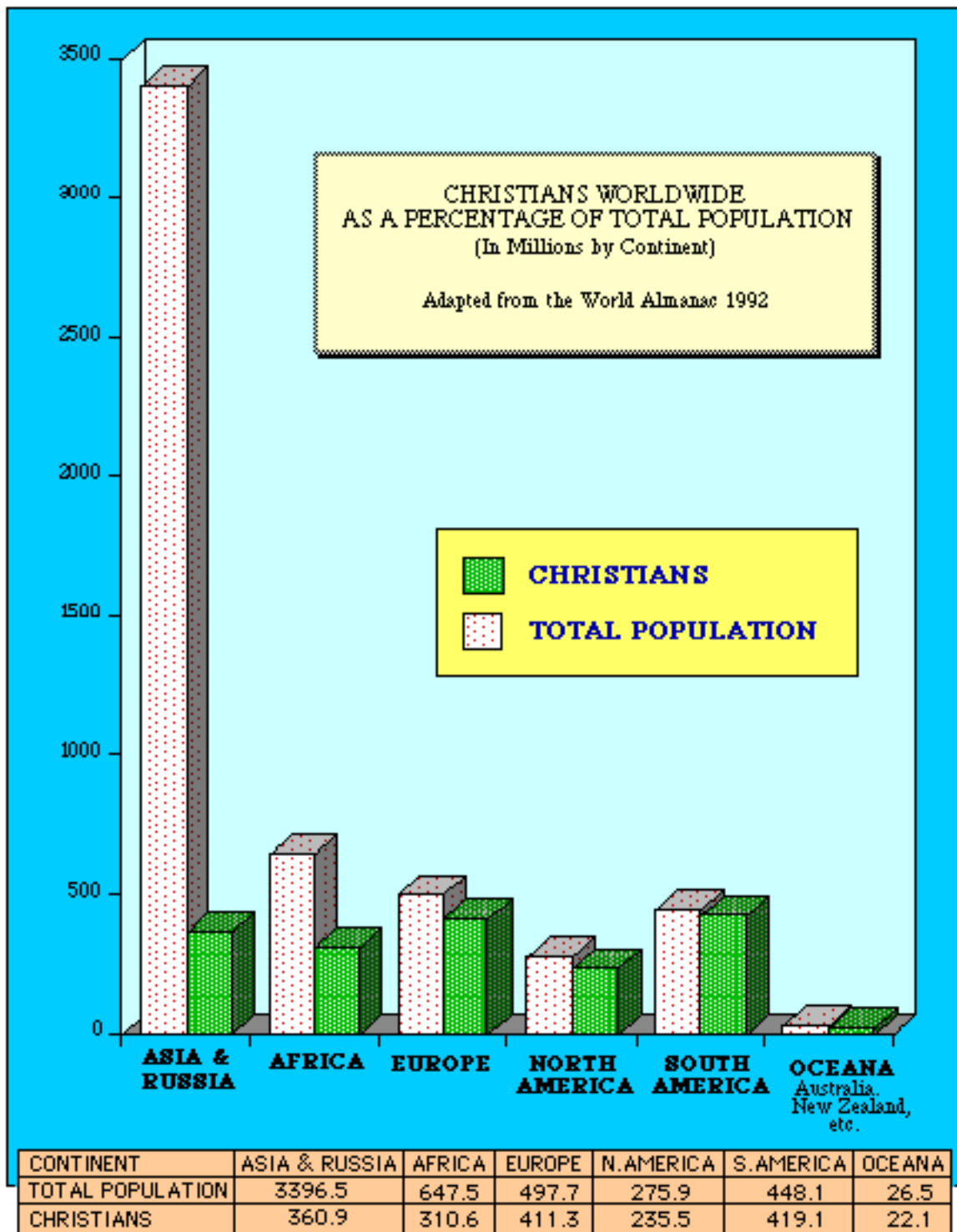


Like the 'Seven Hills' in the Book of Revelation, the seven continents of the world form 'Babylon', captive home to the widely scattered tribes of the House of Israel. In this graph showing the relative distribution of Christians worldwide, Russia, which sits half in Europe and half in Asia has been substituted for Antarctica, whose population is too small to measure.



MEDIA ACCOUNTS tend to promote the idea that Christians constitute a minority religious population in America. Statistics from the World Almanac show that just the opposite is true. Christians are, by far, the most populous religious body in the United States. That is why the religious vote here remains such an important issue in public politics.

CHRISTIANS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION



One can easily see in the graph above how the 'Great Rebel' of the last days will be able to mount an attack using eastern forces against Christians. The non-Christian population of Asia dwarfs that of most of the rest of the world. Christians constitute the vast majority of the population in Europe, Oceania and the America's, but even in these countries, a recent and serious movement away from Christianity toward a more worldly secularism has begun to surface and grow.

