

Signs of the Times

Pastor Kelly Sensenig

December 21 in the year 2012 was a popular date to many people within the world. New motion pictures, You Tube, Internet talk, and even secular news programs have talked about the year 2012 as a coming apocalyptic cataclysm or judgment that will bring the world to its close. For many today 2012 was targeted as earth's expiration date. According to the ancient Mayan people (American Indian people) a cataclysmic upheaval will occur on December 21, 2012. In 2012 the cosmic clock will wind down to zero and a time of epic disaster will hit this world. This doomsday prophecy was encoded in the ancient Mayan Calendar. Of course, none of this came to pass. Why not? It's because the Mayan Calendar is not God's calendar which is found in the Bible.

In this study, we want to talk about the "signs of the times." In light of all the hype about the end of the world and various other trends that are developing in the world today, it's important to sift through the true and the false statements regarding the signs of the times.

We are going to look at two types of signs in this study.

A. False Signs

Fanaticism and fraudulent signs take away from the true signs of the times that we can see occurring today in the world. This first point deals with the various false signs which are not in accord with true Bible prophecy! There are many bogus signs being promoted today which do not align with true Bible prophecy and what the Bible says will take place in the future.

I. The signs that the world is about to end.

Many conclude that the coming alignment of certain planets is a sign of the end of the world. However, this is a false sign which does not portray the ending of the world and humanity. The New Age mystics of our day have picked up on this and claim that something of epic proportion is going to occur very soon. An all-out-apocalypse of some kind is going to change the world. Some believe it involves judgment while others believe it involves a quantum shift or transformation of human awareness and consciousness.

There are various doomsday theories floating around today. One is known as the Planet X hypothesis, which theorizes that the earth is on a collision course or will at least have a very close call, with the ninth planet of our solar system, known as Planet X. The official name of the planet is 2003UB313. Some believe that ancient Sumerian astronomers identified the planet 5,000 years ago and named it Nibiru.

Some websites provide an official countdown clock that will give you an up-to-the-second indicator of how long we have to wait for the end of the world to arrive! Nostradamus, the king of secular doomsday seers, has predicted that the world will end in about 2012. An alleged lost book of Nostradamus has been found and interpreters of the book claim he also predicted a cataclysmic end to the world in 2012, along with many other vague predictions, such as the Kennedy assassination and 9/11. Of course, all of these spurious predictions are false signs that have nothing to do with true Bible prophecy or the end of the world.

True prophecy is found in God's Word - not in man's phony predictions and modern prophetic proclamations which are being made today.

2 Peter 1:19

"We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts."

Peter reveals two things.

- a. We can be sure of God's prophecies.

The entire Bible is in one sense a prophetic word, since it was supernaturally revealed to prophets (vs. 21), and since these same prophets gave it to us through the process of revelation. The prophetic Word that is given to us in the Bible is said to be a "more sure word of prophecy." This indicates that God's prophetic Word which also contains a great portion of prophetic truth about the future is stable, trustworthy, and dependable. Peter says it's more dependable than his experience on the Mount of Transfiguration. The prophetic Word of Scripture can be trusted and is one hundred percent accurate and reliable. The words of would-be prophets of today, who are parading their prophecies before the world, cannot be trusted, when placed beside the straight and unchanging

standard of truth. The only prophetic truth we have today is found in the Bible and the Bible reveals to us that the world will not end during our time. More on this later.

b. We can study God's prophecies.

The words "take heed" mean we should pay attention to God's prophetic Word and study it, which has been revealed by the prophets of old, so we can learn Bible truth and allow it to change our lives. Also, as we study the Scriptures we will specifically learn about the coming events of Bible prophecy. We must study and turn our attention and thinking to what is predicted to happen in the future. As we do we will receive a blessing (Rev. 1:3) and be more discerning about the trends and developments that are taking place in our world today which are leading up to the period of known as the "end times."

➤ The purpose for studying prophecy.

The purpose or reason why we should study God's Word is because it's "a light that shineth in a dark place." My friend, we need light today in a world that is lost in the darkness of sin and unbelief. Relativism has replaced absolutes but God's truth is like a shining or burning lamp in a dark world of sin, unbelief, and confusion. If you want light about the future, then look into God's Word – not at the predictions of Nostradamus and other spurious predictions about the future.

➤ The period of time for studying prophecy.

We are called upon to heed or study God's truth until the dawning of a new day ("until the day dawn"). In short, we are to keep studying it, believing it, and living in light of it, until the dawning of the new day. This new dawning day is a way to describe the end of this present Church Age with Christ's return for the Church in the Rapture.

"Oh this could be the dawning of that grand and glorious day
When the face of Jesus we behold
Dreams and hopes of all the ages
Are waiting His returning
And this could be the dawning of that day."

Romans 13:12

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.

The rising of the morning star pictures Christ’s coming for His saints (Rev. 22:16). The sense of the passage is that we should always keep the prophetic word before us, treasuring it in our hearts, for it will serve as a true light in the midst of this dark world, until the age is ended and Christ appears in the Rapture, to take His waiting people home to heaven (1 Thess. 1:10).

God’s prophetic Word can be trusted while the whimsical words and conclusions of man cannot be trusted. This once again brings up the question: Is the world really going to end in our present day? Could doomsday be on our doorstep according to ancient Mayan Calendars, Nostradamus, and hidden Bible codes?

Many people point to the alignment of certain planets as one of the key “signs of the times” that should tell us when the world is going to end. However, we must look at these predictions through the lens of Scripture. The Bible teaches that the world can’t end in our present time. Let me give you a quick overview. The Bible predicts that at least seven years and then 1,000 more years must expire before the earth is destroyed by God.

Daniel 9:24-27

“Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it

desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

Daniel’s prophecy of the 70 weeks when properly understood in a literal hermeneutic provides us with some important information about the end times. This passage is a key to God’s prophetic Word and it also informs us that the world is not going to end in 2012. Daniel 9:24-27 has been called the “Backbone of Bible Prophecy” and “God’s prophetic Time Clock.” This prophecy tells us that God has put Israel’s future on a time clock. Furthermore, God’s prophetic plan for Israel will have a profound effect on the entire earth during a future time period revealed as seven years.

The word “weeks” translates the Hebrew word “shabua” and literally means “sevens” and the context of Daniel tells us that Daniel is speaking about “sevens” in relationship to years (units of years) - not days (Dan. 9:1-2). It would be most natural for Daniel to understand these “sevens” as referring to units of years since this is what Daniel was thinking in regards to the captivity of His people. Therefore, the “seventy weeks” or more literally “seventy sevens” are referring to 70 periods of time multiplied by seven (literally 70 sevens or 70×7) which comes to 490 years.

People today think in units of tens (decades); however, Daniel’s people thought in terms of sevens (heptads). Seven days are in one week. Every seventh year was a sabbath rest year (Lev. 25:1-7). Seven “sevens” (after the passing of every 49 years) brought them to the Year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12). Therefore, “seventy weeks” or “seventy sevens” is a span of 490 years. 70×7 years = 490 years.

Let’s break down this 490-year cycle.

A. The coming destiny of Daniel’s people (Dan. 9:24).

Daniel 9:24

“Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people (Jews) and upon thy holy city.” In other words, Daniel’s people (the Jews) along with their beloved city (Jerusalem) will pass through a 490-year cycle of time before they enter into their final promised blessings. At the end of the 490 years Israel will once again be blessed by God and reach her intended destiny. When the end of the 490-year cycle is finished Israel (Daniel’s

people) will experience great blessing as she reaches God's goal and destiny.

Israel destiny is described in six ways.

- ✓ Israel's apostasy will be finished ("to finish the transgression").

The word "transgression" in verse 24 speaks of a revolt within national Israel. It points to Israel's rebellion and apostasy. Daniel is saying that by the time the 490 years have expired, Israel will no longer be in her state of rebellion, unbelief and apostasy. Their revolt against the true Messiah will be over. Israel's course of apostasy will be brought to completion when the 490 years are finished. Presently, Israel is in unbelief (Romans 11:20, 23) but in the future they will be saved (Romans 11:25-26). In the future, Israel will be restored spiritually to the Messiah and no longer continue in their stubborn rejection of Christ (Matthew 24:29-31). This will be the time when the rebellion of Israel will be finished. This then is part of Israel's future destiny as God's people. He apostasy against God and the Messiah will be ended forever.

- ✓ Israel's sins will be taken away ("and to make an end of sins")

This expression has to do with Israel's forgiveness in the future. The text could literally read, "to seal up sin." This concept of sealing gives the idea that Israel's sins will be altogether removed out of the sight of God. When something is sealed, it means that it is finished or done. Israel's sins will be sealed up or ended because God will forgive those very sins and save His national people (Zechariah 12:10, 13:1, Romans 11:27 — "When I shall take away their sins"). This is part of Israel's destiny. At the conclusion of this prophecy, Israel will be saved and forgiven.

- ✓ Israel's atonement will be experienced ("and to make reconciliation for iniquity")

The Hebrew word for reconciliation is actually "kaphar" and should be rendered "atonement." During the Old Testament animals were put to death in temporary payment for the person's sin. The concept behind the atoning sacrifice that Daniel is bringing out is that God demands a payment for sin (Rom. 6:23).

The Bible Knowledge Commentary makes this assessment:

“In Old Testament days the highpoint in Israel’s festival calendar was the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16). On that day the nation assembled before God, acknowledged her sin, and offered blood sacrifices to cover that sin. Though that sacrifice covered Israel’s sin for 12 months, it did not permanently remove that sin (Heb. 10:1-3). It was necessary that a sacrifice be offered God that would permanently remove all the accumulated sins. This sacrifice was offered by Jesus Christ who by His death made payment for all sins that had not been removed in the past (Rom. 3:25).”

The truth that Daniel wants to emphasize is that when Christ returns in His Second Advent, believing Israel will experience the actual application of Christ's death to their lives. Throughout the Old Testament there were many sacrifices which were offered in view of Christ's ultimate sacrifice on the cross. However, someday, according to this prophecy, Christ will return to earth as the Messiah and offer Himself to Israel as the final payment and complete sacrifice for her sins. This is a goal that will come to fruition at the close of the 490-year period of this prophecy. Israel’s ultimate destiny is to have the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ (a final payment for sin) applied to their lives, since He has died on the cross paying the penalty of sin for His people Israel.

Someday Christ will actually present His atoning or forgiving sacrifice to Israel as the only true sacrifice. In this glorious day, Israel will be saved and in one sense experience the final atonement or payment for sin that Christ made for her when He died on the cross (Isaiah 53:1-6). National Israel will actually look back and say that Christ "was" wounded for "our" transgressions according to Isaiah 53:5. In the coming day Christ will offer to His national people the atoning or forgiving value of His work on the cross (Zechariah 13:1). He will appear with wounds in His hands (Zechariah 13:6) and they will see Him as the true Messiah that has died for them on the cross (Zechariah 12:10).

- ✓ Israel’s earthly Kingdom will begin (“and to bring in everlasting righteousness”).

The final goal of the 70-week period or 490 years will usher in the golden age of Millennial Kingdom, which is designed to establish “everlasting righteousness” over this earth. During the 1,000 year period of time (Rev.

20:1-6) Christ will execute perfect justice and righteousness throughout the earth (Isaiah 11:1-5; Jeremiah 23:5-6, 33:15). This will be the new social and world order. Israel awaits her destiny of the Millennial Kingdom which will be the preparatory time (1,000 years) that will usher in the eternal covenant blessings promised to Israel (2 Sam. 7:16)

The 1,000-year reign of Messiah over the earth becomes the precursor to “everlasting righteousness” over the earth. The 1,000-year Millennial Kingdom is the time when Christ takes back the earth from Satan, rules it as a theocracy (1 Cor. 15:24-25), and when Israel will experience the righteous rule of the Messiah (Jer. 23:5-6). However, this period of 1,000 years is a prelude and preparatory time for Israel’s eternal blessings which she will experience on the earth with the Messiah. The Millennium (1,000 years) sets the stage for Israel’s eternal blessings on the earth.

Christ’s earthly reign will prepare the earth for the eternal state and eventually merge with the eternal kingdom or eternal state. This is why Daniel says it will be “everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24) and why the covenant promises never end in relationship to Israel’s blessings.

Luke 1:32-33

He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

Israel will reach her intended destiny on earth at the end of the 490 year cycle.

- ✓ Israel’s prophecies will cease (“and to seal up the vision and prophecy”).

All the promises and prophecies or prophetic visions regarding Israel’s future blessings in the land of Palestine still remain unfulfilled. These unfulfilled prophecies regarding Israel’s future blessings are likened to a document that has not yet been sealed. They are awaiting God’s final seal which will actually bring them to pass.

Since Israel has not yet experienced her covenant promises on earth all the prophetic visions given by the prophets, regarding Israel’s future blessings, remain open, or they are considered to be unsealed, during the present

time. However, the custom of Bible times indicates that once a letter is sealed, its contents are irreversible (Daniel 6:8, Esther 1:19, 8:8). This means that during the Millennium there will be a termination or ending of God's prophecies about Israel's future blessings since she will have entered into all of her covenant promises. All visions and prophecies about Israel's future in the kingdom will essentially be terminated because all of them will have been fulfilled in relationship to Israel.

Israel is moving toward her prophetic destiny and day when she will experience the complete fulfillment of all the prophecies and covenant promises that were given to her. God will come good on His promises. He has not abandoned His ancient and beloved people.

Romans 11:1-2

"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew."

Reformed Theology concludes that God has given up on Israel but the Bible says something altogether different. God will reverse Israel's fortunes someday, save His national people, and bring the Jews into the destiny of their covenant promises. During the Millennium or 1,000 years all the "vision and prophecy" regarding these promises will be sealed, no longer open, and in need of fulfillment. During the Millennial Kingdom God will in one sense, seal the deal with Israel, and she will experience her earthly blessings.

A major segment in Christianity today rejects God's future plans for national Israel. A flawed teaching being promoted today claims that the Church has replaced national Israel in God's plan and that she has been totally abandoned and forsaken by God. The elements of Reformed or Replacement Theology (God is finished with Israel and replaces Israel with the Church) can be traced as far back as Marcion (A.D. 160), who was a Gnostic heretic, that carried on a theological crusade to purge the Church of what he perceived to be dangerous Jewish errors and influences.

Later, many of these same anti-Jewish sentiments found their way into the thinking and writings of some of the Early Church fathers. Irenaeus, for instance, wrote, "The Jews have rejected the Son of God and cast Him out of the vineyard when they slew Him. Therefore, God has justly rejected

them and has given to the Gentiles outside the vineyard the fruits of its cultivation” (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, [1885-1887], Volume 1, p. 493).

Over time, statements like these became the basis for full-blown anti-Semitism in some sectors of Christianity. Anything Jewish was renounced as an attempt to overthrow and “Judaize” the Church. Teachings about the Jews ruling in the Millennium began to be denounced as “Jewish fables.”

By the days of Augustine (354-430) God’s future plan for Israel was allegorized and by the time of the Protestant Reformation (1500’s) the Reformers like Luther and Calvin opposed any future for the Jewish people and allegorized the prophecies and promises given to Israel. This is why Reformed Theology or teaching, which stems from the days of the Reformation, denies a future for Israel.

The Reformers possess an anti-Semitic attitude toward the Jews and primarily taught that God was finished with His ancient people Israel. Martin Luther articulated this position very clearly when he wrote: “For such ruthless wrath of God is sufficient evidence that they [i.e., the Jewish people] assuredly have erred and gone astray. Even a child can comprehend this. For one dare not regard God as so cruel that he would punish his own people so long, so terrible, so unmercifully ... Therefore this work of wrath is proof that the Jews, surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God” (“On the Jews and Their Lies,” Trans. Martin H. Bertram, in *Luther’s Works* [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971], p. 265).

One must wonder why there is all the anti-Semitism against the Jews. The incredible irony of all this anti-Semitism is that only a few centuries earlier, the Church had been almost exclusively Jewish! The Messiah was Jewish; the writers of the Bible were Jewish; the apostles were Jewish; the earliest Christians were Jewish; the first congregation was primarily Jewish (located in Jerusalem); and the first missionaries were Jewish!

✓ Israel will recognize Christ as King (“and to anoint the most Holy”).

Israel’s final destiny is to officially recognize and declare Christ as her Messiah and the promised King of Israel’s blessings. This final goal of the 70 weeks or 490 years has to do with the millennial scene when Christ,

who is the "most Holy," will be officially recognized as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords in the Millennium.

Revelation 19:16

“And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

During the Kingdom Christ will be the center of attraction. He will be the "Most High" (Daniel 7:25-27) and the "Most Holy" (Dan. 9:24) during these glorious days. The following verses in Daniel 9:25-26 speak directly of the Messiah ("the anointed one") who is considered to be the "Holy One" of Israel (Psalms 16:10). During the Millennial Kingdom the Lord Jesus will be presented and portrayed as the "Holy One of Israel" (Psalms 89:18-19, Isaiah 60:9) who they denied in their earlier years (Acts 3:14). In the future Millennium, there may be an official service where Jesus will be recognized as the true Messiah and God of Israel ("to anoint the most Holy"). What a destiny and day this will be for national Israel. God is not finished with His original people Israel.

B. The calculation through the end times (Dan. 9:25-27).

This calculation will inform us that the world will not end in our era.

First Time Calculation

Deals with History (Daniel 9:25) = “seven weeks” or as the Hebrew is understood, seven periods of seven ($7 \times 7 = 49$ years) is the first time designation. This first period of time is linked to the first statement “to restore and to build Jerusalem” and speaks of the time it took to rebuild Jerusalem. From the time when King Artaxerxes of Persia issued his second decree to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh. 2:1) until Jerusalem was finished consisted of 49 years.

Second Time Calculation

Deals with History (Daniel 9:25) = “threescore and two weeks” (62 weeks) or 62 periods of seven ($62 \times 7 = 434$ years) is the second time designation. This second period of time is linked to the second statement “unto the Messiah the Prince” and includes the 400 silent years (the years between the Old and New Testaments) up to the official presentation of Jesus as the

Messiah to the Jewish nation (Matt. 21:1-11). God predicted a period of 173,880 days to the exact day! This official presentation of Jesus as the Messiah brought this second period to a close. The first two periods of time conclude the 69 weeks ($69 \times 7 = 483$ years) of the prophecy. There is one week left to be fulfilled – Daniels 70th week (a week of seven years).

Interim Period of Time

During a football game there is a half time or break in the action. This is when people go buy hotdogs and other refreshments. In a similar way, there is a break in the 490-year prophecy of Daniel. Daniel 9:26 is like the “half time” in the countdown of Daniel’s 490-year prophecy.

Deals with History (Daniel 9:26) - After the 434 years (“after threescore and two weeks” – Dan. 9:26) or second part of the prophecy has expired there will be a prophetic gap of time (a prophetic time out). This gap of time has already existed for some 2,000 years. During this interim period of time Jesus would die (“Messiah be cut off” – vs. 26), the Romans would destroy Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (“people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city” – vs. 26), and we also know that the Church age would exist (Eph. 3:5-6). We are presently living in the gap of time (a great parenthesis) between the 69th week and beginning of the 70th or final week in Daniel’s prophecy. We are living a time period when prophecy is not being fulfilled. However, the stage is being set for prophetic events to once again be fulfilled during Daniel’s final period of seven years.

Third Time Calculation

Deals with Prophecy (Daniel 9:27) = “one week” (one seven) or one final period of seven years (“and he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week”). This refers to the future time (seven-year Tribulation Period) when Antichrist will make a 7-year covenant, specifically with the Jewish people, but also with “many” other countries who will be forced to follow this covenant.

One can search in vain to find a seven-year covenant that was made in history; therefore, Daniel 9:27 is referring to prophecy or something that is going to take place in the future. This future time period of seven years is expressed in two three and one half periods by the words “a time and

times, and the dividing of time” (Dan. 7:25), “time, times, and a half” (Dan. 12:7), and “a time, and times, and half a time” (Rev. 12:11).

Note: Who is being referred to in Daniel 9:27 when it states “and he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week?” We must apply the rules of grammar to answer this question. Basic grammar teaches that the present pronoun and subject being talked about (“he”) must refer back to its nearest subject or antecedent.

The previous subject that was addressed and which is nearest to verse 27 would be the second person that is talked about in Daniel 9:26, which is Titus the Roman general, who destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. So grammatically “he” (vs. 27) must be referring back to the subject of Titus the Roman general (vs. 26). However, since Titus did not make a covenant with the Jewish people during this time, another person similar to Titus, a strong ruler who is a type of Titus, will someday govern and overtake the Jewish people in the future (end times). This person is none other than the Scriptural man called the Antichrist (Dan. 11:37; 2 Thess. 2:3-9).

Many of the prophets leap from history to prophecy within the scope of the same verse or several verses that they are dealing with (Isa. 9:6; 61:1-2; Zech. 9:9-10; Mal. 3:1-2; 4:5-6; Luke 4:17-19). Daniel is no exception as he often moves from history to prophecy without directly mentioning the juxtaposition between history and prophecy (Daniel 11:36-45).

Adding the three numbers or time designations together of Daniel 9:25-27 (49+434+7) we come to 490 years. 483 years of the prophecy (69 weeks) have elapsed but a final seven years (one week) is still future. Daniel’s 70th week is fulfilled in the future 7-year Tribulation Period.

This prophecy alone tells us that the world cannot end in our time, since we have at least “one week” (one period of seven years), which must run its course in the future. Not only this, the Bible tells us that an entire Millennium (1,000 years) must transpire (Rev. 20:1-6) before the world comes to an end (2 Pet. 3:10-12). How will the world end? God will end it with the direct hand of His judgment. It will be God who pushes the button to destroy the world – not some Middle Eastern madman or the galactic alignment of the planets.

2 Peter 3:10-12 reveals that the ending of this present world occurs after the Millennial Kingdom (1,000 years) and the purpose for ending this earth is to create a new one that is unaffected by sin, ecological disaster, and an earth where eternal righteousness will abound in every society (2 Pet. 3:13). The practical aspect of prophecy and specifically the ending of the world should motivate us to live for God today (“what manner of persons ought ye to be” – vs. 26). If we are headed toward the eternal state, we had better live with eternity’s values in view. We ought to be living a holy and godly life since everything else on earth will be blown up and be worthless in the end. We should live for eternal things (Matt. 6:19-20) instead of secular things since nothing on this earth will remain in the eternal state. Only what we have done for the Lord will last.

Are there hidden codes in the Bible which shed light on what is going to happen in the future? According to some, the Bible can be viewed as a type of prophetic crossword puzzle, where hidden meanings must be discovered, through a computerized process of extracting hidden or cryptic words from the Hebrew Bible. Are there really hidden codes in the Bible and do these codes reveal true signs of the times and what is going to happen in the future?

In this study, we want to talk about the “signs of the times.” In light of all the hype about the end of the world and various other trends that are developing in the world today, it’s important to sift through the true and the false statements regarding the signs of the times.

II. The signs related to hidden Bible codes

What about Bible codes? The claim is made by certain teachers, authors, and writers that there are many signs in hidden Bible codes that need to be decoded, so we can know what is going to take place in the future. Finding prophetic signs through hidden Bible codes is another tactic created by man, not God, so men can predict future events. Once again, fanaticism and fraudulent signs take away from the true signs of the times that we can see occurring today in the world.

Many “sign seekers” of today claim there are hidden or cryptic Bible codes in the Hebrew text of the Old Testament (a Bible beneath a Bible), when searched by computers, which also predict that that the world will come to an end by 2012 and other various end time events. This process of

discovering Bible codes became very popular in the 1990's and many books were written on it. What these computers do is search for the letters of specific words that occur at a specific interval or spacing. In other words, the computer finds a Hebrew letter, then skips another ten letters to find the next Hebrew letter, and then continues the process until the "hidden" word is revealed. The skip can be of any length as long as the skips are equal. And the word can be spelled forward, backward, vertically, horizontally, or diagonally.

This is playing hocus pocus with the Bible and is doing a great injustice to the Bible. This whole "hidden Bible code process" should be avoided since some of the skip distances can be up to 1,000 letters. Trying to find certain letters between spaces in order to create words makes the whole process suspect. Using this process computers have found 2,323 references to Mohammed, 104 references to Krishna, and the named Koresh (as in David Karesh) encoded 2,729 times. Names like Hitler and John. F. Kennedy has been discovered indicating that the Bible prophesied of these people in the Old Testament.

It's interesting that the same principles used to find hidden codes in the Bible can also be used on other secular books. Certain world figures and events can be located by the same process. This is simply a scam on the Bible! A mathematician names David Thomas conducted one of these computer code searches on the book of Genesis and found the word "code" and "bogus" close together 60 times!

The Bible says that "all Scripture" is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). The word "Scripture" literally means "a sacred portion of writing" and connotes the actual words written in the language and sense that God gave it. The actual writings of Scripture are in view – not the decoding process of man. All Scripture or every word recorded in the writing of the Bible (not decoded from the Bible) is inspired by God. This is not a promise that says the alleged hidden words scattered through the Bible, when discovered by 21st century computers, are inspired by God. God would have never written this promise to first century Christians with computers and hidden codes in His thinking. Let's get real!

2 Timothy 2:15

"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

We are commanded to “rightly divide” the Scriptures – not decode the Scriptures! There are no lost words in the Bible to be decoded and no lost books of the Bible! Let’s stop all of this childish play! Treating the Bible as a Book with hidden message does not support the inspiration of Scripture but the insanity of man’s thinking! Discovering hidden codes in the Bible is huckstering the Bible by trying to make the Bible say something that it does not say nor every intended to convey.

2 Corinthians 4:2

“But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.”

We are not to use the Bible in a “deceitful” manner or a way that tricks and traps people into believing something that the Bible does not teach. Bible Codes is approaching the Bible with a “hocus pocus” and clever trick which dishonestly handles the Bible in order to manipulate others. God wrote the Bible in an understandable format and manner – not in some kind of Biblical crossword puzzle. If I want a Bible crossword book I go to purchase one in a Christian bookstore; however, I don’t treat the Bible as a crossword puzzle, which has alleged hidden or cryptically coded messages hidden within its pages. God is not a God of nonsense!

Isaiah 28:10

“For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little.”

God is a God of order (1 Cor. 14:40) and therefore the Bible should be studied in an orderly fashion. The Bible was written by God to be understood “line upon line” and “precept upon precept” which means that God communicates His Word and eternal truth through plain sense – the plain sense of sentence structure. The text says we are to study the Bible “line upon line” - not by skipping 1,000 letters in the Hebrew text to find another letter that can create a modern name or event in the word.

Let’s call the bluff on all these “sign seekers” today who are trying to create false prophetic signs and sayings that are not in accord with true Bible prophecy which is found in the clear revelation of God’s Word.

We have then seen that the “signs of the times” regarding the end of the world are not written in Bible codes, Mayan calendars, and the writings of Nostradamus, or New Age mystics. None of these unproven and unreliable methods provide us with the truth of what is going to happen to the world in the future. The true signs of the times and what is ahead for planet earth are recorded in the pages of the Bible in the plain sense and plain language of Scripture.

III. The signs that predict our generation will be raptured from earth.

I believe Jesus will return in our generation and there are many sign markers and trends that indicate this. We will talk about this in our next major point, which deals with the “true signs of the times.” However, we must always remember that there are no specific signs that must occur or take place so Jesus can return. Nothing must take place in order for Jesus to return in the Rapture. In other words, the Rapture (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Thess. 4:16-17) was never intended to be introduced by the fulfillment of signs.

The Rapture was intended to be a “signless” and imminent event. We are to be looking for the Savior (Phil. 3:20; 1 Cor. 16:22) – not for signs to be fulfilled. We are to be listening for the sounds (1 Thess. 4:16) not expecting signs to be fulfilled. The Rapture is not dependent or contingent upon specific signs being fulfilled, while the Second Coming of Christ to earth is to be preceded by mandatory signs (Matt. 24:3) and make His coming to earth very predictable (Matt. 24:33).

Matthew 24:3

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

Matthew 24:33

“So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.”

These verses which deal with signs are set in the context of the future Tribulation Period. In other words, they are specific signs which must occur before Christ can return in His Second Coming to earth – not the Rapture.

Matthew 24 is dealing with the Tribulation Period and Christ's return as the King to earth following the seven-year Tribulation period. It is not talking about the time period before the Rapture of the Church when Jesus takes His children back to Heaven (John 14:1-3). The context is dealing with the Tribulation Period. Let's follow Christ's teaching.

Matthew 24:21

"For then (not today) shall be great tribulation (the future terrible Tribulation Period), such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be."

Matthew 24:29-30

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days (not today) shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

The Church has already been in Heaven for seven years (Rev. 3:10) at this point of time. However, after the Tribulation Period Jesus will return as the King. The prophetic context is dealing with Jews living during the Tribulation Period and not God's people before the Rapture.

Matthew 24:34

"Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

This is referring to the generation of Jews (Matt. 24:2, 30 – "tribes") living during the seven-year Tribulation Period and not to the Jews living today. They are the same Jews who will need to flee into the mountains of Israel for fear of being persecuted by the Antichrist (Matt. 24:16-20).

Matthew 24:32-34

"Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Some suggest that the “budding of the fig tree” is a picture of Israel since she is portrayed this way in the Old Testament (Hosea 9:10). The claim is made that the budding of the fig tree occurred in 1948 when Israel became a nation and the present generation of Jews would not die off the scene without the Rapture taking place.

Since a generation is about 40-60 years many have expected Christ to come by 1988 or 2008. We will have more to say on this in our next point. When Christ did not come back in 1988 or 2008, some changed the length of a generation to 80 years or changed the date of the fig tree’s budding to June 1967, when the Jews took the city of Jerusalem. This extends the “generation” of Matthew 24:34 as far out as 2027, depending on how long a generation can be stretched! The constant need to change the length of a generation shows the folly of trying to set dates for the Rapture.

The budding of the fig tree and the context of this passage has nothing to do with the rebirth of the nation Israel. Jesus was simply using a common tree analogy to make a simple prophetic point. The generation of Jews living during the Tribulation Period will be able to see the signs approaching, which relate to Christ’s Second Coming to earth, even as they can witness the blossoming and budding of a fig tree, which indicates that summer is near. A generation of Jews living on earth during the seven-year Tribulation Period will be able to see that Christ’s coming is near, when the signs predicted in Matthew 24:4-31 begin to happen. As summer is near, when the blossoms appear on a fig tree, so Christ’s Second Coming to earth will be near, when the Jews witness all of these signs occurring during the Tribulation Period.

A problem arises when we try and construe the signs of the Tribulation Period with Christ’s return in the Rapture (an imminent event) and begin to set dates or come to conclusions that Jesus must return before a certain year or generation has expired. The signs mentioned in Matthew 24 are signs that must occur during the future seven-year Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:29). They are signs that must precede the Second Coming of Christ to earth (Matt. 24:29-31); they are not mandatory signs which must precede the Rapture (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Furthermore, the promise is given that a generation of Jews living during the seven-year Tribulation Period will not pass off the scene before Christ returns in His Second Coming. There is no direct promise given in this passage that Christ will return in the Rapture for His Church (John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:13-18), during our present generation,

after certain required signs have come to pass. This is a false promise taken out of its prophetic context.

The Bible teaches and promises that Christ could return at any moment for those of us living in the Church Age; however, it does not promise that He will return to one specific generation living during the Church Age, after certain prescribed and mandatory signs have come to pass.

John Miles used to say:

“Signs are for Israel living during the Tribulation Period – not for the Church.”

Signs are for Israel – not the church! Of course, we do see precursor signs of the “end times” occurring today which would indicate that the Rapture is close. However, we are never given the promise that when we see certain signs taking place that Jesus must come within our generation. The generation of Matthew 24:34 does not refer to any generation living today during the Church Age but to a generation of Jews who will be living during the future seven-year Tribulation Period. A specific generation of Jews living during the seven-year Tribulation Period will not pass away until they see all these Tribulation signs taking place. The fact is this; a generation of Jews will survive the Tribulation Period and see Christ return to earth in His Second Coming and be saved (Rom. 11:26; Zech. 12:10-13:1).

The Church of today is not to be looking for specific signs that must occur in order for Christ to return in the Rapture; instead, they are to be listening for the trumpet sound (1 Thess. 4:16), since Christ’s return in the Rapture could happen at any moment. This brings us to our final “false sign” that is being promoted today in the Church.

IV. The signs from Bible chronologies that indicate Jesus will return on a specific date.

There are many fanatical and fanciful, so-called prophecy experts today, who claim they can find certain chronologies in the Bible, which point to the actual date when Christ will return. These intricate and imposed chronologies on the Bible become signs which indicate when Christ will return. Those who try and date Christ’s return do numerical gymnastics with the Bible in order to arrive at the actual time when Christ must return.

The folly of date-setting can be readily seen throughout the passing centuries. Pope Innocent III predicted that Christ would return in His Second Coming in the year 1284. Baptist preacher William Miller predicted Jesus would return to upstate New York on October 22, 1844. Jehovah Witnesses have set several dates for the end of the prophetic end and Christ's Second Coming (1919, 1915, 1918, 1919, 1920, 1925, 1941, 1975, and 1994).

In 1988 Edgar Whisenant wrote a book entitled "88 Reasons Why Christ Will Return in 1988." The book did not sell very well in 1989! Harold Camping predicted that Christ would return in September 1994 and wrote an entire book imposing chronological implications on the Bible which do not exist. He has recently set October 21, 2011 as the date for Christ's return and the end of the world. Others based Christ's return on certain feast days and "blood moons" and predicted that the Rapture must occur in September 2008. The list could go on. However, it's time to cut through all of these false sign calculations and find out what the Bible really says about Christ's coming.

Christ clearly revealed that no person could know the exact timing of His Second Coming to earth.

Matthew 24:36

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

This verse is placed within the context of Christ's Second Coming to earth and should stop date-setters from trying to predict when Christ will return in His Second Coming. If one living during the Tribulation Period could not determine the exact timing of Christ's return, with all the signs that will be given to them (Matt. 24:32-33), then how could anyone expect to calculate the time when Jesus will return in the Rapture? The Rapture is a separate event that is not linked with Christ's Second Coming. The Bible also compares the Rapture to a "secret coming" based upon the texts that explain Christ's return to rapture the Church out of this world, prior to the beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

1 Corinthians 15:51-53 reveals:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

The Rapture is comparable to a “secret coming” since it was not revealed in the Old Testament Scriptures. It’s also a secret coming for Christ will not reveal Himself to the world at this time, as He will in His Second Coming (Matt. 24:27-30; Rev. 1:7).

We must remember that only the truth about Christ’s Second Coming to earth was revealed by the prophets in the Old Testament (Isa. 9:6; Dan.7:13-14). However, the secret coming is revealed in the New Testament and becomes the hope of New Testament saints who in Christ (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Stop and think; if one can set a date when Christ must return, then Christ’s return could not have been imminent during Paul’s day, or the days of the early church, and the whole doctrine or teaching about imminence would be false. And yet the Bible clearly teaches the imminent or any-moment return of Christ for His Church.

Revelation 22:12

“And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

The word “quickly” (Rev. 22:7, 20) means that Christ’s will return soon, speedily, suddenly, without delay and warning. The word connotes imminence or the any-moment return of the Lord to take His Church (the Bride of Christ) back to Heaven (John 14:1-3). All that needs to happen for Christ to return is for Christ to return! The soon return of Christ means the any-moment return of Christ and this is what this world “quickly” is teaching. Jesus Christ is returning soon, suddenly, and without any prior warning for His Church.

If I told you that I will soon arrive at your house to take you out to Shady Maple for supper, you would not expect to wait four years or a long time to get there! If someone was coming to visit you soon and without any

warning, it means they could come at any moment. Their visit is impending. If something can occur soon or suddenly (without warning) then the event is impending. It is imminent.

This is how the early church viewed and anticipated Christ's return in the Rapture. Jesus Christ was returning soon, suddenly, and without any delay. Paul was looking for Christ in his day ("We look for the Saviour" – Phil. 3:20). The Lord's return was "at hand" during Paul's day (Phil. 4:5). The early church expected Christ to return in their generation (1 Cor. 16:22; 1 Thess. 1:10). Christ's coming is at the door (James 5:9). Jesus was ready to step through the door of Heaven and return for His people. This means that there were no chronologies that had to be figured out, or any signs that had to be fulfilled or occur during Paul's day, or today, for Jesus to return in the Rapture. However, as we have seen, there would be many signs that would take place during the seven-year Tribulation Period that would precede Christ's return to earth in His Second Coming (Matt. 24:32-34).

Someone said:

"God didn't give us prophecy to make calendars but to build our character (1 John 3:2-3)."

Although we should not set dates regarding Christ's return or look for mandatory signs that must occur before Jesus returns in the Rapture (Phil. 3:20), there are trends and developments occurring today that indicate the period of the "end times" is fast approaching and that Christ's return is not far away. Christ is preparing the world for the final drama to begin and we can see the stage being set for the end times to begin.

All we can say today is that the stage is being set for the Tribulation Period (end times) to begin with all of its signs and cataclysmic judgments. The key players and props are already in place. Israel is back in the land as a nation, the nations of Europe are united, Russia has Islamic alliances, times are increasingly getting worse, and the entire earth is in need of a world leader that can bring peace and stability to a war-stricken and economically distressed world. We might call these precursor signs or trends of what is going to take place during the Tribulation Period. Let's not bury our heads in the sand! There are some clear prophetic signs markers that we can see today which indicate the "end times" are closing upon us and that Jesus may come soon!

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

We have all witnessed an approaching storm forming and moving across the sky. We have watched the fierce storm race toward the direction of our home and knew that it was just a matter of time until it hit! As the storm clouds approached and got closer we could hear the rumble of thunder and see the flashes of lightning even before the storm actually strikes. The sights and sounds let us know that a storm is impending.

Friend, there is another storm that is brewing today. An ominous dark cloud can be seen on the horizon which is going to eventually come and overtake the earth with God’s judgment. This prophetic storm will hit the earth during a period of time known as the “end times” or the seven-year Tribulation Period, which is known as Daniel’s 70th week (Dan. 9:27) – a final week of seven years. The storm that is brewing and which will eventually come upon the earth is a storm of epic proportions.

Jesus predicted this coming storm in Matthew 24:21:

“For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

The Bible gives Church-age believers the promise of escape from this coming terrible storm of God’s future judgment (Rev. 3:10). The Bible predicts that Jesus Christ will return in the air (1 Thess. 4:13-17) to capture away His Bride (the Church) and take her back to Heaven (John 14:1-3), so she can live with Him for seven years (Dan. 9:27), before actually returning to the earth with Christ in His Second Coming (Matt. 24:27-31; Rev. 19:11-16). This is known as the pretribulational Rapture of the Church.

Matthew 24:3

“And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

The term “end” in the context of Matthew 24 is applied to the events associated with the future seven-year Tribulation Period which precede

Christ's Second Coming to earth. The "end times" are actually events which can only occur during the future Tribulation Period. Therefore, we are not living in the "end times" which occur before Christ's Second Coming; instead, we are living during the "last days" (2 Tim. 3:1), which occur prior to the secret coming or the Rapture.

The world is headed toward the "end times," or the time of God's coming judgment, which is related to the seven-year Tribulation Period. The storm is brewing and casting its shadows on the world even before it hits. The Bible predicts what the world scenario will be like during the seven-year Tribulation Period. As we read the books of Daniel and Revelation we can see how the world will be set up militarily, politically, and economically during these end times and also the judgments that God will unleash upon the earth during these seven years.

As we look at the prophetic Scriptures and what is going to take place in the future, we can't help but see that the world is being set up for the end times or this final period of seven years to begin. There are some unprecedented precursor signs and stage setting events occurring in our world today that are preparing the world to enter this final period of seven years predicted by Daniel (Dan. 9:27). We might call them the true signs of the times.

A. True Signs

The true "signs of the times" allow us to see in advance what is soon going to take place on earth in the future. They provide a preview of what is about to take place on earth when prophecy begins to once again be fulfilled.

Here is an important observation. We must remember that coming prophetic events often cast their shadow upon the world before they arrive. These shadows function as signs of the times. There are many trends and developments (shadows of what lies ahead) that indicate Christ's coming and the end times are not far away. These signs (trends or developments) are setting the stage for the end times (Tribulation Period) to begin.

Again, we must remember that there are no mandatory signs that must be fulfilled for Jesus to return in the Rapture; however, there are many precursor signs or trends developing that would lead us to believe the

coming of Jesus Christ for His Church is closer than it every was before in the history of Church.

Should we look at developing trends and signs in the world today as indicators of Jesus' soon return? Or should we just stick our heads in the sand, live in ignorance, and pretend like nothing has really changed in the world, indicating the arrival of Christ's return? Most of us would agree that prophetic date setting is an unfortunate and unwise practice. We also know that no specific and mandatory signs must be fulfilled for Jesus to return in the Rapture. We also realize that some prophetic teachers have taken their treatments of current events to ridiculous extremes by reading the newspaper and claiming that the events happening today in the world are the actual fulfillment of Bible prophecy (newspaper exegesis).

For this reason, some swing to the opposite extreme claiming that we will not have any signs appearing in the world that indicate the approximate return of Jesus Christ. They claim that looking at trends and signs are a waste of time and that it's foolishness to even talk about the trends and developments that point toward the end-time scenario portrayed in Scripture. However, we should never disregard the trends of current events in light of Bible prophecy because of the excesses of a few. We are not going to throw out the baby with the bathwater.

The Bible never says that the terminal generation, or the last generation of Christians that are alive when Christ returns (1 Cor. 15:51-52), will be completely clueless about the nearness of Christ's return in the Rapture. The Bible never says that Christians will not see the ominous signs approaching on the horizon which indicated the end times (seven-year Tribulation Period) is about to begin. In fact, we don't know how bad the world events will become before Jesus Christ returns in the Rapture. All we know is that we are moving closer to that time when end time events will begin to unfold on planet earth.

Matthew 16:1-4

"The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh

after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.”

Jesus chided the leaders of Israel about not being able to discern the “signs of the times” in relationship to His first coming. If this is the case, we should certainly be discerning Christians today and be able to witness some of the signs or trends, which are taking place in this world, prior to the Rapture of the Church.

By asking Jesus this question the religious leaders were saying that they rejected all the previous signs that Jesus had performed before their eyes (Matt. 12:38). They were in effect asking Jesus to give them a sign more spectacular than healings, so they could believe. Jesus condemned them and called them a wicked and adulterous generation (Matt. 16:4; 12:39). Jesus reminds them that they were careful observers of weather signs and could forecast whether the weather would be good or threatening. Nevertheless, they had been surrounded by spiritual signs relating to the person of Jesus Christ and had missed all the signs that He had given to them (John 20:30-31).

Jesus was fulfilling the Old Testament prophecies by performing the prophesied miracles of the Messiah right before the leader’s eyes, and yet, they were blind to the clear signs of His first coming. In a similar way, many religious leaders and Christians are following the same sad pattern of being blind to the things that are happening in the world in relation to God’s approaching prophetic program and the end times. They are not ready nor are they willing to believe that the final drama of God’s prophetic program is about to begin.

Matthew 2:1-2

“Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.”

You will remember that these Magi, the ancient travelers from the east, saw a star, and they knew that they should follow it to find the Christ’s child in Bethlehem. This special “star” revelation may simply have been a revelation witnessed in the sky, as indicated by their title “Magi” (specialists in astronomy), and by the fact they referred to a star which they saw. Or the

revelation about this particular star could have come through some contact with Jewish scholars who had migrated to the East with copies of Old Testament manuscripts. Many feel the Magi's comments reflected a knowledge of Balaam's prophecy concerning the "star" that would "come out of Jacob" (Num. 24:17). In any event, these travelers were interested in the sign that God gave to the world to indicate that Christ was born. If this was the case for the Magi, shouldn't we be interested in the various trends, developments, and preparatory signs that are in the world today, which are leading this earth toward the end times? They should stir our hearts and provide us with much anticipation that Christ is coming soon.

To believe that there will be no preparatory signs which precede the Rapture and the end-time scenario of the Tribulation Period is about as believable that no football team will win the Super Bowl this year. Logic or common sense indicates that there will be certain detectable developments that will transpire in the world prior to the commencement of the end times, which will put many of the pieces and players in place for the Tribulation Period to begin.

We know that earthquakes, pestilences, wars (Matt. 24:3-8), and the rise of false messiahs (Matt. 24:24) have been occurring in our own day and time; however, during the coming Tribulation Period there will be an increase and intensification of these specific signs. The seven-year Tribulation Period can be viewed as a time when there will be a measurable increase of these signs or a greater frequency and of intensity regarding these signs as is illustrated by the beginning (Matt. 24:8) and harder birth pangs (Matt. 24:21) that a woman experiences. In short, the real labor pains or signs of the end times will occur during the seven-year Tribulation Period (Matt. 24:33), but this does not mean there will not be some false labor pains, which precede the true signs of fulfillment.

In other words, there are preparatory signs that will occur in the world today which are reflection of the signs that will occur during the coming Tribulation Period. What we see occurring in the world today should not be confused with the start of the labor pains related to the Tribulation Period but they are certainly similar signs which will intensify and escalate during the period of the end times.

Someone said:

"Hindsight is always 20/20."

From the 21st century perspective, it's easy to see that the prophetic trends have never been so evident, as they are today. These same developing trends would not have been quite so obvious to believers in the past generations (1800's – 1960's). We live in a unique generation, perhaps the terminal generation, who will see the development of many world trends or events that will make the promise of Christ's soon coming very dear and real to our hearts.

Not long ago I was walking on the sidewalk and I noticed my shadow on the concrete in front of me. My shadow is not me, and it has no substance, but the shadow signals that I am not far behind. It's a sign that I'm coming. In the same way, coming prophetic events often cast their shadow upon the world before they arrive. These shadows function as signs of the times.

Many times the decorations of the Christmas season are often seen at Thanksgiving. In one sense, Christmas is casting its shadow on the world, even before it gets here. In a similar way, the end times and what is going to unfold in the world during the seven-year Tribulation Period is casting its shadows on the world, even before these direct signs are fulfilled during the seven-year Tribulation Period. There are many trends and developments (shadows of what lies ahead) that indicate Christ's coming and the end times are not far away.

Another way to illustrate what is meant by the "signs of the times" is to imagine that you are sitting in an audience waiting for a play to begin. You are sitting in the audience, and before Act One, you can hear sounds behind the curtain. The actors are taking their place and positions on the stage and you know that the curtain will soon be drawn and the play will begin. In a similar way, the events transpiring in our world today are comparable to "stage-setting" events that are preparing the world for the final drama of the ages to begin. The present "signs of the times" can be referred to as "stage setting" events and trends that are preparing the world and paving the way for the end times to begin. The pieces and players related to the end times are starting to take their place behind the curtain. But before the curtain parts, all those who have trusted Christ as their Savior will be raptured and meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:17).

There are two ways to look at the true signs of the times. There are prophetic and mandatory signs that will take place during the Tribulation Period which will indicate that Christ's Second Coming is impending (Matt.

24:1-35). There are also preliminary and preparatory signs (trends and developments) which are taking place in the world today, prior to the Tribulation Period, which indicate the end times are not far away.

Now let's begin to look at some of these preparatory "signs of the times" which are casting their shadows on the world, which indicate that the end times and the Rapture of the Church are not far away. They can be viewed as the true signs of the times.

In the remainder of this study we want to look at the signs of the times or the preparatory signs that show us we are not far away from Christ's coming and the commencement of the Tribulation Period. Our world today looks strikingly similar to the one pictured in the Bible during the end times of the Tribulation Period.

There are ten super signs occurring in the world today.

These signs (trends or developments) are casting their shadows on the world and setting the stage for the end times (Tribulation Period) to begin.

1. The sign of religious deception and apostasy.

We are going to look at some signs predicted to take place during the coming Tribulation Period. However, as we have previously explained, these tribulation signs (Matt. 24:21) are casting their shadows on us today, since we see many of these things occurring in the day and time in which we live. If we were instructed to write a book, which would show how the present-day events of the world would pave the way for the end times (Tribulation Period) to be fulfilled, there would be no need to write it. This is because the scenario that has developed in our world today is an accurate book or script that is setting the stage for the Tribulation Period to begin. We couldn't improve on it. Unless we have our blind to what is occurring in the world we must conclude that the events occurring around us today are paving the way for the end times of the Tribulation Period to begin.

The sign of religious deception would be the first clear development that would occur to indicate that we are living close to the time when Jesus would return. The sign of religious deception and apostasy is raising its ugly head even today as we speak. This sign is casting its ominous shadow

over the Church and our world today even before the Tribulation Period begins.

- There will be those who claim to be Christ.

Matthew 24:5

“For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.”

Matthew 24:23-24

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Today the pope claims to be the vicar or replacement of Jesus Christ on earth. This is Roman Catholic teaching. What is our response to this kind of false and erroneous teaching? Matthew 24:23 says, “believe it not.” Don’t believe it! No man will ever replace Jesus Christ – not even the antichrist! Don’t you believe those who teach that some religious man is replacing Jesus Christ.

Cardinal Joseph Suenens had the charismatic experience of speaking in tongues and said after this: "Since I have had this [charismatic] experience, my allegiance to the Holy Father (the pope) as the Vicar (replacement) of Christ in the world has been heightened and strengthened. My appreciation for Mary as the co-redemptress and mediatoress of my salvation has been assured. My appreciation of the mass as the sacrifice of Christ has now been heightened."

Many have claimed to be Jesus Christ. Jim Jones claimed to be the reincarnation of Jesus, who organized a mass murder suicide at Jonestown, Guyana. David Koresh was the leader of a Branch Davidian religious sect, and proclaimed that he was "the Son of God, the Lamb. Marshall Applewhite posted a famous message declaring, "I, Jesus—Son of God—acknowledge on this date of September 25/26, 1995." This was two years before he and his Heaven's Gate cult committed suicide in rendezvous with a spaceship hiding behind the comet Hale-Bopp.

Charles Manson even claimed to be Christ. Sun Myung Moon, founder of the Unification Church, considered himself the second coming of Christ on earth. GG Allin, a punk rocker, whose real name was Jesus Christ Allin, possessed a large cult following. He was given this messianic name because his father, Merle Colby Allin Sr., then 33 years old, told his wife, Arleta Gunther, then 20 years old, that Jesus Christ himself had visited him and told him that his newborn son would be a great and all powerful man in the vein of the Messiah. The list could go on and on. Many less-significant people have claimed to be Jesus Christ. Dear friend, the Bible tells us that we are not to believe the lies of these false Christ's!

➤ There will be those who claim to see Christ.

We should never believe that another person is a replacement of Jesus Christ; however, we also should not believe those fellows who claim to see Jesus. We have all heard various people claim that they had a dream or a vision during the night, and experienced a visitation of Jesus Christ, at the foot of their bed.

Matthew 24:25-26

“Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.”

The man who says, “I saw Jesus at 4:30 last night” should not be taken seriously. He should be shunned and seen as a heretic. God calls a person a liar who makes the claim that they have seen Jesus. He may have seen something – but He did not see Jesus! Jesus is not appearing to people today in dreams or visions. Jesus said don't believe the dreamers!

I once heard a man say that he had died and went to Heaven and saw Jesus. And there in Heaven he saw the body parts of babies who were aborted, and as he walked along on what felt like plush carpet, he saw Jesus and talked with Him, like he would talk with any other man. Listen, the Bible says, “believe it not” (Matt. 24:26). Don't fall for these types of false religious and ridiculous stories. We simply cannot believe these types of fanatical visions and trances that are being promoted today in the cults and modern charismatic movement.

- There will be those who fail to preach the word of Christ.

Matthew 24:11-12

“And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

During the future Tribulation false prophets (speaking lies) will join with many the false Christ's (those claiming to replace Christ) in seeking to deceive people about God and truth. This is called apostasy. Apostasy is when people depart from Bible truth and teach their own manmade lies and deceptions. Instead of speaking forth the true “word of Christ” (Col. 3:16), or the Scriptures that Jesus gave to us, they will present their own false teachings which disregard truth and correct doctrine. The future Tribulation Period will be a time of unprecedented deception and spiritual confusion. The false prophets will persuasively teach doctrines that seem true; however, they will be false and satanic. Because of this rise of false teaching and the acceptance of error, iniquity or lawlessness will increase and cause any love for righteousness, truth, and the things of God to grow cold in the hearts of professed believers. Here is the point; as people accept religious lies, they will no longer love the truth and those things, which are sound in doctrine.

This sounds strikingly similar to what Paul warned Timothy about in regards to what would take place in the last days, prior to Christ's return in the Rapture.

2 Timothy 4:2-4

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

Today the great masses in the postmodern and emergent church movement no longer want to hear sound teaching. Instead, they want to listen to “fables” or mythical stories which have no Scriptural support or depth. The Bible says that people will seek out (“heap to themselves”) many available teachers, who would tell them what they want to hear, rather than teach them the truth about doctrine and holy living. The people in today's modern church and culture are described as having “itching ears”

that need to be scratched by the teachers for hire. In other words, our religious contemporary culture wants to hear positive messages or non-condemning messages and most religious teachers are willing to give it to them. As a result, the false teachers turn people away from old-fashioned Bible truth and replace it with fables or fictional stories or myths (1 Tim. 1:4). These myths (fictional narratives) consist of religious talks which have no solid Bible truth or doctrine attached to it. They refer to teachings which are new, novel, and entertaining. Man-made fables will not convict people of their sin or bring them to the place of repentance. As a result, many congregations of today are filled with comfortable, professing Christians, who are listening to comfortable, religious talks, which contain no Bible doctrine.

The fact that a preacher has a large congregation is not always a sign that he is preaching the truth. In fact, it may be evidence that he is tickling or scratching people's "itching ears" and giving them what they *want* to hear instead of what they *need* to hear. The Joel Osteen's and Robert Schuller's of our own day are a prime example of teachers who are out to scratch the people's ears instead of preaching Bible repentance, holiness, and doctrine.

In an appearance on the Phil Donahue show in 1980, Schuller tried, incredibly, to portray Jesus as an egotist! Here's what he said: "The Cross sanctifies the ego trip. That's very significant. In other words, Jesus had an ego. He said, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me." Wow! What an ego trip He was on!"

What blatant blasphemy this is to accuse Jesus Christ, the very One who was the very essence of humility, of being an egotist! The sign of religious deception is everywhere today. A man can get a following over night if he claims to have some esoteric and mystical experience. I will never forget how one man in California thought his tortilla chip looked like a picture of Jesus. As a result, he set up a shrine around the tortilla chip so people could come and worship Jesus. The church today has fallen into the melting pot of mysticism, which promotes experiences that do not align with truth and what the Bible teaches. If you want to see Jesus, then open up your Bible, and learn of His character and loveliness. You won't find Him in a bag of tortilla chips!

Apostasy can be summarized in two ways.

- Departure from truth

1 Timothy 4:1

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.”

The expression “latter times” is referring to the time prior to Christ’s return in the Rapture. It’s a term similar to “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1), which refers to the period or era of time that exists in the world today, just before Christ raptures His Church. The “last days” or “latter times” are not the same period of time known as the “end times” (Matt. 24:3-51) which relate directly to the seven-year Tribulation Period.

No doubt, the signs that are mentioned here and in 2 Timothy 3:1-7 were already occurring in Paul’s day, when he was writing, and therefore became an indication that Christ’s coming was soon. This is why Paul (Phil. 3:20) and the early church (1 Cor. 16:22) expected Jesus to return during their life time.

During the era of time in which we live today, the sign of religious apostasy will be clearly visible in the world. The apostasy is explained as people who “depart from the faith” or from those things that all Christians believe and cherish in the Bible. The meaning of “the faith” refers to the great doctrines of the Bible and what they mean in their historic definitions and teachings. Today people no longer believe the Bible, and if they refer to the words of the Bible, they often change the definitions of the words and meaning of the texts. Many today from the cults, Christendom, and the new courageous atheists claim that the Bible is not the final authority and therefore the writings of other, so-called lost books of the Bible, and the conclusions of secular humanists, can actually replace the Bible.

My son sent a Gospel tract to one man this last week and he sent me his response via email. The man wrote: “Thank you for thinking of me and sending me the religious tract. I read it and found it interesting, but not convincing, as it was entirely based on the assumption that the current Christian Bible is the only true and original word of God. The booklet is also full of errors in logic and rhetoric.”

My friend, the Bible is the only logical truth that is in the world today. It gives the only answer to the sin question and man's need of eternal life. And Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Dwight Pentecost has observed:

"In the period of church history known as the dark ages, men were ignorant of the truth; but never was there an age when men openly denied and repudiated the truth."

The boldness of Bible rejecters and the blasphemous conclusions of false teachers are the result of demonic deception ("seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" – 1 Tim. 4:1). There is no other explanation for what is occurring in the Church today except that demons are behind this overwhelming tide of error. Satan's demonic hordes are working overtime to bring about deception in the world as the Rapture approaches.

1 John 4:1-3

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world."

This Scripture warning also reminds us of the role that demons will play during the last days. We are called upon the "try the spirits" which means we must test what spirit is behind the messages that we are hearing. There is the Holy Spirit but there are also many demonic spirits in the world today promoting deception. We must remember that Christ, or the Messiah, was prophesied to come into the world, as God incarnate (God in the flesh – Isa 7:14), and reveal God's being and nature to mankind (John 1:1, 14, 18). What does the person believe about Jesus Christ? This is the real test to discover whether the Holy Spirit, or a demonic spirit, is behind his teaching and message. A person must believe in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, that He was God in the flesh, if he is going to pass the fundamental test of allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ.

John 1:1

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

John 1:14

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

If a person not believe this, then he is demonized. Demons are running his doctrine and he has been eating lunch with the devil! In this verse, John is juxtaposing spirits with the false prophets of his own day. In other words, you can't have a false prophet with a false spirit. If a preacher claims that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (His incarnation), as God, then you can be sure that the Holy Spirit is behind his message. However, if a preacher says that Jesus Christ has not come in the flesh, as God, then you can be sure that the spirit behind his message is a demonic spirit.

The Arianism heresy is still with us today. Arius was a church leader (A.D. 318) from Alexandria. Arius denied the deity of Christ and was more of a threat because he claimed to believe in the writings of Paul and was more systematic in his beliefs. Arius denied both the deity of Christ and the trinity. He believed that Jesus was the Wisdom and Word of God but not God Almighty. Arius explained away the Scriptures which speak to Christ's deity by saying that they were accommodations or expressions of courtesy so we could understand the exceptionally human Jesus.

Jehovah's Witnesses modern day example of the Arian heresy is this group. They claim Jesus was a great man and a prophet and the Word of God but not God Almighty. Mormons are modern day examples of polytheists who believe there are many gods. Mormons believe that “As man is, God once was, and as God is, man may become.” They believe we can all attain to divinity and hence believe in many gods. The full-blown liberals deny the deity and miracles of Christ. To be a liberal Christian is in reality an oxymoron. Anyone who denies the deity of Christ isn't a Christian according the Words of Jesus himself (Jn. 8:24). The deity of Christ is the main pillar of Christianity. If you reject Christ's deity, you kick out that pillar and Christianity crumbles. If you reject the miracles of the Bible you make Jesus and the authors of Scripture liars, you undermine the Word of God, and strike a blow at the only objective source of revelation we have.

One modern day apostate is Robert Funk, a New Testament scholar at the University of Montana. He is the founder of the notorious Jesus Seminar which began operating in 1985. The avowed purpose of the Seminar was "to renew the quest for the historical Jesus." The Seminar conducted this quest in a very unusual way. Meeting twice a year for six years, the group voted on each of the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. They voted by dropping colored beads in a box. A black bead meant Jesus definitely did not make the statement in question. A gray bead meant He did not say it, but it might have represented His thinking. A pink bead meant He probably said something like this, but not in the words recorded. A red bead meant He definitely made the statement.

What a spectacle this must have been to the Lord as He watched these so-called scholars vote on passages from His Word. The Bible says, "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools" (Romans 1:22). The chilling thing to keep in mind is that the men who judged the Gospel accounts, and many like them, are professors at seminaries across America. They are the ones who are training the current generation of pastors and teachers.

Of course, the apostasy is not confined to the seminaries. It can be found in all denominations. Consider some examples. In 1997, on the eve of Lent, the Right Reverend Alan Smithson, the Bishop of Jarrow (Anglican Church in England), held a press conference in London. He announced that it was traditional for Christians to give up something during the forty days of Lent. He then dramatically announced that he had decided to give up Bible reading! He went on to explain that he was going to devote his time during Lent to reading the Koran, because he felt like the Muslim scriptures would make him "more understanding, more compassionate, and more fully human."

In 1997 the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church sponsored a meeting in Kansas City that attracted 4,000 participants from all over the world. Called, "Global Gathering III," the conference featured a parade of speakers who attacked the fundamentals of the Christian faith. One speaker declared that the crucifixion of Jesus reveals an "abusive Heavenly Father who is not fit for Christian worship." The speaker urged instead that the Church revere all the world's children as little messiahs equal to Jesus.

Consider the Episcopal New Church Center in Walkersville, Maryland. This church hired a public relations firm to develop a print and television advertising campaign. One of the first ads in this campaign carried a banner headline that read, "To Hell With Church!" It showed a man thinking, "If I want to feel guilty, I'll eat some cheese fries." Another ad in the series showed a painting of Christ nailed on the Cross. Scrawled over the painting were the words, "Of course people with pierced body parts are welcome in our church."

Apostasy is everywhere. Today Christians are inviting Muslims, Jews, Hindus, American Indian practitioners of "native religion," and others to join in worshipping "the one true god, regardless of the name you may give to him or her."

Pope John Paul II got caught up in the inter-faith and ecumenical fad in 1986 when he invited the leaders of the world's religions to come to Assisi, Italy to join him in praying for world peace. One hundred sixty representatives came, including the Dali Lama (who considers himself to be a god). Each representative prayed to his own god at the Pope's request! Did the Pope believe their gods were real? Or did he believe that they were all praying to the same god, but under different names?

1 John 2:18

"Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

Beloved, time is running out! The Bible predicts that during the "last time," or the period of time before Christ returns in the Rapture (1 Tim. 4:1), that there would be many who are rejecting the personal claims of Jesus Christ. Today there are many "antichrists" that are in the world. This means that great masses of people are "against Christ" as the word "antichrist" means. You don't have to look very far today to find an antichrist! People everywhere, not only in the apostate Church, but in the world at large, are against Jesus Christ. They reject His personal claims to be God, the only way to Heaven, the only Person to be worshipped, and the Giver of eternal life.

Paul said in Acts 20:28-29:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.”

Paul spoke of the coming tide of apostasy that would soon begin to move upon the early church and today it has grown into a giant evil monstrosity. The birds are lodging in the branches of Christendom (Matt. 13:33). The prediction of apostasy would shortly come to pass, since the Judaizers and Gnostics, would soon invade the early church.

We have all heard of the apostle’s creed, but did you hear of the apostate creed? I think it was best summed up by William Booth at the turn of the 20th century. William Booth was asked: "What in your opinion is the chief danger, social or political, that confronts the coming century?" The General, who was invited among others to reply to the question, sent the following: "In answer to your enquiry, I consider that the chief dangers which confront the coming century will be religion without the Holy Ghost; Christianity without Christ; forgiveness without repentance; salvation without regeneration; politics without God; and Heaven without Hell."

Someone said that in liberalism, “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministration of a Christ without a cross.”

- Departure from godly living

Titus 1:16

“They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.”

You have heard the old expression: “There are many professors, but few possessors.” Many people profess to know God and have a relationship with Christ today, but in reality, they do not possess salvation and new life in Christ. This is evidenced by the sinful lifestyle that they are leading and promoting. Paul is warning Titus that apostasy also takes on the form of departing from the acceptable norms of society. Wrong doctrine leads to wrong living. Many today within the professing ranks of the church are making the bold claim that they have a relationship with the true God of the

Bible and yet their “works” (sinful works related to their living) are a witness against what they are saying (“in works they deny him”). In other words, their lifestyle of sinful living contradicts what they are saying about having a relationship with God. America needs to hear this today. The sinful lifestyles of our generation that depart from Scriptural and traditional standards of society, and Biblical family values, are termed as “abominable” (detestable), “disobedient” (to God and what is right) and “reprobate” (unapproved and rejected) by God.

Sex outside of marriage is still a sin (2 Pet. 2:13). Homosexuality is a terrible sin in God’s sight. Straight and gay are not equal in God’s moral code. Apostate living is being witnessed today in the professing church with its acceptance and endorsement of homosexual lifestyles, even among the clergy.

Mark Hitchcock said:

“Sadly, sins that were not condoned by the most hardened sinners a generation ago are now being accepted as alternative lifestyles for professing Christians and even ordained ministers.”

The worst sins one could speak of a generation ago are now ordained in the apostate church. Professing Christians are seen living on the lowest levels of society and trying to identify with Christianity. Individual churches and whole denominations are shockingly, wading knee-deep, into the worst kind of moral filth the world has ever known.

2 Peter 3:3

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts.”

Peter reminds us that there will be many scoffers living in the last days, prior to Christ’s return in the Rapture, who are false teachers, which will actually mock the promise of Christ’s coming and the future judgment of the world by God. In fact, they will mock the historic doctrines of the Bible and create a god after their own liking. It’s these apostates who are said to be “walking after their own lusts” and who are under the bondage of sin (2 Peter 2:19). They will live lives of reckless abandonment. During the last days, prior to the Rapture, there will be an increasing apostasy from pure doctrine and pure living.

There are those in the Church today that are dedicated to the homosexual lifestyle. Homosexuals claim to be part of the church today. Apostate, liberal, denominational leaders are coming out and promoting a new tolerance of the gay lifestyle. If homosexual preachers are not a sign of the times, then I don't what is!! We are living in days of the worst apostasy the professing church has ever witnessed! Signs of the times are everywhere!!

Most apostates and modern America in general, could summarize their belief system, or what they don't believe, in the words of this apostate creed.

“We believe everything is OK as long as you don't hurt anyone,
To the best of your definition of hurt,
And to the best of your knowledge.

We believe in sex before, during, and after marriage.
We believe in the therapy of sin.
We believe that adultery is fun.
We believe that sodomy's OK.
We believe that taboos are taboo.

We believe there's something to horoscopes, UFO's, and bent spoons;
Jesus was a good man just like Buddha, Mohammed, and ourselves.
He was a good moral teacher
Although we think His good morals were bad.

We believe that all religions are basically the same.
They all believe in love and goodness.
They only differ on matters of
Creation, sin, heaven, hell, God, and salvation.

We believe that after death comes Nothing
Because when you ask the dead what happens, they say Nothing.
If death is not the end, if the dead have lied,
Then it's compulsory heaven for all
Except perhaps Hitler, Stalin, and Genghis Khan.

We believe in Masters and Johnson.
What's selected is average.
What's average is normal.
What's normal is good.

We believe that man is essentially good.
It's only his behavior that lets him down.
This is the fault of society.
Society is full of conditions.
Conditions are the fault of society.

We believe that each man must find the truth that is right for him.
Reality will adjust accordingly.
The universe will readjust. History will alter.

We believe that there is no absolute truth
Except the truth that there is no absolute truth.”

In 2 Timothy 3:1-7, Paul clearly taught that the departure, or apostasy from holy or pure living, will extend to the members of the professing church.

2 Timothy 3:1 declares:

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.”

The other day, I saw a girl with orange and green hair and thought to myself, “We must be living in the last days!” The Bible says that we are living in the “last days” (2 Tim. 3:1) and that the earth is headed toward the “end times” (Matt. 24:3) which is Biblically identified as the seven-year Tribulation Period that Jesus prophesied about. The “last days” lead into the “end times” and what is going to occur in the future (the Tribulation Period) is beginning to cast its shadow on the world today.

Second Timothy is a last day epistle. It speaks of the events that would be taking place in the world before Christ returns in the Rapture. Paul predicts that in the last days “perilous times shall come.” The word “perilous” means that the times in which we live will be hard to bear, harsh, fierce, troublesome, and difficult times. This reminds me once again that we don’t know how bad things will get before Jesus decides to return in the Rapture. It’s very possible and probable that the world will move into a time of terrible delusion and difficulty before Christ returns for His Church in the Rapture. There will be “perilous times” occurring on planet earth before Jesus returns.

This description in this passage is actually an explanation of the apostasy (falling away) that will occur in the professing church (both laypeople and

leaders), during the last days, prior to Christ's return in the Rapture. Why do I say this? The Bible says that these people claim to have a "form of godliness" (2 Tim. 3:5), or outward show of godliness, in that they are in some way connected to the professing church. This expression indicates they are people that are somehow related to the Church. However, true believers are commanded to "turn away" (2 Tim. 3:5) from these professing church members, or leaders, who are promoting false teachings and parading their sinful lifestyles within the professed church. In fact, within this same context false teachers or apostates are spoken about, who are termed as "men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2 Tim. 3:8) or what Christians believe and hold true. These verses describe the heart-wrenching apostasy that would occur during the Church Age, prior to Christ's return in the Rapture, which will ultimately culminate with the total apostasy of the worship of Antichrist during the Tribulation Period.

2 Thessalonians 2:3

"Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

The "falling away" or departure refers to the total apostasy from truth that will take place in the world following the Rapture. When the true Church is taken out of the world (1 Cor. 15:51-52), only the false Church, or great whore (Rev. 17:1-7) will be left on earth. It will be the ecumenical church of the end times, which will be composed of all faiths, religions, and cults. It will not espouse the truth. Furthermore, the ultimate apostasy from Christ and the truth will occur when the world will follow Antichrist's religion of the end times ("and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition who opposeth and exalteth himself above all this is called God, or that worshipped" – 2 Thess. 3: 3b-4a).

The apostasy taking place in these last days is setting the stage for the final apostasy to occur, which is related to the apostate Church and the final worship of the Antichrist. In fact, the New Age apostasy is preparing the world to accept the Man of Sin, who will someday claim to reach the highest godhood status, which any man could ever reach. The greatest apostasy that will occur is when the entire world will worship the Antichrist.

Revelation 13:8

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Today, we often wonder how mankind, on a worldwide scale, could worship and adore one man. But we have seen in recent times how untold millions can be mesmerized by fancy rhetoric and promises by world powers and leaders. The world is looking for a leader or savior that will solve the Middle East Crises, the economic crises, and the global unrest of war. Someday a man will arise on the world scene, who has a working plan, which will promise peace and utopia to the world. This person is called “the man of sin” (2 Thess. 2:3) and “antichrist” (1 John 2:18). Eventually, the world will worship this man, as God (2 Thess. 2:4), and the greatest apostasy, since the days of Nimrod, will occur on planet earth. People today already bow to the pope and other religious leaders on earth and this is what is going to occur during the future Tribulation Period.

By the way, the Bible says that the Antichrist will not be revealed until the Tribulation Period begins (2 Thess. 2:8 – “then shall that wicked be revealed”). It’s actually during the Tribulation Period when the Antichrist will be revealed and the great masses in the world will be deceived and damned because of the strong delusion that God sends (2 Thess. 2:11). In any event, Church Age saints, who are raptured, or taken out of this world before the Tribulation Period begins (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-11; Rev. 3:10), will not be able to identify the Antichrist. After the Rapture, the “wicked” (2 Thess. 2:8) or lawless one will have greater freedom and he will do things that will eventually result in his being identified as the Antichrist.

Here is the point. Everything taking place today is leading up to this future erosion and apostasy, or departure from the truth, by the apostate Church and the entire world, as unsaved men bow to worship the Antichrist. It doesn’t take much effort to see that we live in days of increasing apostasy. If you can’t see it, then go to the dollar store and buy a pair of those one-dollar reading glasses, and you will see it.

As already stated, apostasy in the Church, not only relates to false religious systems of unbelief, but also the failure to live out lives of obedience, holiness, and righteousness before God. In fact, Paul states that the apostasy was taking shape in the day that he lived and says, “the mystery

of iniquity doth already work” (2 Thess. 2:7). This means that the ever-rising tide of wickedness that is against truth and what is right is already present in our world.

The term “mystery” in the New Testament writings refers to a new truth previously unknown before its revelation in the present dispensation. In this case, the mystery is the revelation of a future climax of apostasy, describes here as lawlessness, would occur in the world. Paul concludes that even before the final apostasy occurs, during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period, there would be a working of iniquity or lawlessness, wickedness, and reckless living occurring in the world. The future apostasy would, in one sense, cast its shadows back on the earth, and begin to take shape in the world, even prior to the time of complete and total apostasy from truth and godly living.

Today there is a tremendous spirit of disobedience toward God and truth that is already stirring. It is leading the way to the final revolt or apostasy during the Tribulation Period. The future period of apostasy from truth and godly living, would in some sense, begin to take shape, even before it comes to its full-blown head during the Tribulation Period. Paul clearly reveals that this working of iniquity or apostasy is taking place in the professing Church, which is in the world today, prior to the Rapture and the beginning of the end times.

Jeremiah 23:14 warned of apostasy in Israel:

“I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.”

These types of sins are among the Church today and we should see them as a “horrible thing” and separate from them. What are the signs of apostasy that are occurring in the church today? Paul speaks to Timothy about this in 2 Timothy 3. These are the signs that have become progressively more characteristic of nominal Christianity.

On my recent trip to Florida, I saw some very interesting road signs. However, one of the most interesting and intriguing sign was found in southern Florida and the area of the Everglades. The sign read: “Warning: vultures may cause damage to your vehicle.” I later discovered that

vultures love the rubber on your car and try to sometimes do damage to your car. This was a rather unusual sign. As I think of signs, the Bible predicts that there will be signs that will occur on the earth before the Lord Jesus returns in the Rapture.

Paul outlines these specific signs in 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

❖ A defection from true love (2 Tim. 3:2, 4)

Again, these “men” certainly include false teachers and apostates who are leaders in the Church (vv. 6-8) and those who are following their teachings and evil habits. They represent apostate and professing Christianity which has strayed far from the historic roots and practices of both doctrinal and lifestyle integrity. However, even the true church can absorb some of the traits of apostasy as it moves further away from God’s standards. The expression “lovers of their own selves” (vs. 2) means they are self-lovers instead of God-lovers! This is a defection from the true nature of love for God and means that people live for their own pleasures, wants, and according to their own schedules, instead of God’s schedules. Man has a “love affair” with himself today. Humanism promotes the self-love in man. The self-esteem movement has its roots in clinical psychology, namely in the personality theories of such men as William James, Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm, Abraham Maslow, and Carl Rogers, who promoted antibiblical secular psychology. Its claims today are that we need to promote self-love, self-concept, self-image, and self-fulfillment since these are the all-important ingredients to living effectively in the world.

John MacArthur observes:

“The concept of self-love as a positive characteristic did not find its way into the church until the late twentieth century, and, lamentably, it has spread quickly to broad portions of evangelicalism. Contrary to the unambiguous teaching of Scripture and contrary to its clearly destructive consequences, the heresy of self-love continues to find acceptance among those who claim Christ.”

Many today are buying in to the apostasy of the last days which is related to self-love. It is widely claimed that a person cannot love God and other people rightly unless and until he loves himself rightly. This is turning God’s truth completely on its head! It reverses what both the Old and New Testaments teach. Matthew 22:37 states: “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt

love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.” Today people are being taught to love themselves, live for themselves, and listen to their own hearts, instead of following truth and what is right. 2 Cor. 5:15 says, “And *that* he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.”

Paul also says in this list that people will be “covetous” (vs. 2) or lovers of wealth instead of lovers of God! This too is a defection from true love. Man today thrives on materialism and money. Everywhere we look we see the push for getting rich and having all that you want in life. The wealth and health movement in the modern-day Church has certainly fallen into this trap of covetousness. God wants you to be rich.

1 Timothy 6:5 further describes this last day madness and apostasy: “Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.”

A love for money and materialism in the Church is a sign that the last days are upon us. We live a day when greed has gone wild.

Revelation 3:17 describes it in this way:

“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.”

The expression “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 2:4) should be added to this point about defection from true love. No one can deny that we live in a pleasure-mad world. These are sexual pleasures, hedonistic pleasures, monetary pleasures, sports pleasures, and entertaining pleasures that have swept into the Church today and overtaken the lives of people. These earthly pleasures keep people from loving God and have a relationship with Him.

The nominal Church of today is caught up with entertainment world of pleasure and Hollywood and has lost sight of what is most important in life. Personal pleasure runs the lives of people today instead of a love for God, His Word, and His will. As I think of the mad craze today for entertainment in the local church, I see how the Church is being pleasure-driven by entertainment, instead of the things of God. Lovers of pleasures more than

lovers of God. This describes a time when the Church will be characterized by loving entertainment more than God. Think of it! We live in a day when the pleasure related to entertainment is ruling the Church. It is possible that entertainment may have a God-honoring goal, but at the same time, entertainment quickly degenerates into mere pleasure. The worldwide craving for entertainment is just one more evidence that people's hearts and love have turned away from God.

Matthew 24:12

“And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.”

Love for God, righteousness, and truth will no longer be present in the hearts of people.

❖ A defection from humility – (vv. 2, 4)

The words “boasters” (vs. 2), “proud” (vs. 2) and “highminded” (vs. 4), which means to be puffed up with pride. All of these should all be lumped together in one category. These types of boasters are the people who know-it-all and who try to deceive people into thinking their way is the only way. They love to see their names in print and their faces on television. They exaggerate their abilities, their accomplishments, their talents, their reputations, and their value to society and to the Church. These people glory in making a big display of themselves, their riches, their accomplishments, and even their alternative lifestyles. The apostate says, “I’m proud of my homosexual lifestyle and I want show it off to the world. I want the world to know that I’m proud to be gay, and proud to have a same sex marriage, even as a leader in the Church.

Proverbs 16:18

“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.”

❖ A defection from wholesome speech (vs. 2)

The word “blasphemers” (vs. 2) can be applied to a broad range of things but basically is points to those who speak evil of God and the truth. Today the liberal theologian denies the deity of Jesus Christ and the great doctrines of the Bible. By their lips and lifestyle, they deny the truth of God's Word.

The word “false accusers” (vs. 3) is the same Greek word that is used for the “devil” (diabolos) in the Bible. Religious slanderers are those who speak false and evil things against God and the truth. The apostate teacher slanders dedicated Christians by telling them that they are too narrow-minded and they slander the absolute standard of God’s Word.

Also, within the professed Church of today, gossip has gone wild. Gossip means you talk about others, in order to destroy their reputation, and make yourself look better. When doing this, you partake of the same character of Satan, who is a slanderer. Malicious gossips make a point of harming the reputation of others, whether to promote one’s own interests or agenda, to express jealousy or hatred toward others, or simply to vent one’s anger. Gossips take pleasure in damaging reputations and destroying the lives of people. Gossip is a sign of the apostasy that will take place in the Church during the last days.

Whatever you do, don’t become a professional gossip, and destroy the character and reputation of others. Proverbs 26:22 states, “The words of a talebearer *are* as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.” Proverbs 26:20 adds, “Where no wood is, *there* the fire goeth out: so where *there is* no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.”

❖ A defection from obedience

The expression “disobedient to parents” (vs. 2) speaks of the great rebellion that is evident in the Church today among the younger generation. With the hippie generation and the present generation of today we have witnessed a great departure from traditional family home structure. Disobedience to authority is the seedbed of apostasy. The spirit of self-will is manifested today in the young generation within the professed Church. They are disobedient toward their parents and this ultimately funnels over into their disobedience against God and what is right. Many in the younger generation of the church today accuse the older saints of not changing, but the fact is they have changed! They allowed God to change their lives after they were saved and today many in the older generation are actually waiting for the younger generation to change their worldly conduct and follow God.

This disobedient spirit carries over into adulthood and church life. Self-rule wins out over God’s rule within a person’s life and decisions. Rebellion in

early age often leads to rebellion in older age. The disobedience of children to parents in our day has become epidemic, and the cause is not hard to find. The disappearance of mothers into the work force and the spiritual failure of both mothers and fathers is the cause. The failure to discipline has brought on this terrible sign of the last days. Disobedience is seen to be a psychological dysfunction and many are trying to drug their children to correct their problems. Has the Church gone mad today? Whatever happened to old-fashioned discipline? Putting a board to the seat of learning is still God's remedy for rebellion!

Proverbs 19:18

“Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying.”

❖ A defection from gratitude (vs. 2)

The word “unthankful” (vs. 2) is appropriate for this next category. It describes people who do not express gratitude to God for life, breath, and for everything they possess in life. Instead, they praise themselves for their own accomplishments. The person who elevates himself above others will feel that he deserves everything that he receives and therefore feels no need to express gratitude to God for what he has. The ungrateful person despises the very idea of grace, which denotes goodness received, which is undeserved. Romans 1:21 states: “Because that, when they knew God, they glorified *him* not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.”

❖ A defection from holy living (vs. 2)

When people are “unholy” (vs. 2) it means they disregard sacred things and do not allow God and the Bible to rule and purify their lives. Instead of living a holy or consecrated life toward God, they live a wicked life that is contrary to God's plan and purity. The unholy person is driven by self-love in order to gratify his own lusts and passions, while giving no thought to decency or God's approval.

Today the church wants to bypass God's holiness, on many issues, as they try to use pragmatism to gain a huge following. Nominal Christians live without discretion and discipline. They long for worldly things, look like the world, and listen to the same things as the world does. Holiness has also

taken a back seat in most churches today. We want lost people to attend our churches, but we do not help them if we mimic their way of life, culture, and worldly practices. The philosophy in the church today that says, “You’re okay and I’m okay” has no regard for the holiness of God. The music of rebellion has also placed a blot and blight upon the modern-day Church. A vast portion of the Church has adopted the musical rebellion of our culture and has jettisoned God’s holiness in relation to musical expression.

❖ A defection from family life (vs. 3)

Satan is out to destroy traditional families today. He wants men living together and women living together instead of the traditional and Biblical family of a man and wife being wed together in marriage for life. The expression “without natural affection” (vs. 3) means that people have become hard-hearted and unloving toward kindred or family members and the way God has designed the family to function. This is a term that speaks of social love among a family unit. Today there is a breakdown in the family unit. This is a sign of the last days. Our country has been built upon the Biblical and traditional foundation of the family unit, which means one father, one mother, and children living together and loving each other.

Today mothers are working while children are in the home and missing out on rearing and teaching their children (Titus 2:5 – “keepers of the home”). Also, fathers are not providing for their families (1 Tim. 5:8). These actions are described as living “without natural affection” in relationship to the home life. In addition, there is a growing divorce epidemic among families within the corporate Church. Dads and moms are walking away from their children, committing adultery, and destroying their families. Adultery is “without natural affection.” It is an act of selfishness which is a sign of the last days.

In general, there is a growing epidemic of a lack of affection toward the family unit even among those in the professed Church. This is why homosexual priests have been molesting children. They have no affection toward family life. If this is not a sign of apostasy, then I don’t what apostasy is! In general, the family is under attack these days. Let us remember that as the families go, so goes the church, and so goes the nation!

❖ A defection from commitment (vs. 3)

Today people do not want to be committed to God and truth. They want to live their own life in their own way. The word “trucebreakers” (vs. 3) refers to those people who want nothing to do with commitment of any kind. They want to break their ties and promises and live without any commitment to God, truth, and the Bible. They want to live their lives with no strings attached. They want to live without any covenant or agreement with God. These types of people refuse to enter into any kind of agreement and be committed to anything or anyone. A truceless person breaks his relationship with God and is determined to have his own way, regardless of what God thinks, what the consequences might be, even when it might destroy their own lives, and the lives of their families. You can’t reason with these people and they are inevitably self-destructive. As far as they are concerned, there is no compromise, no reconciliation, and no court of appeal. Their self-love is so extreme that absolutely nothing matters except doing as they please. Whatever happened to commitment on the local church level? Many today want no commitment to God’s House, God’s ways, and God’s will for their lives.

❖ A defection from self-control (vs. 3)

The motto of our secular society today is this: “It can’t be wrong if it feels so right.” The word “incontinent” (vs. 3) means to live without self-control and restraint and the word “fierce” (vs. 3) speaks of living savage and untamed. Today mankind is living like the animals. And why shouldn’t he? They are teaching in the secular schools and colleges that we came from the animals! Our society has gone to the dogs!! Many people today, even within the professing Church, are living without any self-control or restraint upon their lives. The age of free-sex and do as you please has inundated the professing Church. The pornography industry is exploding and getting rich because people are living without restraint.

1 Corinthians 9:27

“But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.”

God wants us to discipline our lives today by taking note where we go, what we watch on TV and the computer, what we listen to, what we read, and even what we eat.

❖ A defection from goodness (vs. 3)

The next expression “despisers of those that are good” (vs. 3) means that people are opposed to living the kind of good life that God condones and other Christians are living. I like to say what John W. Peterson wrote in a song many years ago: “Give me the good life!” However, many are not singing this any longer. They don’t want the “good life;” instead, they want the “worldly life.” This is true within the ranks of the professing Church.

Many today are opposed to Christian virtues that honor God but are quick to promote their secular vices. It seems that the tables are turned and many people hate the good and love the evil. Isaiah 5:20 exclaims, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” I’m amazed at how man today, even within the Church, who glorify sin. The sins of impurity, immodesty, heathen body piercing, and rebellious rock music seem to be the norm. When these things are promoted and practiced we become promoters of bad things and actually oppose the good things. Today the modern Church seems to hate what should be loved and loves what should be hated.

Remember that even genuine believers, in some measure, can promote the apostasy and rebellion that is seeking to overtake the Church. Apostasy can apply to the realms of theology, music, the arts, and secular living. We see how the modern evangelical church has become corrupted by the secular culture and the ecumenicalism of our age today and is playing around with certain apostate teachings (annihilation of the soul, human psychology), music, and apostate living.

❖ A defection from loyalty (vs. 4)

The word “traitors” (vs. 4) speaks of betrayal. There are many today within the ranks of the professing Church who betray God, Christians who stand for the truth, and the truth itself, as they seek to promote things contrary to righteousness. There are many today who call themselves Christians while defying “the faith” (Jude 3) that all true Christians love and defend.

The term “heady” (vs. 4) can also be placed under this category. This is a person who is not loyal to God. The word literally means to “fall forward”

and speaks of someone who falls headlong into sin because they have no commitment to God and live a reckless life from a spiritual perspective. They have defected from what is good, right, and honorable before God. You can't be "heady" and "holy" at the same time! This is the person who is careless, negligent, and rash in the decision-making process. Loyalty to God is not part of this person's agenda and life. Instead, they do what they want to do. This is the type of person who rushes toward the pursuit of their own will and program of life, without considering any loyalty to God and truth. The heady person is not loyal to God, since he wants to follow his own dreams and goals in life, instead of God's will for his life. A heady person is someone who has no regard for God's will or the interests of others. He only lives and thinks of himself.

Luke 9:23

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."

When we are ready to follow Christ we will say to Him, "Anything, anywhere, any time, and at any cost. We will also say to Jesus, "Whatever, whenever, and wherever."

Vance Havner once remarked:

"We have put the demands of discipleship in fine print for fear that we will scare away the prospects."

❖ A defection from real Christianity

Many people today in the church only possess a "form of godliness" (vs. 5) which means they only possess what we might call formal religion. They do not really live and experience the true Christian life. However, they take on the appearance that they are religious and linked to God and Christianity. They wear the right robes, sing the songs of the redeemed, and appear to be part of the true Church, and yet, they are imposters! They are tares among the wheat (Matt. 13:24-25). They possess a religious form without godliness! This speaks of religion without a true relationship with God. It involves religion and regulations without real Christianity. It is the social gospel without substance. These people may be a Catholic, Lutheran, Episcopal, or Baptist, but they do not possess the true thing, which is salvation through Jesus Christ.

The expression “denying the power” means several things. First, many today within the professing Church deny the only power that can save them, which is the power of the Gospel message.

Romans 1:16 says,

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

False teachers deny the power of the Gospel message. This is why they don’t preach it. Although the messages that they give are presented in many persuasive ways, their messages are actually empty, worthless, damning messages that keep people out of the Heaven. In failing to preach the Gospel they deny its power to save souls.

Second, many in the professing church deny the power of God, which can transform them. Titus 1:16 once again says, “They profess that they know God; but in works they deny *him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.” Many nominal Christians keep up “a form of godliness” but they don’t want the liberating force or power of grace to change their lives. This is religion without reality. Outwardly these people seem religious; they make a profession of Christianity, but their actions speak louder than their words. By their ungodly behavior, they show that they are living a lie. There is no evidence of the power of God working in their lives. While there might be reformation, there never was regeneration.

Edmond Hiebert sends this warning about the form of godliness or the false disguise of Christianity today: “It is the fearful portrayal of an apostate Christendom, a new paganism.” Today many of the leaders in the Church are masquerading under the name of Christianity, and immature members in the church will accept their apostate and paganized form of Christianity, as the true faith.

We are commanded to “turn away” (vs. 5) and separate from all those who are promoting the religious form but who are denying the power of the Gospel to save them and transform their lives (1 Cor. 15:33). This forbids ecumenicalism with those who are not saved and wear a religious disguise, and who are not part of the true Church. The Word of God is very clear about this. Don’t associate with apostasy! Don’t attend churches that are apostate and don’t associate with those who promote ecumenical ties with

apostasy! We are to steer clear of it in every way and stay clean at all costs.

❖ A defection from truth

The defection of false teachers and their followers is described as a three-fold process:

a. They creep (vs. 6)

“For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts.”

Paul then goes on to talk about these types of apostates when he says “they which creep into houses” (vs. 6). This may refer to the house churches during the early days of the Church. The apostate creeps or secretly enters into homes and churches, with a disguise, and promises a new start and life, but he does not have the right message. They are actually coming with false messages and false hopes. Jude vs. 4 says, “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Secrecy and disguise are still the hallmarks of apostasy. This is the way they capture the clueless and weak.

Some have use 2 Timothy 3:6 to argue that Christian women are not as discerning as Christian men. But the Bible does not say that Satan deceives godly, discerning, and spiritual women; he deceives “silly women,” or foolish women, who are living for themselves, and who have no spiritual discernment. God does not want you to be a silly woman; He wants you to become a spiritual woman who loves God and follows His will for your life and marriage.

Many cults today are directed and dominated by silly women (foolish women) who have had their lives taken captive by Satan. These foolish women are “laden with sins” (vs. 6) which means they are already weighed down with many sins. It’s these types of women that are “led away with divers lusts” which indicates that these foolish women are led into sinful living, by their ungodly impulses, and they are weak spiritually an

emotionally, because of sin. These types of people are easy targets for Satan and his religious quacks that are in Christendom.

b. They confuse (vs. 7)

2 Timothy 3:7

“Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

This gives the sad story of many people today within the professing Church. These silly women and many others are always learning something new from the false teachers, but in spite of all the new things they are learning, they never can understand the truth of God’s Word, and allow the truth to change their lives. Through false teaching and error, people remain confused and don’t understand the truth of God’s Word, and how it applies to their lives.

The expression “ever learning” or always learning does not mean that they are continually learning more about the Lord Jesus and the Word of God. Rather, it means they are constantly being confused, as they delve into one form of error after another, but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). They are talking about the Bible but not learning the Bible. They are using the Bible but not discovering the true meaning of the Bible. They never come to know the truth about salvation and sanctification or the way that God wants them to live.

c. They combat (vs. 8)

“Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith.”

The apostate combats or fights against the truth. The two men mentioned here, withstood Moses, by imitating his works. They made their rods into snakes as Moses did (Exodus 7:9-12). As we have already seen, one of the signs of the times is that there will be a revival of demonism in the last days, which will be accompanied by miracles wrought by demons. Demons can perform miracles. Levitation, clairvoyance, astral projection, and paranormal powers all testify to this. The cultic world of Satanism is filled with miracles. Then too, we have the deception of miracles occurring today in the modern Charismatic Movement. Not all miracles are of God and we must come to grips with this reality today. The miracle-making men of today

who claim to be apostles are often hailed as the greatest superstars in the Church. But let us remember that as we approach the end times that great deception will occur in regards to miraculous healings. The fact that a man claims to perform miracles is no sign that he is of God. Jannes and Jambres were not of God and they performed miracles. They were nothing more than religious magicians.

Matthew 7:22-23

“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works (miraculous feats)? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

The truth is that during the last days and end times there will be an increasing effort to deceive people with miraculous signs. Miracles will be performed by Satan’s men, which will cause the world to follow these men and their false teachings. Men will perform miracles which will seemingly validate their claims to be prophets and teachers of God, but in reality, they will actually be imposters promoting Satan’s agenda of the last days and end times.

Matthew 24:24 concludes with these words:

“For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.”

Today apostates are imitators of true religion. We see this in 2 Timothy 3:8. They want to resemble the true thing, but in actuality, they are defectors, who “resist the truth” (2 Tim. 3:8) of God’s unchanging Word and standard. They are constantly combating the truth. They are also said to be “men of corrupt minds” (depraved minds – 2 Tim. 3:8; 1 Tim. 6:5) who think thoughts contrary to truth and righteousness. These same people are said to be “reprobate” (disapproved, and worthless) “concerning the faith” (what all Christians believe in the Bible).

In other words, these apostates are defectors from the way of truth and are disproved and worthless to both God and the Church. These apostates should have no part in our fellowships and associations. Listen, if a man cannot clearly and correctly tell a person how to be saved from hell, then he is a worthless cause to Christianity! He is a reprobate. He is an

apostate. If a man does not take a stand against homosexuality and stand up for the historic doctrines of the Bible, he is an apostate! Apostasy is a tale-telling sign that Jesus is coming soon.

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

According to a Pew Research Foundation, about one in five Americans believe that Christ will return in the current generation. A U.S. News and World Report poll revealed that 60 percent of all religious Americans believe the world will end eventually, and about 20 percent say earth’s life expectancy is just a couple of decades away. Today many people everywhere share a common belief that the world is getting near its closing time. Apocalyptic thinking is in the air. I’m glad the Bible gives us the answer regarding what is going to take place in the future. We have a “more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19) and can know the events that are going to unfold in this world.

2. The sign of world chaos.

Matthew 24:6-7

“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”

Jesus predicted that the world would eventually enter a stage of chaos, calamity, and violence during the end times. A time of world upheaval would be experienced by mankind. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus is speaking about the signs of God’s judgment that would occur on earth during the future seven-year Tribulation Period. However, we already see similar events occurring today in the world, and these events can be seen as trends or developments (precursor signs) of what Jesus said would take place in the future. Again, coming events often cast their shadows on the world before they arrive. Changes in the world are occurring at an alarming rate. Both natural disasters and manmade disasters are creating a dangerous world. World violence and upheaval are everywhere today.

The world chaos of the last days will be witnessed in three ways.

➤ Detection of wars

The Bible predicts that there will constantly be talk about wars taking place in the world, and even rumors of wars, which could potentially occur, during the future Tribulation Period. This will be war to a degree that the world has never known or seen before. Today war is everywhere. This sign is casting its shadow upon the world even today as we head toward the Tribulation Period.

First, there will be internal warfare as Matthew 24:6 describes (“nation shall rise against nation”). The term for “nation” (ethnos) refers to the races of Gentile people and may indicate there that there will be conflicts taking place, not only between the different nations, but also among the races themselves that reside within a particular nation. These may be internal conflicts will undoubtedly include racial, ethnic, and cultural confrontations much like we see in the world today; however, they will occur on a vaster and more intense scale, during the coming Tribulation Period.

The hatred among the races is still with us today. Hitler believed and taught that the Germans were the superior race. In fact, the whole theory of evolution was born out of man’s hatred for the races and judging the superiority of some races over others. Today hatred among the different races still abounds. This will escalate as we approach the end times.

Second, there will also be national warfare (“kingdom against kingdom”). The point is that no group of people will be exempt from war or the threat of war. Military confrontations of every sort will accelerate throughout the world even as we have seen during the recent generations - WW1, WW2. Vietnam War, Korean conflict, Iraqi war, Afghanistan war, etc. You can add to these wars the more recent scare of terrorism and the ever-increasing threat of nuclear war. Terrorism is a real threat today in our world. It’s the new type of war that is on the rise.

Revelation 6:4

“And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.”

The Book of Revelation also predicts that “a great sword” or warfare will become increasingly evident and violent during the end times. As we move toward the period of the end times we can be sure that war and rumors of wars will be on the rise. Have you listened to the news lately or picked up the paper? There are always multiple wars occurring somewhere throughout the world and the talk of war threatening our own country and many other countries of the world. Who can forget the Cuban missile crisis? Today Russia and communism is once again raising its ugly head and turning the world against the United States and other freedom-loving countries.

There is what Jesus called “wars and rumors of wars” (Matt. 24:6). Think of the war zone of the Middle East and the terrible atrocities that are taking place today in the name of the Allah religion. The world today is in a state of unrest. The more recent tragic incident of 911 is but another sign that tells us about the world upheaval in our own time. These wars and rumors of wars are precursor signs to what is yet to come. The sign of warfare that is going to occur during the Tribulation Period is casting its ominous shadow on our world even today.

➤ Division within families

In the context of the end times, Jesus said something that is very startling.

Matthew 24:10

“And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.”

Matthew 10:21 speaks of the same thing:

“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.”

Mark 13:12 records the same truth:

“Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death.”

During the coming Tribulation Period the family unit will be in disarray and experience unprecedented division. The family will turn on each other. One

way this will be occur is when one family member turns in the names of another family member to the nanny state religion (Rev. 20:4-5). They will seek the death penalty for their own family members because of their own hatred, intolerance, and disobedience to God and truth.

Those who want to remain loyal to truth and God will experience persecution by their own family members. A terrible hatred for family members will occur as one seeks to honor God while another seeks to honor the Antichrist and his state-run religion and government.

This is a terrible sign that we see occurring even in our world and culture today. Today people like Al Gore and many secular schools are teaching the children to follow the state and their guidance counselors instead of the parents. The secular schools want to run the lives of our children. They are seeking to gain power and persuasion over our young people. The government is not only trying to turn our children against traditional and Biblical family values; it's also seeking to run the lives of our children. This is one reason why children are rebelling against their parents today. Families are already turning against each other. The goal of humanism is to promote division within the traditional family unit. Children are being advised to tell on their parents, if they are punished, and children are threatening their parents with lawsuits and everything imaginable. We are leading up to these dreadful days and wicked times which Jesus prophesied would come upon the earth.

➤ Devastation among the earth

Jesus went on to say that there will be “famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in divers (various marked off portions) places” of the earth (Matt. 24:7). Jesus predicted that many worldwide natural devastations would occur simultaneously, in various marked places of the earth, during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period. As some parts of the earth starve from famines, others will be shattered by earthquakes, others decimated by plagues, others paralyzed by other unspecified terrors. Today we read about famine, earthquakes and the terrible plague of the aids epidemic in third world countries. One out of three people in many third world counties are dying from aids. Children are dying by starvation and other plagues at an alarming rate.

The third and fourth horsemen of the apocalypse predict that all of these events would transpire on earth during the end times. Famine (Rev. 6:5)

and death by war, hunger (starvation) and disease (Rev. 6:8) are predicted to occur on earth.

Revelation 6:8

“And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.”

This is similar to what Jesus predicted would take place on earth during the first three-and-one-half years of the Tribulation Period. Millions upon millions of people will die due to the acts of the “sword” or military warfare. In light of nuclear activity in the hands of terrorists one does not have to guess how great masses of people will die. The 20th century witnessed two world wars. Ten million people died during WWI and 20 million people died in WWII, including six million Jews. It is no secret the death toll that warfare can have on human population.

John also mentions “hunger” (vs. 8) which is starvation from terrible famine. People will die by the millions from starvation which can be a direct result of warfare but can also occur as a result of no rain falling from the sky and pestilence overtaking the earth. When he mentions “death” (vs. 8) he is probably referencing death that results from pestilence or disease caused by animals. John was probably reflecting upon Ezekiel’s prophecies which mention death by famine.

Ezekiel 5:17

“So will I send upon you famine and evil beasts, and they shall bereave thee; and pestilence and blood shall pass through thee; and I will bring the sword upon thee. I the Lord have spoken it.”

Ezekiel 14:21

“For thus saith the Lord God; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence, to cut off from it man and beast?”

Apparently millions of people will also die during the first half of the Tribulation Period as a result of terrible worldwide pestilence and disease that is caused by various germs and viruses. Terrorism may inflict deadly viruses on the human race that will kill millions. Then too, God may allow

rats and birds or other animals to carry deadly diseases that will kill millions of people. With destruction and chaos everywhere in the world one can readily see how pestilence can spread like wildfire and claim the lives of millions of people.

The “beasts of the earth” (Rev. 6:8) can refer to dangerous wild animals. Apparently the Lord Jesus Christ will turn the wild animals on people and they will begin to kill people as an act of God’s wrath. The Tribulation Period will be the Day of the Animals! The ferocity of the animals will increase at alarming rates but during the Millennial Kingdom the animals will dwell together with humanity and each other in peace (Isa. 11:6-7).

The same term “beasts” is also used in Acts 28:4-5 to refer to a poisonous snake or serpent so it is possible that this passage is also referring to smaller animals that inflict suffering on mankind. Since the beasts are linked with pestilences it may be that other kinds of beasts are in the writers mind in this apocalyptic literature such as rats and other disease carriers.

The rat has killed more people than all the wars in history. Rats carry as many as 35 diseases. Their fleas have carried bubonic plague, which killed a third of the population of Europe in the fourteenth century. Their fleas also carry typhus, which in four centuries has killed an estimated 200 million people.

The first half of the seven-year Tribulation Period will result in the death of approximately 1.5 billion people, according to present-day statistics. People will die terrible deaths due to war, hunger, deadly diseases spread by animals or germ warfare, and by animals themselves as they turn on mankind and spread diseases.

The mention of “earthquakes” (Matt. 24:7) by Jesus certainly grabs our attention today. In 1999 an earthquake in Turkey killed 15,000 people and left millions without homes and ill health. A title wave in Honduras killed 25,000 people and left one half million homeless. A mudslide in Venezuela killed 50,000 people in just a few days. A tsunami created in the Indian Ocean by an earthquake killed between 175 and 200,000 people.

The 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake was an undersea megathrust earthquake that occurred on December 26, 2004, with an epicenter off the west coast of Indonesia. The earthquake triggered a series of devastating

tsunamis along the coasts of most landmasses bordering the Indian Ocean. Again, this quake killed nearly 230,000 people in fourteen countries inundating coastal communities with waves up to 100 feet high. It was one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. Indonesia, India, and Thailand were the hardest hit.

With a magnitude of between 9.1 and 9.3, it is the second largest earthquake ever recorded on a seismograph. This earthquake had the longest duration of faulting ever observed. It caused the entire planet to vibrate as much as 1 cm (0.4 inches) and triggered other earthquakes as far away as Alaska. Of course, the more recent devastating earthquake in Haiti is once again a telling sign that we are headed toward the end times.

We live in days of unprecedented world upheaval or chaos and these signs will continue to manifest themselves as we approach the end times. This sign of world turmoil which will occur during the Tribulation Period is already casting its scary shadow on our world today. Wars, famines, plagues, and pestilences are on the rise. Signs of the times are everywhere!!

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

3. The sign of Christian persecution

Matthew 24:9-10

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

Consider:

- ✓ The reality of persecution.

Jesus said “they shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you.” Persecution of Christ’s followers will intensify during the end times (Tribulation Period) and believers will begin to be arrested, hated, and martyred for Christ’s sake. Jesus predicted that an unprecedented time of persecution would occur in the future which would result in the death of

God's saints. The Bible predicts that millions of saints will die for their faith in Christ during the coming Tribulation Period.

Revelation 7:9

"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."

Revelation 7:14-15

"And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them."

Countless millions of people will be saved during the Tribulation Period but many will suffer martyrdom for their faith at the hands of apostate religion and the Antichrist. The reality is this; a time of terrible persecution, unlike anything previously experienced on earth, will sweep upon planet earth. God's people will die terrible deaths because they refuse to join the apostate church (Rev. 17:6; Rev. 6:10) and later identify with the Antichrist's false religious system of worship (Rev. 13:15).

Even today, as we approach the end times, we find that persecution for those who identify with Christ is on the rise. The wicked and godless systems of socialism and communism are not the friends of Christ, Christianity, and Christians. These wicked systems are persecuting Christians throughout the earth. When freedoms are taken from us, eventually our freedom to worship Christ is also removed, and Christians begins to suffer for their faith.

✓ The reason for persecution ("ye shall be hated" and "offended").

The first reason for persecution will be hatred. Jesus stated that "ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake" (Matt. 24:9). Even today there is an increasing intolerance against Christians and their Gospel message. The unsaved masses are turning against God and God's messengers like never before. We should not be surprised of this hatred.

Jesus said in John 15:18-19:

“If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.”

John adds in 1 John 3:13:

“Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you.”

Hate fuels persecution and this is what Jesus said would take place during the end times. God’s people would be hated for being identified as followers of Jesus Christ.

The second reason for persecution will be offense. The professing Christians living during this time will be offended when discovering that they must suffer for Christ and the truth (“many will be offended” – Matt. 24:10; Matt. 13:21). These people will have had an outward identification with Christ (2 Tim. 3:5 – “form of godliness”) but they will prove by their defection or desertion that they never belonged to Him. When the persecution becomes too severe, they will forsake Christ and join fellow unbelievers in persecuting God’s people (“shall betray one another, and shall hate one another”). This obviously means unbelievers will claim to have a connection with God’s people and they will learn to hate believers and seek to persecute them and even kill them. God’s people living during these dark days will be betrayed by those who once were a part of their fellowship, but who become offended at Christ, when the cost rises too high.

In summary, Jesus gives three conclusions why unbelievers will not have any contact with true believers and Christ. First, the price will be too high to identify with believers (vs. 10 – suffering for Christ’s sake will be offensive to them and they will defect from truth and Christ). Second, the deception of false teachers will be too convincing (vs. 11). Third, sin will be too attractive (vs. 12). For all these reasons, unbelievers will begin to punish and persecute God’s people. This division and persecution of God’s people will even occur within families during the coming Tribulation Period.

Mark explains it in even more vivid detail.

Mark 13:9-13

“But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them. And the gospel must first be published among all nations. But when they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. Now the brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Those who are saved within the family ranks will be turned in by unsaved family members. Brother shall go against brother, father against his own son, and children against their parents. This is how persecution will be experienced against believers during the coming Tribulation Period. But once again, the sign of Christian persecution which will occur in the coming day is casting its ominous shadow on the world even today.

2 Timothy 3:12

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”

John and Betty Stam answered the call to serve the Lord in China. One day after they arrived, a band of Communist guerrillas entered their town, plundered the countryside, and killed many innocent people. Discovering that these lone foreigners were Christian missionaries, the rebels treated them brutally, and finally made martyrs of them. On the way to the place of execution they stopped at a small post office, and the clerk asked John Stam, "Where are you going?" "I don't know where the soldiers are going," he replied, "but we are on our way to Heaven!"

Persecution is going to intensify as we head toward the Rapture and the end times, when all of these predicted persecutions will come to pass, as Jesus said. We might not want to think about persecution taking place in America, but if the present course of socialism and secular philosophy continues in our country, we can be sure that persecution will begin to raise its ugly head in our own beloved land.

Revelation 17:6

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

The “woman” is clearly presented as the end-time apostate church (“the great whore” – Rev. 17:1) which will raise its ugly head after the Rapture of the Church and rise to world power. This woman is connected with the religious past of Babylon (Rev. 17:5) and will become the breeding ground of many “harlots” (false religions) lumped together in one giant harlot system which is against truth and God.

Babylon is both a system (Rev. 17:5) and a city (17:18) which means that the literal city of Babylon will be rebuilt to house the ecumenical apostate church of the end times. More on this in another point. It’s this harlot religious system that will murder the true saints of God living during the Tribulation Period since this woman is said to be “drunken with the blood of the saints” (Rev. 17:6). The apostate church of the end times will have power during the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period and martyr those who come to faith in Christ. The apostate church will want everyone to come under the same umbrella, and when true believers refuse to join the ecumenical bandwagon of the end times, they will be persecuted for their faith (Rev. 6:10).

All those who do not unite with the harlot system during this time will be in danger of being persecuted and put to death. Many saints will die when they refuse to participate and espouse the woman’s ecumenical agenda. The woman’s desire for worldwide religious control will cause an edict to be sent out into the entire world, which will in essence say, those who do not unite with the one world church, will be put to death. Of course, true believers will not want to cooperate with an apostate system that is not honoring to God. They will refuse to join the harlot system and suffer the consequences of martyrdom. They will be severely persecuted for proclaiming their faith in Jesus Christ.

One good way to promote the one-world church will simply be to annihilate all those who oppose it. This is what the woman (apostate harlot church) will do to all those who are saved and become true Christians during this time period. If the people do not imbibe her religious cocktail drink of false teaching from her golden cup (Rev. 17:4), she will persecute or slay them.

The Bible envisions a massive religious system of the end times that will encompass the globe and severely persecute the saints.

Revelation 18:24 also speaks about this religious woman shedding “the blood of prophets and of saints.” These prophets and saints have to do with those who are actively witnessing and seeking to serve the Lord during the future Tribulation Period. The prophets that the Babylonian system will kill, while headed up by the Antichrist, are the two witnesses, which are said to prophesy during this time period (Rev. 11:3-12). The blood of prophets will be spilt as a result of Babylon’s hatred for God and those who represent Him. The two prophets will die during the time when the Antichrist, the final Nimrod of Babylon, takes control over the Babylonian system.

The saint’s blood will also be shed. These saints refer to the great multitudes that will be martyred during the future Tribulation Period. They are saints who will stand up and witness for Christ during these dark days (Rev. 6:9. 12:11; 7:9-14). The phrase “and of all that were slain on the earth” points to the total deaths of all God’s servants, whether prophets or saints, who oppose the Babylonian religious system, first under the harlot church, and then the Antichrist, the final Nimrod to rule Babylon, in what will be the last display of Babylonianism witnessed on the earth.

Great multitudes of God’s servants during the Tribulation period will die a terrible death, at the hands of the Babylonian religious system, especially as millions reject the Antichrist’s final world religion and the marking system.

Revelation 20:4

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Millions will die at the hands of the God-defying Babylonian system of the end times (“a great multitude of which no man could number” – Rev. 7:9), as it relates to both the ecclesiastical apostate church and finally the religious empire of the Antichrist. In short, the harlot woman (false church) and the Antichrist’s dictatorship system of government will kill many followers of Christ during the end times.

The emperor Diocletian set up a stone pillar on which were inscribed these words: FOR HAVING EXTERMINATED THE NAME CHRISTIAN FROM THE EARTH. This of course never happened. But let me say that Christians are dying in other parts of the world today more than we will ever realize. The persecution of God's people is beginning to be seen and felt, even in our own country, as Christian liberties are being stripped away from our lives with the push of godless and hellish humanism. Satan wants God out of this country and God's people to be persecuted. Satan wants to enthrone sin instead of the Savior. Satan wants to promote evolution instead of Christianity and Allah instead of God the Father. And if I read the Koran correctly the Muslim religion wants to conquer the world for Allah. This means that true Allah followers will kill in the name of Allah, and if they have a chance, they will rise up against true followers of Christ and Christianity. The persecution that is taking shape today is a precursor sign of what will occur during the Tribulation Period.

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4. Sign of ecumenicalism

Politics and religion are the two hot topics of today. Many times politics wants nothing to do with religion. The familiar expression used by the liberal, left-wing people of today is “Separation of Church and State.” This sounds like a broken record today. However, there is coming a day when politics and religion will not be separated. In fact, during the first half of the Tribulation Period, a false church called a “harlot” will actually rule the world through the backing of the Antichrist. Politics and religion will be united within the city of Babylon and together they will amass some of the greatest wealth this world has ever seen.

Ecumenicalism is a movement that is worldwide in scope, which is designed to unite all denominations and religious bodies (mainline denominations, Charismatics, Catholics, Mormons, Seventh Day Adventists, Eastern Religions, etc.). This is accomplished by emphasizing various points of agreement and de-emphasizing points of doctrinal disagreement. The ultimate aim of ecumenicalism is for all religious beliefs to be one. This practice of religious ecumenicalism is also called

syncretism. Ecumenicalism is drawing together all denominational structures and religious organizations, which may be corrupt in doctrine and apostate in nature, in order to unite together for some common goal or interest. Ecumenicalism becomes an open invitation for all faiths to join together, put aside doctrinal differences, and associate with one another for some important cause or activity. This integration process mingles belief with unbelief and truth with error since various religious structures are not true to the Gospel message and the truth of God's Word.

Within the workings of trans-denominational participation and ecumenicalism there are always cooperative efforts between denominational structures and different churches that are errant in doctrine, some of which represent blatant unbelief. Churches of belief and unbelief form committees and cooperate with one another in certain religious endeavors and outreaches, which becomes a breach of the doctrine of separation (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Many times those who may be converted are shipped back into the Roman Catholic Church and other liberal denominations, which refuse to preach the true Gospel and other key truths of Scripture. This becomes a terrible black spot on ecumenical efforts. People are told to go back to the church of their choice instead of God's choice. The obvious goal of the liberals in ecumenicalism is to gain more followers of their faith and fill their coffers whereas the goal of the conservatives is to see souls saved.

We can conclude that the ecumenical church is seeking to build the one world church. The overall thrust or aim of this movement is to bring all churches, denominations, and ultimately all religions together into one world religion. Ecumenicalism practices a false organizational unity (not a spiritual unity), which is many times based upon subjective experiences and so-called charismatic renewal (2 John 2:1-2, 9-11). Ecumenicalism is represented by the birds roosting in the branches of the tree of Christendom (Matt. 13:31-32), the whole leavening process prior to the kingdom's arrival (Matt. 13:33), the apostasy in the end times following the Rapture (2 Thess. 2:3), and the great harlot in the book of Revelation (Rev. 17:1-2, 5, 15).

Satan is building this ecumenical monstrosity today. It is the aim of our enemy (the devil) to attach every church to the ecumenical monstrosity. God's people must see this devilish plan and "come out from among" (2

Cor. 6:17) this last day ecumenically based syncretism that unites with apostasy and downplays doctrine.

The harlot woman portrayed in Revelation chapter 17 is a picture of the false ecumenical church of the end times. She is a false ecumenical woman of the end time.

- Her appearance

Revelation 17:1

“And there came one of the seven angels which had the seven vials, and talked with me, saying unto me, Come hither; I will shew unto thee the judgment of the great whore that sitteth upon many waters.”

Her appearance is that of a seductive “harlot” system which represents false religion that is against God. She is set in contrast to the true bride of Christ (Rev. 19:7) and is a harlot that is seductively leading people into false teachings. In prophetic language, harlotry, prostitution, fornication, or adultery is always symbolically portrayed as religious apostasy or idolatry before God (Isa. 23:15-17; Jer. 2:20-31; 13:27; Ezek. 16:17-19; Hos. 2:5; Hah. 3:4).

Revelation 2:20

“Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.”

In short, the term harlot is a Bible metaphor for false religion, spiritual defection, idolatry, and religious apostasy.

- Her appeal

She is called “the great whore” (Rev. 17:1) to indicate her vast influence that she has over the earth. She is “great” in the sense of having a dominant role in spiritual idolatry throughout history and into the future as this prophetic context indicates. The “waters” (Rev. 17:1) on which this woman (pagan or apostate religion) sits are identified as many people (see Rev. 17:15). It seems that this woman will be a universal church that influences the entire world.

The fact that she “sits on” these waters (peoples) suggests the concept of control as well as unification. The nations are religiously united and politically affiliated with each other through the power and control of this religious system and its head. When the church is raptured, the apostate system, which will already have spread its tentacles all over the world, will quickly unite and become the one-world church.

People from all over the earth and from all walks of life, during the Tribulation Period, will be influenced and swayed by her seductive religious harlotry. All those who are seduced into the false religion will be unbelievers who left behind after the Rapture (Rev. 3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 11:10; 13:8, 12, 14; 14:6).

Then too, and even more importantly, this woman (apostate religion) will influence the leading figures and leaders of world countries.

Revelation 17:2

“With whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her fornication.”

The “kings of the earth” are world leaders who also personify their kingdoms (Rev. 16:14). This woman will seduce the great world leaders and masses of people on planet earth.

Revelation 18:3

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication, and the kings of the earth have committed fornication with her, and the merchants of the earth are waxed rich through the abundance of her delicacies.”

Revelation 18:9 repeats the same thing:

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning.”

Committing fornication with this woman (religious harlot) suggests that she will entice the world leaders and rulers of the nations to imbibe her pagan idolatry or religion which also involves sorcery or witchcraft. Revelation

18:23 says "for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived." When people reject the truth, they will believe lies (cf. 2 Thess. 2:10–11).

The imagery and metaphor of "being drunk with the wine of fornication" (Rev. 17:2) suggests that the inhabitants of planet earth during the Tribulation Period will imbibe and participate with her false religious teachings while committing spiritual fornication or (spiritual harlotry or religious idolatry) with her pagan teachings and false religions.

This is religious drunkenness. Many today are drunk on false religion. The wine (booze) is representative of Babylon's many false pagan teachings that people imbibe. They guzzle down Eastern religions, Roman Catholicism, and liberal Protestantism like booze. These pagan teachings have their roots in Babylon which is the fountainhead of all pagan religions. One popular idea that has been promoted by liberal Protestantism is that we are all God's children (Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man) and can come to God in various ways (pluralism); another is the delusion Satan has promoted from the beginning that we can be like God (New Age teaching) while disobeying Him and His way (Gen. 3:5). This has nothing to do with becoming like the children of God through Christ but becoming like gods through New Age mysticism. All the booze that this whore (apostate church) offers to her partners is representative of her false religions and teachings which will be promoted in the end time church.

Babylon as a religious system and city is coming back to earth. The New Testament predicts that at the end of this age that both the city and religion of ancient Babylon will once again stand in opposition to God. It's very likely that some of the same pagan beliefs promoted in the ancient city of Babylon will once again be practiced and promoted in the end time Babylon (harlot church).

We can be certain that the New Age Movement of today is paving the way for the religious Babylon (harlot church) to unite together under the beliefs of reincarnation, Transcendental Meditation, mystical experiences, and such like. The Eastern religions will gladly unite with those who embrace or at least promote these things. The goal of New Age teaching is "unity." The New Age concept is pushing for unity among all faiths and religions with the goal of influencing the religious organizations into their ideology (set of beliefs).

One prominent Emergent Church leader, Bob Bell, said:

“This is not just the same old message with new methods. We’re rediscovering Christianity as an Eastern Religion.”

I believe the final city and religious system of Babylon will in some measure practice the same occult religion as that of ancient Babylon. This is the religion which is now sweeping the Western world and gaining widespread acceptance among all levels of our society and liberal denominations.

Erwin Lutzer said:

“The *New Age* thus is a revival of the *Old Age*. And the *New Age* may well turn out to be the *Final Age*. For as modern Babylon gains in momentum, it will once again assault the heavens and shake its fist in the face of God...”

“For all nations have drunk of the wine of the wrath of her fornication” (Rev. 18:3). In other words, she will cause the world to “drink” or imbibe her religious false teachings which have their origin in Babel and the original city of Babylon. Babylon is the spawning ground for all the ecumenical apostate religions which are lumped together in one apostate system of the end times. So every false religion, which is represented in this wicked city of the end times, will have an intoxicating effect upon the masses. Her religious deception will result in the people of the earth becoming spiritually intoxicated with her pagan beliefs such as Catholicism, mysticism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Eastern Religions, the cults, and false denominationalism. When man disregards God as the true creator, he gets spiritually drunk on false teaching and moves into evolution, humanism, mysticism, reincarnationism, liberalism, occultism, and every other Babylonianism or false religion that was spawned at the Tower of Babel and Babylon.

- Her authority (vs. 3a)

Revelation 17:3

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

This harlot religious system will sway the masses with her multifaceted religious charm but also her political power and cause the world to follow her during the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 17:18

“And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.”

The city and the system of pagan religion are one and the same. Babylon is both a system (Rev. 17:5) and a city (Rev. 17:18) which means that the literal city of Babylon will be rebuilt to house the ecumenical apostate church of the end times. The city and system cannot be separated since the city of Babylon will support false religion. Therefore, the harlot woman (ecumenical false religion) will at one-point rule over the kings or leaders of the earth. Babylon will become a religious and economic power house of the end times.

This harlot religious system will have great political authority throughout the earth during the first half of the Tribulation Period. Church and state will be united in the first part of the Tribulation Period. The people and world rulers will have a fascination with the religious woman who will have great power and authority throughout the earth. Historically the paganism associated with Babylonian religion has controlled the great empires of the past as well as the future as indicated by the “seven heads and ten horns” (Rev. 17:3).

A careful explanation of these “seven heads” on the beast is that they represent Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and then the Revived Roman Empire of Europe in the end times (Tribulation Period) which is represented as the seventh head or empire under the rule of the Antichrist.

Revelation 17:12

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast.”

The ten horns on the seventh head pictures a revived European nation under the power of ten kings or kingdoms that the Antichrist will unite together in the end times.

Daniel 7:24 reveals the same ten kingdom imagery:

“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.”

The reemergence of a united Europe began in 1993 with the actual creation of the European Union (EU). The establishment of its central bank occurred in 1998. The EU, a unique organization of nations – an article from CBC News May 30, 2005. “The European Union evolved in the latter half of the 20th century to integrate European nations into a common market. The predecessor to the European Union – the European Coal and Steel Community – was established in 1951 to pool coal and steel resources among member nations. The organization eventually became known as the European Union, and evolved as a tool to integrate European nations into a common market, to create a common defense system, and to achieve a unified voice on the world stage.”

This religious system will actually control the beast (Antichrist) and his empire for the first three- and one-half years of the Tribulation Period. She is seen riding the beast! This woman is not the beast (personal Antichrist). However, she is seen riding the beast.

Someone has called this relationship that the whore has with the Antichrist as: Beauty on the Beast. The fact that the super church will ride the beast or Antichrist indicates that she will actually have control over his politics and movements during the first half of the Tribulation Period. Religious Babylon will ride Political Babylon at this point. However, the woman sitting on the beast also signifies that the Antichrist is supporting her in the religious role.

Arthur Pink says:

“The Woman seated on the Beast does not signify that she will rule over him, but intimates that he will support her.”

Actually, both will be true. She will have a ruling sway over him for the first three and one half years, since she is said to rule the kings of the earth (Rev. 17:18), but she will also support the Antichrist and His goals. The initial unifying and controlling factor of Antichrist’s kingdom will be religion.

David Levy states: “In the first half of the tribulation, each system will use the other to promote its ambition of world domination.”

False religion, like Romanism during the Middle Ages in Europe, has always tried to rule over people. False religion has historically tried to be powerfully aligned with leadership within world nations.



The woman (apostate religion) is seen to sit in a position of control over Antichrist and he supported her. There will be a close affiliation between religion and the Antichrist during the first half of the Tribulation Period. The harlot church will be supported by the beast (Antichrist) but in another sense it means that she will to some extent dominate, lead, and outwardly control or direct the movements of the Antichrist during the first half of the Tribulation Period. Reluctantly, the Antichrist will allow the woman to help build his empire. However, the Antichrist will use the allurements and deception of religion to bring the world together religiously, economically, and politically.

The question is this. How will she do it? How can a religious based system seduce the world into promoting and following her religious-based communism? The answer is – ecumenical religion! This woman will appeal to the masses because she will have something to offer everyone, since she will embrace all false religions in one ecumenical system.

- Her apparel

Revelation 17:4

“And the woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication.”

Prostitutes usually dress in a manner to attract attention to themselves, and metaphorically the harlot or Babylon will be no different. Ladies, don't play the harlot!

Proverbs 7:10

“And, behold, there met him a woman with the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart.”

Ladies, you should not dress in a manner that causes men to lust after your body! Did I say that clear enough so we all understand it!! What the world calls sex appeal becomes harlotry in God's sight.

The adornment of this harlot is similar to that of religious trappings of ritualistic churches today. Purple, scarlet, gold, precious stones, and pearls in this context reveal a false religion that prostitutes the truth.

John saw this harlot clothed in purple and scarlet, the colors of royalty, prosperity, nobility, and wealth (Judg. 8:26; Est. 8:15; Lam. 4:5; Ezek. 23:6; Dan. 5:7, 16, 29; Matt. 27:28; Mark 15:17, 20; John 19:2, 5).

These colors have for centuries been the colors of the Roman Catholic Church, and the wealth of this church is immense. Many believe that Papal Rome will somehow be involved in this last time system, at least in the first half of the Tribulation. This does not mean that the great whore is only the Roman Catholic Church. The Reformers taught this. Actually the whore is a picture of the composite ecumenical church, all religious faiths united together in the end times, but there can be no doubt the Roman Catholicism will be a leading figure in this harlot church. She may very well run the apostate church. Hence, the description of these colors is very interesting, since they depict the major colors of the Roman Catholic Church today.



In Revelation 17:4 it says that this woman is “decked with gold and precious stones.” This means she is adorned with gold, precious stones, and pearls which portrays her as a prostitute, who is attractive to the nations of the world (Prov. 7:10), but she has also applied her trade successfully and become extremely wealthy. The harlot’s ornaments included gold, precious stones, and pearls, jewelry that made her look like a queen. The harlot (apostate church of the end times) is seen to be wearing expensive and attractive garments and accessories that made her externally appealing, but she is a counterfeit beauty.

One can contrast the garb and gold of the false church to the “fine linen, clean and white” of the true bride and Church (Rev. 19:8). The harlot church shows the beauty of outward display, but, like the Pharisees, she is within “full of dead men’s bones and of all uncleanness” (Matt. 23:27). Beware of living a hypocritical way of life! You can wear gold on the outside but be gruesome on the inside.

Revelation 18:16 gives a similar description to the city of Babylon during the end times. Again, the city and the system of pagan religion are one and the same. They really cannot be separated since the city of Babylon will support false religion. Therefore, the harlot woman (ecumenical false religion) will be filthy rich, living in the luxury of the world market and religious profiteering, represented by her clothing and “gold and precious stones.” The “golden cup” in her hand added to her royal appearance, but it contained idolatrous abominations, as we will see in a moment. However, all of the gold, precious stones, and the golden cup portray wealth and luxury. All of the gold and religious trappings appeal to the sensual, material, and religious bent of man’s sinful nature. Man admires this, he is awed by it, and it blinds him!



The pomp, pageantry, and proliferation of religion are clearly seen in her clothing.

Paul Crouch, President of the Trinity Broadcasting Network, the largest TV network in the world, said, "I'm eradicating the word Protestant even out of my vocabulary... I'm not protesting anything... it's time for

Catholics and non-Catholics to come together as one in the Spirit and one in the Lord." You've got to be kidding!

Robert Schuller, Hour of Power author, Pastor of the Garden Grove Community Church said, "It's time for Protestants to go to the shepherd (the Pope) and say, 'What do we have to do to come home?'"

- Her abominations

The golden cup (Rev. 18:4) here is related to the enticements spoken of in verse 2 – “the wine of her fornication.” Inside this golden cup are the false teachings and idolatries of paganism which are called “abominations and filthiness” (unclean things). Abominations is the word used for idolatry many times (Matt. 24:15). The wine in the cup is representative of the detestable and unclean teachings, as well as the practices, of false religion and perverted paganism, which includes sorcery or witchcraft – the occult. Revelation 18:23 says “for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived”

What is in the golden cup refers to the various forms of idolatry involved in the worship of God through images, statues, and metals, and to all the false teachings and practices of ritualistic religion. It would also include such things as astrology and occult practices. Everything that defies God and truth are found in this golden cup!

First Timothy 4:1–3 emphasizes that not only are such doctrines demonic and satanic, but gives us one of the primary doctrines of latter day Babylonianism, celibacy among the priests. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.”

This false teaching has led to horrible atrocities in the Roman Catholic Church. In Chiniquy’s book, “Fifty Years in the Roman Catholic Church,” he says that a young student priest was questioning a superior about this doctrine of Rome and received the following reply: “You have spoken as a true heretic...you speak of the Holy Scriptures just as a Protestant would, do you appeal to them as the only source of Christian truth and knowledge. Have you forgotten that we have the *holy traditions* to guide us, the

authority of which is equal to the Scriptures?” Later he said: “You are not required to understand all the reasons for the vow of celibacy; but you are bound to believe in its necessity and holiness.”

Her cup was full of abominations! In the end times every form of religious abomination and pagan unclean practice will be in this cup from New Age teachings and practices to Islamic teachings and practices. The cup will contain a strange ecumenical brew from Mormonism, modernism, and mysticism that the leaders and people of the world will imbibe. They will all like her seductive charm and drink her false teachings, become spiritually intoxicated with her apostate pagan teachings and practices, and commit spiritual harlotry with her. They will end up in her bed and follow her leading. This will be a terrible time to be alive on planet earth. Great religious deception will abound promoting false forms of worship,

Jeremiah 51:7

“Babylon hath been a golden cup in the Lord's hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.”

This has been true historically about Babylon and it will be true prophetically when this city and system of the end times is once again put in place. As we have already stated, many today are drunk on religion! Get off the sauce! Many are intoxicated with false religion today.

The golden cup of Babylon actually has a history behind it that is rather interesting. Commenting on that graphic description Donald Grey Barnhouse wrote: It is also highly significant that the abominations and filthiness should be spoken of as coming from a golden cup. To those who are acquainted with the history of ancient religions this significance is heightened by comparisons with the rites of the pagan religious mysteries.

A French scholar, Salverte, writing on *The Occult Sciences*, tells of the drinking in connection with these demon ceremonies. “To drink of mysterious beverages,” he says, “was indispensable on the part of all who sought initiation in these mysteries. These mysterious beverages were composed of wine, honey, water, and flour, with various other ingredients used locally. From the nature of the ingredients avowedly used, and from the nature of others not avowed, but certainly used, there can be no doubt that they were of an intoxicating nature; and till the aspirants had come

under their power, till their understandings had been dimmed, and their passions excited by the medicated draught, they were not duly prepared for what they were either to hear or see.” (*Revelation: An Expository Commentary* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971], 324)

- Her association

Revelation 17:5

“And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.”

This woman is directly associated with the city and paganism of ancient Babylon. There is a direct link and line leading back to this city which has historically given birth and housed religious paganism.

Her association is explained in four ways.

1. She is marked

The Bible declares: “And upon her forehead was a name written.” The practice of harlots in ancient times was to write their names on their foreheads for easy recognition, which showed the shamelessness of their character. It revealed a seared conscience from continual rejection of God’s truth and ways. This prostitute was a marked woman. As we are about to see, her mark (“Babylon the Great”) identifies her with the historic tower of Babel and its Babylonian false religion. This woman is associated with Babylon in that she is marked as a prostitute system that is against God and the truth. We need to see ecumenicalism and the apostasy of today marked by God as a harlot system.

2. She is a mystery

The word “mystery” seems to be part of her actual title and name. Let the Bible say what it wants to say! The “mystery” that is related to this woman is something that connects this woman with the mystery religions and rites (ceremonies) of her Babylonian past. This word can connote an organization in which members were left in the dark concerning some secret matters; however, the initiated understood them clearly. This seems to be the emphasis of the world “mystery” in this context, since the city of

Babylon was associated with the ancient mystery religions which only the initiated were allowed to participate with.

In Revelation 17:5 the term “MYSTERY” describes this woman (who she is) in relationship to her historic roots and past. It may be true that information about the specifics of the apostate church were hidden in the past; however, I do not believe this is John’s intent in this verse. The “MYSTERY” in Revelation 17:5 has something to do with the historic background and beginnings of this woman (harlot system). She is connected to the mystery or secret pagan religions of the past.

The designation (“MYSTERY”) links her to Babel, the mystery religions, and Babylon – where all false pagan religion began. This harlot woman is a MYSTERY in the sense that all her false religions and pagan practices in some way stem from the original mystery religions and rites (secret religious pagan ceremonies), which began in Babel, and which were directly associated with the ancient city of Babylon. Hence, the title MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT is appropriate. The explanation of this woman as a “mystery” is a religious designation that corresponds to what Babylon was religiously – a center that promoted the mystery religions and rites (secret religious ceremonies) associated with pagan religion and false worship. This is the woman’s heritage and past. She stems from the mystery religions and practices of ancient Babylon.

The ancient preserved records indicate that Nimrod (the founder of Babylon) had a wife (Semiramis) who was the founder and first high priestess of the Babylonian mystery religion. This religious system of Semiramis had many secret rites (religious ceremonies) that were connected with the worship of Babylonian idols. The mysteries (secret pagan ceremonies of religion and worship) were open to the initiated but closed to the non-inducted and the inner-working of the pagan order was kept secret from the general public. The mystery religions were the original organized form of false religion and pagan worship after the Flood.

In B. C. 63 Julius Caesar was made "Supreme Pontiff" of the "Babylonian Order" which had made its way into Italy. In short, Julius Caesar, the first Roman Emperor became the Head of the "Babylonian Priesthood," and Rome became the successor to ancient Babylon.

Later the Bishop of the Church at Rome, Damasus, was elected to the position of the pope and the title was transferred to him. He had been Bishop 12 years, having been made Bishop in A. D. 366, through the influence of the monks of Mt. Carmel, a college of Babylonian religion originally founded by the priests of Jezebel. So in A. D. 378 the Head of the "Babylonian Order" actually became the Ruler of the "Roman Church" with all of her pagan beliefs and practices. Thus Satan united Rome and Babylon in One Religious System."

Over the years many false teachings were introduced in the Church of Rome, which were in some way reflected in the original mystery religions of ancient, pagan Babylon.

The worship of the Virgin Mary – 381 AD
Doctrine of Purgatory- AD. Gregory I593 AD
Prayers to Mary & dead saints600 AD
Worship of cross, images & relics786 AD
Canonization of dead saints995 AD
Celibacy of priesthood1079 AD
The Rosary1090 AD
Indulgences1190 AD
Transubstantiation-Innocent III1215 AD
Confession of sins to a priest1215 AD
Adoration of the wafer (Host)1220 AD
Purgatory proclaimed as a dogma1439 AD
The doctrine of the Seven Sacraments confirmed1439 AD

Of course, these are just some of the pagan teachings which became part of the church and false religion which have roots in the original religious and pagan rebellion in Babylon.

Texe Marrs in his book *Dark Secrets of the New Age* lists nearly 30 rituals and beliefs found in ancient Babylon that are practiced today in the New Age Movement! Everything from reincarnation to occult meditation was commonplace 3,000 years ago in Babylon.

Tim LaHaye and his wife made a trip around the world many years ago and visited some 50 temples and religious shrines of the major religions of the world. They were appalled to find the strange chords of similarity in all these forms of religion. Mystery, darkness, incense burning, superstition,

ignorance, immorality, priesthood, nuns, sprinkling, idolatry, and many other Babylonian customs appeared repeatedly. He could only conclude that Rome is not the only form of Babylonian mysticism, but merely the one that has infiltrated Christianity. And after the Rapture, their leaders that remain will bring all the Babylonian based religions together with one global idolatrous religion. She may be the one leading all forms of religions at the end time.

3. She is a mother

She is called THE GREAT because of her far-reaching influence she has had over the earth in the past as well as in the future. She will deceive the masses. She is called the "MOTHER OF HARLOTS" (all harlot systems) which means that every religious pagan practice of the past, present, as well as the future, is somehow tied to the Babylonian pagan system, which began at the Tower of Babel with Nimrod. It has originated from Babylonian idolatry. Babylon is viewed as the mother or fountainhead of all paganism, religious idolatry, and apostate religious systems that are against God. All false religion has historically and presently, to this date, spawned from the roots of Babylon, and the same will be true prophetically of the end time apostate church. The end time apostate church will "mother" many harlot systems that will band together during the end times. The term "harlots" is plural and in the prophetic context it indicates that the final form of Babylon will be a combination of harlot systems that are against God.

Many writers have traced the religiously apostate system of worship begun in Babylon and carried on through history through Roman Catholicism and the modern Christian ecumenical movement. However, this description of Babylonianism encompasses all forms of paganism including perversions of Christianity and non-Christian religions, which combine together in the end times to defy God and truth.

Babylon will be the source of all the false, idolatrous, blasphemous worship in the end times or future Tribulation Period. So Babylon, the city that spawned the system that corrupted the world with false religion, will do so again, during the Tribulation Period. Play is again Sam!

Apparently this harlot woman represents not only the Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches with their religious pomp and pageantry but an amalgamation or ecumenical church of the end times. One again, the plural

emphasis on Babylon being the “MOTHER OF HARLOTS” (vs. 5) indicates that during the end times all the harlot religious systems, which have originated from Babylon, will somehow come together to form a super ecumenical church. Babylon will be the source of all the false, idolatrous, blasphemous religion and worship in the end times.

This “great whore” (Rev. 17:1) will undoubtedly be an ecumenical uniting of all false religions and ecclesiastical churches (harlots) that have spawned from Babel, and which will unite together in the end times, as one apostate force that is against the true God of Heaven. These religions and religious orders will maintain their distinctives and yet unite in order to spread their own religious beliefs throughout the earth and gain the political power they need to do this.

After the Rapture the whole will become leavened or corrupted (see Matt. 13:33) as Jesus taught in the parable of leaven. The true Church will be raptured and only false religions and ecclesiastical orders will remain on earth. These religious persuasions will unite together to form a super church of the end times.

Everything from Christendom, Catholicism and the cults will be part of this harlot church movement. It will be an amalgamation of end time apostasy that will be unprecedented and never before seen in the history of the earth. Mormonism, Romanism, mysticism, and modernism will have their part in this whore. Liberal Protestantism, Buddhism, Mohammedanism, Shintoism, Shamanism, Hinduism, Taoism and pantheism will be part of this end time ecumenical apostate church. Apostate Judaism and Islam, who will have its own religious and political aspirations, will also integrate with this super church, thinking that it can gain its own following from the masses of people linking up with her. New Age teachings will be prominent in this end time wicked system and also the occult (animism and astrology). Black magic and the occult practices are another element of Babylonianism (Rev. 18:23). The idolatry of Babylon is a devilish intoxication which is already fascinating the entire world. This is the reason we are seeing so much experimentation in our day with Satan worship, exorcism, and all the cults which are definitely satanic.

This ecumenical harlot will consist of a vast complex of “gods many, and lords many” (1 Corinthians 8:5). Together these world religions, ecclesiastical orders, and spiritists will unite and bring about a “great

whore” (Rev. 17:1) with her multifaceted religious teachings. This is the reason we are seeing so much experimentation in our day with Satan worship, exorcism, and all the cults which are definitely satanic.

With all the world religions and ecclesiastical religious orders represented in this ecumenical whore (harlot church in Babylon), the people and leaders of the earth will gladly follow her, take part of her religious appeal, and promote her end time agenda, which will involve killing the true follower of Christ (Rev. 17:6), and taking control of the world politically.

Amazing, as it may seem, the ecumenical movement of today is paving the way for this reunification of the religious tower of Babel in the end time religious center and city of Babylon. And the Christians who are ecumenically linking together with these God-defying and disobedient false religions, which stem from ancient Babylon, should obey God and separate from such activities that cater to false religion and apostasy.

Today the ecumenical movement is already prostituting the leaders and people of the world and is setting the stage for the end-time harlot to emerge on the world scene. World leaders praise popes, cardinals, and other high religious figures who are prostituting false teaching. They are already imbibing the teachings of apostate religious systems. They are now embracing Islam, claiming that this too, is an acceptable religion, which should stand aside of Christianity. Denomination structures are accepting homosexual preachers to now be their spiritual leaders. Lord, help us! Babylon’s intoxicating wine and prostitution is already being experienced today in the world.

I will have no part with the ecumenical movement of today which is paving the way for the harlot system to emerge in the end times. I have nothing to do with those who promote, either directly or indirectly, spiritual prostitution! I refuse to drink with the harlot system and commit spiritual fornication with her teachings. I will not get together with the harlot or any man, movement, or ministry that praises the harlot! I want nothing to do with false religion, false teaching, and the promotion of false unity with apostate Protestantism, liberalism, Catholicism, the cults, and eastern religions.

The prostitute in some measure exists today in many forms (Roman Catholicism, liberal Protestantism, the cults, etc.), but after the church is

gone, or perhaps even before it is gone, they will unite and become one great ecumenical religious system. The harlots and abominations of the entire earth will ecumenically unite together and become the one harlot of Revelation 17:1.

A smorgasbord is a place where everyone can pick and choose what they like and want. The same will be true of the end time harlot system. This is how the harlot system will be able to lead the world with her false and perverted religion of the end times. She will espouse and endorse an ecumenical menu of every false religion and pagan ideas that mankind has followed and embraced throughout the centuries. All mankind, with his different religious backgrounds and ideologies, will be drawn to this woman or harlot, since she represents and embraces ecumenical religion of all harlots (Rev. 17:5).

The cry of the woman will be: "We are the world, we can unite together, it matters not what religion you might be." And the members of the apostate church will say: "let us make us a name and let us build us a city and tower whose top may reach unto heaven" (Genesis 11:4). Babylon and its tower will revisit the earth in the future. In fact, the tower is being built even today with the continual push for ecumenical councils and fellowships.

This whorish woman, who represents false and pagan religion that is against God, will serve up an ecumenical smorgasbord menu, which all peoples and leaders in countries will be able to embrace and endorse. One of the things we should be watching for are tendencies and movements among the religious groups of the world toward a united world church, and we have been seeing this for years. One of the recent "uniting factors" is the present day tongues movement. It seems the tongues experience becomes a uniting force that unites Roman Catholics, Charismatics, liberal Protestants, and even the cults, and this regardless of the divergent doctrinal views, many of which are clearly contrary to Scripture.

The emerging church (sometimes referred to as the emergent movement) is a Christian movement of the late 20th and early 21st century that crosses a number of theological boundaries: participants can be described as evangelical, post-evangelical, liberal, post-liberal, charismatic, neocharismatic and post-charismatic. Participants join together and seek to live their faith in what they believe to be a "postmodern" society. They emphasize things that the Eastern religions emphasized such as mystical

experiences, breath prayers, walking the maze which is known as the labyrinth, and yoga as a way to get closer to God. They support narrative preaching instead of Bible preaching and teaching. Their emphasis is also on social reform and not the presentation of the true Gospel but a social gospel. In this movement there are no absolutes, even in the Bible. Their doctrine is actually closer to Buddhism, Hinduism, and the New Age than it is to traditional Christianity. This type of movement links in with New Age thought and will also be a unifying factor of the one world church.

With all the world religions, ecclesiastical religious orders, and systems and sects represented in this ecumenical whore (harlot church in Babylon), the people and leaders of the earth will gladly follow her, take part of her religious appeal, and promote her end time agenda, which will involve killing the true followers of Christ (Rev. 17:6), and taking control of the world politically.

Babylon has not changed! She continues to the end as she began in Genesis. She is an apostate religious system that has persecuted God's true saints.

Revelation 18:4-5 records:

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.”

God has always called His people away from paganism and false religion even as He did in the days of old (2 Cor. 6:14-17 – “Come out from among them and be ye separate”). God calls us to separate from any man, movement, or ministry that is the enemy or promotes the enemy. In short, we must separate from the pagan false religions which stem from the ancient days of Babylon.

We can readily see how the stage is being set for the world to be economically and politically united, but it's equally true that the stage is being set with the ecumenical movement for the world to be united religiously under the great harlot church, which the Antichrist will promote during the first half of the Tribulation Period, and then the final religious system of worship under the Antichrist. The trends are being seen today which are paving the way for this abominable wickedness to rise to power.

4. She is murderer

Revelation 17:6

“And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus: and when I saw her, I wondered with great admiration.”

This harlot woman (the ecumenical church of the end times) will be responsible for the deaths of many who are following Christ during these days. Those who do not follow her religious charms will be persecuted by the state church and put to death (Rev. 6:9). Many followers of Christ will die at the hands of the harlot during the first three and one half years of the Tribulation Period. The harlot woman (the system of pagan religion and God-defying pagan leadership) has a long saga, sad, and sordid history of killing God’s people. In the name of pagan religion millions of God’s saints have also been martyred historically. This woman is responsible for the deaths of millions throughout history.

From the days of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, this woman, who rides the historical world empires (Rev. 17:3), has killed millions of saints. The same is true regarding Japan, China, Tibet, Mongolia, and Islamic nations who have killed untold numbers in the name of their pagan religions.

The important application is that false religion, represented here by the harlot, is a murderer. It has killed millions of believers over the centuries. She has a blood-strewn history! The history of the church has demonstrated that apostate Christianity is relentless in its persecution of those who hold to true faith in Jesus Christ.

Lehman Strauss has stated:

“Rome has historically made her own saints, but those whom she has put to death are God’s saints.”

Sir Robert Anderson of Scotland Yard estimates that Rome was guilty of the death of 50,000,000 Christians. The inquisition, the stakes, torture chambers, and catacombs are all part of history. These are a witness against this woman and her bloodshed. The system of Romanism has killed millions. She has been historically thirsty for blood and it will be no

different in the future when she, along with the apostate church, rules the world during the first half of the Tribulation Period. Babylon has not changed. She continues to the end as she began in Genesis. She is an apostate religious system that has persecuted God's true saints. It will be no different during the future Tribulation Period and even during the last days, as we approach the end times. The stage is being set today for all this to transpire as ecumenicalism continued to flourish among the pagan and apostate religions of the world.

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

5. The sign of Globalism

GATT, NAFTA, NATO, WTO, UN, IMF, and WSSD – Do these abbreviations or acronyms mean anything to you? Some of them are more familiar than others like NATO and the UN but all of these letters stand for something. They stand for globalism. Globalism is the attempt to bring the world together under one common power, economy, and even world religion. It is what we might call the world community. Today there are international organizations springing up all the time, which attempt to unite or bond together the world in some way. The effects of globalism are everywhere. Man is pushing toward globalism as he works together to regulate world environmental and economic conditions, or as he seeks to get United Nation's approval before going into internal military conflicts in the world.

Globalism simply means that the world is linked together and has become interdependent in many ways. Today the world is locked together economically and countries are beginning to talk about common currency and a universal banking system. These are all precursor signs of what lied ahead for planet earth during the Tribulation Period.

The 1990's were called the Decade of Globalism. But the move toward a global economy is now moving on fast-forward. The global economic meltdown has heightened the call for more global interdependence. The New World Order is a phrase that we are hearing more and more from government leaders. The Bible predicts that in the end times there will be a

one-world government, economy, and religion. It looks like we are well on our way down this road! Globalism has become part of our society.

❖ Global government

The Bible predicts there will eventually be one ruler and one government that will have power over all the earth and it won't be Washington DC. The ruler is known in the Bible as the Antichrist (1 John 2:18) and He will eventually take political control over the entire earth and create a universal government over mankind.

Revelation 13:4-5

“And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him? And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power was given unto him to continue forty and two months.”

The Bible declares that a future ruler called the “beast” (a ferocious individual) will eventually rise to world dictatorship for 42 months or three and one half years according to a Jewish calendar. The “power” that is given to him speaks of world power through government. His government will rule over the lives of billions of people. In fact, no person will be able to make war with this individual for his war machine will be unmatched. The fact that this evil individual can demand world worship would also indicate a world dictatorship and one world government (Rev. 13:15). The Antichrist will be a superman, a superpower, a super-god and no one will contest his world dictatorship until the close of the Tribulation Period.

Revelation 13:7 also reveals:

“And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations.”

Again, the Antichrist's “power” refers to his one world government through which he will run the lives of people. This is true world socialism, communism, or dictatorship carried out to the highest possible level. Our present move toward socialism in our own country is a move toward accepting global government. The sooner countries come to socialism and communism the easier it will be to follow a world dictatorship. Everything is

being set up for the end-time to begin. The players and procedures are put in place. Time is running out before Jesus returns. Are you ready for Jesus' return? Are you saved?

Way back in the 1960's I can remember watching a special TV program at school that was called "Big Brother." It predicted a time when everyone in society would be accountable to someone else. Of course, in the later 1960's this seemed to be something that was a dream; however, the dream is ever-increasingly becoming true. The closer we get to the end times, the more socialistic and communistic tendencies will overtake the world, and prepare the earth to receive the global ruler and dictator called the Antichrist.

It's only a matter of time until entire planet will fall under his leadership and dictatorship of the Antichrist. All other rulers of countries will give their allegiance to this one man so that he will be the ultimate world ruler of the planet. All other governments and sovereignties will merge into one global or giant dictatorship whereby one man will call the shots and rule with complete world authority.

It's obvious that the world's acceptance of a one-man ruler must be preceded by a period of preparation where the world becomes adapted to globalism. I believe the world has already passed the point of no return! The signs and preconditions of globalism are already in place. The global world of the Antichrist cannot suddenly develop in a vacuum. Certain preparations must pave the way. Current events all around us are moving us toward the end. The current is drawing us farther and farther down the stream of globalism where the Antichrist can and will take world control. All the necessary elements for full-blown, all-out globalism are getting in place. The Antichrist will use globalization for his reign of terror.

❖ Global religion

The Bible predicts that during the end times, specifically the last three and one half years of the Tribulation Period, that there will be a final religious revolt against God. The Antichrist religion will destroy the whorish system (Rev. 17:6) and become the sole religion over the earth. It will be a time when the entire unsaved masses will worship a personal man called Antichrist. The prophetic Scriptures reveal these chilling details.

Revelation 13:8

“And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”

Revelation 13:12

“And he (false prophet) exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed.”

Revelation 13:14-15

“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”

The Bible teaches in unmistakable terms that there will emerge a final religious system that will deify man and cause unsaved mankind on earth to worship a false Christ, an imposter Christ, through which Satan is actually worshipped and glorified (Rev. 13:4 – “and they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast”). This has always been Satan’s dream. He has always craved for worship ever since his fall from Heaven (Isa. 14:12-15). Someday Satan will receive worship through the Antichrist, that Satan is backing, and set up his own world kingdom on earth. But this worship will be short-lived for the true Christ is going to return and destroy the false Christ (Rev. 19:19-20).

❖ Global economics

There is coming a day when there will be a one world banking system and a one world currency that everyone will have to use in order to survive on planet earth. These days may not be so far away. Since World War II, the U.S. dollar has been the preferred currency for investment because it has been viewed as the securest in the world. This factor has made the United States the world financial leader for the past 60 years, Oil, for example, is valued and traded in dollars. However, the credit and financial market collapse in 2008, along with Obama’s trillions dollar deficits, has caused

many foreign investors to question the value of investing in greenbacks or American dollars. In October of 2009 the United Nations called for a new, global reserve currency to end the dollar supremacy that has allowed America to privilege of building a huge trade deficit.

In the same month, Iran announced it had replaced the U.S. dollar with the euro as the main foreign currency in its reserves. It was also reported that the Gulf Arab states were secretly negotiating with China, Russia, Japan, and France to replace the greenback with a basket of currencies for trading oil. Friend, all of this activity points to the reality that the United States is losing its position as the world financial leader, and the dollar's decline is a leading indicator of what may lie ahead. America cannot spend its way into oblivion and think she can get away with it. America's trillions dollar deficits can't continue without a day of reckoning!

Our leaders had better wake up before it's too late. However, God may have other reason for the dollar's decline, and with it, the decline of the United States and the world leader. Future prophecy does not reveal a clear role for America. We may be seeing the ordering of events that are setting the stage for what the Bible tells us will occur in the future. It predicts that there will be a one world economic system.

Revelation 13:16-18

“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

The Bible predicts that the Antichrist and his world government will enforce a universal marking system that everyone must follow, or else they will starve and be killed. The mark will identify the unsaved as followers and worshippers of Antichrist and this same mark will be required for purchasing food. In other words, religion and economics will be combined together in the end times. Beast worshippers will be marked as His followers and it's only Antichrist's followers who will be able to receive food and eat. What a terrible time this will be to be alive. God' saints, who refuse the mark, will be killed for being disloyal to the government and its leader.

The score was tied. My softball team was in a very important showdown with another rival team. The score was six to six. To top it off, the game was also in the sixth inning. So it was a six to six tie and we were in the sixth inning. When I stepped on the field I looked at the scoreboard and it spelled out the tie game and sixth inning with the numbers 6 6 6. It seemed somewhat eerie as we walked out on the field. Another Christian who I was playing ball with just looked over at me and smiled.

On another occasion my wife was checking out at the grocery store. I was there with her in the line. The total grocery bill came to \$6.66 and the cashier lady just smiled at us as she read off the number on the computer. What is the mark of the beast? What is it about this mysterious number 666? Why are so many people intrigued with this number? Why is there a growing interest in this number?

Six things can be observed about this mark:

1. It's populace (Rev. 13:16a)

The Bible says that the False Prophet (the Antichrist's henchman) "causeth all, both small and great (social standing), rich and poor (substance), free and bond (status), to receive a mark." The false prophet will reorganize the world's population under the Antichrist. The prophetic Scriptures teach that all walks of human life will be demanded to receive this identifying emblem or mark. No person will be left out. From well known stars to the unknown people of the world, from presidents to paupers, from slaves to the free, all people throughout the earth will be required to wear this identifying mark, or else be killed. The marking system will make it to all regions on earth and be implemented as a necessary requirement for purchasing and surviving on planet earth. Complete allegiance to the world government will be required.

2. It's production (Rev. 13:16b)

The Greek word for "mark" is "charagma" and suggests that which is scratched or etched (painted or engraved) upon something. This word suggests the idea of a tattoo, which once inscribed, cannot be removed. The Romans would imprint the figures of their leaders on coins and impress their figures on important documents. Animals would also be branded with certain marks. It's also interesting that during John's day,

slaves, soldiers, and temple devotees to pagan religions all wore a tattoo mark. It was displayed upon them to indicate their ownership and loyalty to their master or religion. One day in the future, all unsaved earth dwellers will be given a certain painted mark that will identify them as worshippers of the beast (Rev. 14:9, 11; 19:20). The mark will be an indication of their loyalty to this beastly master. It will indicate their surrender to the state god and their allegiance to him as their leader.

It would seem that the mark is something that is going to be visible, even as slaves, soldiers, and temple devotees to pagan religions received visible marks in John's day. There is no other way to describe this mark other than a visible mark that can be seen by all people.

It seems the purpose for the mark's production is to make it visible. A tattooed mark will need to be visible in order to identify beast worshippers and persecute those who are not beast worshippers. Those who don't display the visible mark will themselves be punished and declared as defectors from the state and world religion.

Some suggest that the mark means that an invisible chip will be placed under the skin of millions of people which can display information when scanned by laser. They suggest that this will be the fulfillment of the mark of the beast. I can't buy into this scenario.

Although lasers may be used in some way during the end times, the Greek word for "mark" suggests a visible tattoo imprinted on the human body. The popularity of tattoos in our present generation and world will present no problem when a tattooed marking system is demanded for the entire world. The term "mark" was also used for images or names of emperors on Roman coins, who were worshipped. So wearing a visible mark would on the body would certainly be appropriate for identifying someone as a beast worshipper. The False Prophet will use a type of laser tattoo marking system that will be able to painlessly and permanently etch a visible mark on the body (Rev. 13:16).

One day, not too far in the future, all earth dwellers will be given a certain mark that will identify them as worshippers of the beast. It will indicate their surrender to the state god and their allegiance to him as their leader. With the present tattoo craze in the world today, I don't think there will be any objections to wearing a mark. It will be a natural thing for society to accept.

This world-wide mark or tattoo system should not be unbelievable to any person living today. We have numbers assigned to each one of us. We are all computerized and can be called up in a moment's time. We have social security numbers, driver license numbers, and credit card numbers. Someday, a single stamped or tattooed mark will be given to the entire world population. The world will be branded by the beast!!

3. It's placement (16d)

In some way, the Antichrist will cause the world of humanity, living during the end times (Tribulation Period), to receive some kind of identifying mark or tattoo "in their right hand or forehead" (vs. 16) see also Rev. 14:9; 20:4). The word "in" is a word that can also mean upon or on their right hand or forehead and it translated in this way many times (Matt. 9:2, 6; 10:29). This identifying etching will show that they are a follower of the Beast and allow them to buy, sell, and do the normal business transactions.

The world is moving toward a global marking system. This will be one way to control the world economically as well as religiously. This identifying mark will indicate both their economic status with society and their religious tie with the Antichrist. The fact that the mark will appear on a person's right hand or forehead gives added evidence that ownership is in view. Again, the marks in John's day were displayed so all could see them and identify the slave or religious devotee to their master or pagan religious cause. Apparently those who receive the visible mark will be easily singled out as loyal followers. Those who do not wear the noticeably visible mark will be easily spotted as having no loyalty to the New World Order. The visibility of the mark will make it much easier for the New World Order to function. These places upon the right hand or forehead will be the most conspicuous areas on the body that can be seen by the rest of the observing world. This again may give some evidence to the fact that the mark will in some way be visibly seen to the human eye in the end times.

4. Its purpose (vs. 17a)

"And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark" - The purpose for receiving and displaying this mark earns the right for all business transactions. Evidently this mark will have to be displayed in order for a person to be able to transact business and survive within society. This is why there will be constant pressure to become a worshipper of the beast.

The consequences of not receiving the number of the beast will involve both a death warrant and economic sanction.

No mark, no food. In the future global economy, no mark, means no food.

The progress in numerical codes today is paving the way for this end-time numbering code to be established on a worldwide basis. We have code numbers on all food and purchasing items today. Someday, the code 666 will have to be seen in order to be able to purchase or sell. All economic workings will depend upon this code.

No doubt registrations centers will be set up in every community and people will be instructed to report for registration and marking on or before a certain date. The registration will be universal in its scope. However, it will no doubt be carried out with difficulty in the far-reaching lands of Africa and Asia.

Those who are believers and orthodox Jews, who refuse the mark, will try to survive by any means they can. Some might secretly grow food and others might have stockpiled food before the marking system begins as they attempt to live outside the beast's authority. This will be a terrible time for those who refuse the mark. Starvation and terror will be around every corner as they look out for other beast followers to report them to the proper authorities, and then wait for their execution.

I believe there will be many believing families and people who will be living underground and in secret communities within the countryside, in order to avoid the mandatory marking system. They will try and raise their own food and attempt to survive without any government aid. Their lives will involve extreme hardship and dangers as they try to avoid the repercussions of not being a beast worshipper. We cannot imagine what it will be like in this world. Many Jews will be housed by believing Gentiles in rural areas and secret communities during these dark days. It will be these Gentiles who will be rewarded at Christ's return to earth (Matthew 25:31-40).

5. Its presentation (Rev. 13:17b-18)

The Bible predicts that this tattoo will be "the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name." Some have suggested that there are actually three different marks and John is drawing a distinction between three distinct tattoos that will be given to different classes of people during

the second half of the Tribulation Period. However, this is not likely. Elsewhere John mentions only the mark of the beast as a single mark given to all unsaved people (see Rev. 13:16; 14:9; 16:2; 19:20). Therefore, it seems likely that there will be only one mark that will be displayed upon all beast worshippers and followers.

Apparently John is using the connective word “or” (Rev. 13:17) in a comparative sense instead of a manner of distinction. He is building together a statement of fact concerning what this mark will actually be during the tribulation period. The mark will involve the actual number of a man’s name, which can be calculated to the numerical equivalency or number of 666. Therefore, it’s “the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”

All three descriptions are referring to one single mark (the mark 666) and John is explaining how this mark will originate. It will reflect a man’s name that can be calculated to the numerical equivalent of 666. In other words, John is saying that the triple mark of 666 will be the distinct and only mark of this period of time, which will identify people as beast followers. The mark that is first mentioned in verse 16 is now explained as being an actual number, which will be displayed on the forehead and right arms of people as 666.

Revelation 13:18

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.”

But how can a person “count the number of the beast?” How can you count a name? How can the name of the coming Antichrist actually have a number assigned to it? This is very easy to understand when we remember that the Hebrew and Greek letters of the Old and New Testament also were used for their own numbering system. Each letter has a corresponding numerical value. This is not true for the English language. You must learn your numbers and alphabet separately. However, many ancient languages did not have separate symbols, which stand for numbers, as we do. Rather, the letters of the alphabet had a numerical value as well. This method of calculating a name by the use of numbers is known as “Gematria” and was practiced seriously by the Jews.

Since the book of the Revelation is written in the Greek language, it is possible that John had the Greek language in mind. Therefore, from the Greek language one could numerically calculate the beast's name and arrive at the conclusion that a certain man is the Antichrist, since his numbers add up to 666.

Greek number	α	β	γ	δ	ε	ζ	η	θ
Greek name	alpha	beta	gamma	delta	epsilon	zeta	eta	theta

Greek number	ι	κ	λ	μ	ν	ξ	ο	π	ϙ
Greek name	iota	kappa	lambda	mu	nu	xi	omicron	pi	koppa

Greek number	ρ	σ	τ	υ	φ	χ	ψ	ω
Greek name	rho	sigma	tau	upsilon	phi	chi	psi	omega

Since the letters of the alphabet served as numbers, it's understandable that a person's name could be numerically coded to them. If you suspect someone is a good candidate for being the Antichrist, you need to transliterate the name into Greek! This is not that difficult. Just transliterate each letter according to its sound. Of course, we should not speculate

about numbers today, since we don't know what exact numbering system (Greek or Roman) that will be used to arrive at the number 666.

Revelation 13:18 says you can "count the number of the beast." To "count" or calculate a person's name obviously means to add up the numbers attached to all the letters in the name. If a man's name were written in Greek, this would be a straightforward operation. If it were written in another language, which people could not understand, then it would have to be transliterated into the language that the people would understand, in order to arrive at the calculation. This verse says that this numerical calculation is the "number of a man" or "for a man" which means that the numbers are assigned to a man's specific name. Someday a man will arrive on this world scene whose name in the Greek, Hebrew, or even the old Latin language, will add up to numerical equivalent of 666.

I personally find it most interesting that the Roman numerals, as we have them today, actually add up to 666. These are the most common counting numbers in the known world.

$$I (1) + V (5) + X (10) + L (50) + C (100) + D (500) = \boxed{666}$$

The old Roman language was Latin, which also may be significant in connection with the beast's name. This is because the beast will be a Roman prince coming out of the domain of the old Roman Empire where Latin was spoken by the Romans (Daniel 9:27) and he may actually have a name written in the Old Latin language, which will have to be numerically calculated. However, Latin is a dead language today and this may not be the case.

Since the New Testament was written in the Greek language it may be that John was inferring that the Antichrist's name could be calculated according to the numerical equivalents of the Greek language. Of course, there are many speculations attached to the calculation of this number. The fact is nobody knows for sure what language his name will be numerically coded to and nobody knows who the Antichrist is today by numerical calculations.

Throughout the years there have been endless speculations and calculations dealing with this mysterious number. Some have tried to identify this number to past Roman emperors such as Nero, Ceaser,

Domitian or Caligula. More recently there has been the attempt to identify the name of Hitler and other recognized evil leaders with the number 666. Did you know that Lyndon B. Johnson when transliterated into the Greek language adds up to 666? Like a jig saw puzzle, they try and code names to certain languages to prove who the Antichrist really is. The fact of the matter is this. When you transliterate names into another language, where those names can be numerically coded, statistics tell us that one in every 10,000 names will equal 666. This tells us that the identity of the person represented by the number 666 should not be a subject of speculation for us today.

John was envisioning the actual time when the Antichrist will be on the earthly scene and promoting his godless system of worship. John is giving instruction to the generation of saints who are alive during the Tribulation Period and who will benefit from this numerical formula of calculation.

Revelation 13:18

“Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast.”

John is giving this instruction for calculation to those saints who will be living during the future Tribulation Period. This verse serves as a warning and help to those who are living in the end times (Tribulation Period) who will be able to accurately assess a world figure rising on the scene and calculate his numbers as 666. Only the saints living within the future Tribulation Period will be able to accurately access who the Antichrist is by calculating his name in the Greek, Hebrew or Latin languages.

God will grant special wisdom or spiritual understanding to those dear saints living during the Tribulation Period. They will be able to have a clear understanding about this numerical mark and who the Antichrist really is. This message in Revelation 13:17-18 will have special meaning to those who will be living during the tribulation period. They will be able to study this message and start adding together numbers and receive spiritual wisdom concerning both the name and identity of the Antichrist. Believers today do not have this special wisdom to identify the false Christ because we are not living in the tribulation period when the Antichrist will reveal himself.

Daniel 12:4 says:

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (concerning the fulfillment of future events and such things as the number of Antichrist).

Daniel 12:9

“And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.”

The “time of the end” is an eschatological saying that coincides with the second half of the tribulation period. It looks ahead to the time when the world will actually be in the Tribulation Period when the Antichrist will rise as influential leader and all of the events of the tribulation are occurring.

In the “time of the end” (not this time in which we live today) the saints will have an increase in prophetic knowledge as it relates to the fulfillment of Bible prophecy. During the tribulation period, a new interest, knowledge and significance of Scriptural passages will be studied in light of their actual fulfillment in that day and time. This is why Daniel was told to seal up the prophecies of this book until the “time of the end” or the tribulation period, when all of these prophetic occurrences will begin to be unraveled.

These prophetic truths were to be preserved until a later time and would be understood in a new light when the actual time period unfolds. Only then will these events be studied in their actual context of fulfillment. We must understand that Bible prophecy is not being fulfilled today. One of the great blunders of the church today is when so called prophecy scholars read the headlines in the newspapers and claim that certain portions of God’s prophetic word are being fulfilled through the present day happenings in the world. This is a common false approach to Scripture that many fanatical teachers are getting away with today. God’s prophetic clock and the actual fulfillment of prophetic happenings will only begin to take shape after the Rapture, when the tribulation begins.

This verse and Revelation 13:18 tell us that the saints *living during the actual time of the Tribulation Period* will be given this special increase of knowledge concerning the commencement and fulfillment of certain prophetic events in the world. One of these will be the revelation of the Antichrist and the number 666, which is associated with his name.

Daniel 12:10

“Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.”

Once again we see that those who are saved during the future tribulation period will become very wise and understand about the actual end time events associated with the tribulation period. They will be able to count or calculate who the Antichrist is and identify the Antichrist. This special privilege will be theirs since they will be living in the actual time period when this pseudo Christ will be revealed to the world.

Our curiosity over the identity of the Antichrist cannot be satisfied today since we are not living in the Tribulation Period. We cannot accurately calculate and identify any man as the Antichrist in our day and time since he will only be revealed after the Rapture.

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9

“And then (not today) shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders.”

The revelation of the Antichrist will occur following the Rapture. Any speculation prior to the Rapture is just that – speculation. Instead of looking for the Antichrist, we should be looking forward to Christ’s return and listening for the trumpet! Friend, to spend time calculating names in other languages is a waste of time. Do you know why? Because we are not looking for Antichrist, we are looking for Christ (Phil. 3:20). Furthermore, believers today need to be more concerned about getting out the name of Christ then trying to calculate the name of Antichrist.

The number 666 is most interesting. What does this number imply? There have been many suggestions and speculations. John Nelson Darby was very honest when he said that he was in the dark concerning what the number 666 actually represented. He said: “I confess my ignorance as to the number six hundred and sixty-six. I cannot present you with anything satisfactory to myself. We find, answering to the number six hundred and sixty six, the words apostasy and tradition; but I cannot say anything positive on the point.”

In the midst of all the searching and postulation in regards to the exact meaning of this number, many have simply failed to find the answer in the very text of Scripture where the number appears. The Bible says that this number is the number of a man (“for it is the number of a man”). There is the answer to the meaning of this number. It is the number of a man. What is so hard about this answer? Why must we speculate about the meaning of this number 666 and make it some kind of mysterious and hidden secret of the future?

The fact is this. The number 666 simply represents the number of a man. It is the number associated with man and will numerically represent a particular man who will successfully push the epitome of humanism upon a Christ rejecting world. The number 666 represents man’s day and man’s defiance of God under the Antichrist.

The number 666 is seen to be associated with man in the Bible. This is because man was created on the sixth day (Genesis 1:26-27, 31). Man is linked to the sixth day. However, in the book of Revelation, the number seven is seen to be one of the most significant numbers associated with God’s work and God’s perfection. There are seven seals, seven trumpets, seven bowls, seven thunders, seven angels, seven plagues, seven lamps, seven Spirits, seven candlesticks, seven churches, etc. This unusual format can hardly be accidental. The word seven appears more in the book of Revelation than in any other book of the Bible. Biblical numerology is interesting to consider. We must be careful of extremes. However, there are some very clear meanings attached to certain numbers in the Bible.

God rested on the first seven-day period in history following His creation (Genesis 2:3). This suggests that the world, which God had created, was complete. The number seven in Scripture typically means fullness and completion. It is the perfect number. It would seem then that the number seven relates to God and His perfect working and the number six relates to man and his imperfect workings.

Therefore, the number 666 would indicate the epitome of humanism and man’s working instead of the triple 777 of God’s working. I saw a sign the other day that read: 777. I think they were showing it at a baseball game.

John Walvoord has said:

“Probably the simplest explanation here is the best, that the triple six is the number of a man, each digit falling short of the perfect number seven.”

This Antichrist claims to be the true God, and if that were the case, he should be 777. However, the triple 666 is the number of man and the epitome of man’s humanistic efforts. In essence, God gives a number to the Antichrist that will fall short of deity. No matter how much this future ruler will insist on being God, the number 666 which is attached as a numerical code to his name, will still identify him as only man. He will be a man that falls short of the number seven, which is associated with God, no matter how much he wants to be God. Here, the number six done three times (666) is the most perfect system that man could ever set forth, but it is still remains 6 and will collapse and be forever destroyed (Rev. 19:19-20). Man can never be a seven without God.

6. It’s peril (Rev. 14:6)

I believe that God will give all of mankind the opportunity to be saved as the middle of the Tribulation Period gets underway.

Revelation 14:6

“And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.”

There will be a large scale evangelistic movement occurring during the tribulation period so that people all over the world will be saved. In this coming day, God will save every person that turns in faith to His offer of salvation. The mass evangelism of God’s saving program will be underway as much as the mass evangelism of the beast’s marking program. Untold millions of people will choose to turn to Christ and be saved (Rev. 7:9-15). Likewise, millions will stubbornly refuse the message being preached to them through God’s evangelistic program and take the mark of the beast. However, something is revealed during this time, which sends chills down our spine. The Bible says that when people receive this mark and worship the Antichrist, they reach the point of no return.

Revelation 14:9-11

“And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

The entire population of the earth will eventually be divided into those who retain physical life, but forever lose spiritual life, versus those who retain spiritual life, but who likely will lose physical life (Rev. 20:4). Those who worship the Beast and his image and take his mark are warned by an angel concerning the seriousness of what they are about to do (see Revelation 14:9-11). This unique global warning indicates the irreversible nature of taking the mark. Taking the mark is akin to the unpardonable sin of Jesus' day—there is no possibility of redemption once the mark is taken (Matt. 12:31). In stark contrast to the people of faith, who are secure in Christ, those who receive the mark are eternally insecure and seal their fate for all eternity.

2 Thessalonians 2:12 gives this sobering revelation during the second half of the Tribulation Period: “That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

Globalism is on the rise. In fact, it's already here! Dear friend, you don't have to become a future victim of the globalism or one world government that will exist during the Tribulation Period. I hope that your faith rests in Christ as your Savior (Acts 16:31), since He is the only One who can save you from eternal damnation in the Lake of Fire. You don't have to be damned. You can be saved! You can be delivered from the judgment of hell and the coming judgment that is related to the Tribulation Period (Rev. 3:10).

A barometer is an instrument that measures changes in the atmospheric pressure. A barometer can measure the pressure exerted by the atmosphere by using water, air, or mercury. Numerous measurements of air pressure are used within surface weather analysis to help find surface troughs, high pressure systems, and frontal boundaries. Barometers are

helpful in understanding the weather. In a similar way, there is another barometer, which we can use today, in order to measure where we are at in relationship to the end times or the beginning of the Tribulation Period. The barometer of current world events serve as an indication of what is going to take place in the world. Current events in some way forecast what to expect in the future. Prophetic events often cast their shadows on the world before they arrive. It's these shadows that serve as "signs of the times."

While it is helpful to evaluate headlines and current events in order to discern whether the end times or Tribulation Period is near, at the same time, we must remember that only God knows the immediate future and what is going to happen next in this changing world. We can't predict what is going to actually take place next week or next month. We must leave the future up to God. We must leave tomorrow with God.

We must also beware about hyping every headline, sensationalizing every current event, and trying to pigeonhole every current event into an exact science and scenario dealing with the end times. When we do this, we can lose credibility, and can even cause people to turn away from true Biblical prophecy, and write it off as nonsense. We don't know how everything will evolve into the end times. We can only conclude that we are headed in the direction of the end times; however, we can know exactly what the Bible teaches about the future and end times.

Never forget that we must always evaluate current events in light of the Bible; we should never evaluate the Bible in light of current events. Current events must never be the means of interpreting the Scripture, but the Scripture must interpret current events. In other words, current events won't change what the Bible says will take place in the future. The Bible is our final authority! Also, current events in the world should not become more important to us than what the Bible actually teaches about prophecy. Current events only serve as a barometer and indicate that the changes taking place in the world today will eventually take us into the end times (Tribulation Period).

The changing political and spiritual climate in the world today can mean only one thing; Jesus is coming soon! It can't be long! The blessed hope is just around the corner! Time is running out. The clock is set at 11:59. Are you saved and do you have the blessed hope of Christ's return in your heart?

Titus 2:13 says:

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

I'm looking for Christ's return in the Rapture and His return is to be the blessed hope of the Church. Christ's return provides hope to our hearts because we are reassured that God's saints will be snatched away (raptured) and taken back to Heaven, to live with Christ in the heavenly city (John 14:1-2). It's also a blessed hope because we will escape the terror of the earthly Tribulation Period which will come upon planet earth in the days ahead (Rev. 3:10; 1 Thess. 1:10; 5:1-10), and will be released from our earthly trials forevermore (Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 21:4-5).

“It could happen in a moment, In the twinkling of an eye,
He could call us home to Heaven, He could break the eastern sky.
Hold the fort a little longer, In your struggle over sin,
Trust the Great Commander's Promise, He will surely come again!”

6. The sign of Israel back in the land

For almost 1900 years in exile, and living among the nations of the world, something took place with the Jewish people that caught the eye of the entire world. Near the beginning of the 20th century, the Jewish people began to regather to their homeland in the land of Palestine. As a result, the modern state of Israel was reborn on May 14, 1948. I believe this is the number one supersign which is a critical piece to the puzzle that's necessary for the prophecies of the end times to be fulfilled.

Israel has been called “God's prophetic time clock.” What happens to Israel is often a sign of what is going to happen in the future. Israel is now back in her homeland and this sets the stage for many world events to occur in the future. It's interesting that Israel seems to be in the news everyday. Israel is a key player in the prophetic end time scenario. Israel is like the powder keg fuse for the final world conflicts to take place during the Tribulation Period. Israel must be back in the land for end-time events to occur. The seven-year Tribulation Period seems to be much closer to beginning since Israel is back in the land.

The Bible predicts over and over again that the Jews will in some way be connected to their homeland for the events of the end times to unfold.

Simply stated, most of the end time events related to the Tribulation Period hinge, in one way or another, on the existence of the nation of Israel. Israel seems to be the battleground for all the end time conflicts and was described in the Bible. Now that the Jews are back in the land end time events are ready to begin. The time is ripe for beginning of the end time scenario. The hammer of the end-times gun has been cocked and God may very well be ready to pull the trigger. Israel is a nation. Millions of Jews are back in the land from worldwide exile. I believe this is the number one sign of the end times. The regathering of Israel sets the stage for the end times to unfold. Dear friend, it can't be far away!!

John Walvoord said this about Israel in her homeland:

“Of the many peculiar phenomena which characterize the present generation, few events can claim equal significance as far as Bible prophecy is concerned with that of the return of Israel to her land. It constitutes a preparation for the end of this age, the seeing for the coming of the Lord for His church, and the fulfillment of Israel's prophetic destiny.”

A. The return of Israel.

The Bible teaches that Israel will return to the land in four separate stages or phases.

- ✓ Israel's return after Egyptian bondage (historical).

Genesis 15:13-14

“And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years; And also that nation, whom they shall serve, will I judge: and afterward shall they come out with great substance.”

Joseph invited the family to come and dwell in Egypt during the famine. While in Egypt, Israel grew from about seventy, to a nation of about two or three million people. So Israel's first captivity would be in Egypt, but after four-hundred years, they would be released. Their departure from Egypt and their arrival in the Promised Land is recorded in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy and Joshua. In the book of Joshua we read how they finally crossed over the Jordan from the east bank and began to conquest of the Promised Land at Jericho.

Joshua 21:43-45 then concludes with these words:

“And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob); and they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.”

God does not go back on His Word. It was true that He gave “all the land” to the people as they went and conquered their enemies, since this is exactly what God had previously promised to Joshua and the people (Josh. 1:2-5). However, some amillennial interpreters, who don’t believe in the future blessing of the nation of Israel and a literal Millennium, conclude by these verses that the full extent of the Abrahamic Covenant Promises were already given to Israel historically, when she entered the land after Egyptian bondage. Therefore, God is done with Israel and has no future blessing, since all of her covenant promises were fulfilled historically. These anti-Zionists amillennialists have been using a misinterpretation of Joshua 21:43-45, as their proof-text, which they believe nullifies God’s future land promises to Israel. According to their theology, there will be no future regathering of Israel in the land for an earthly Kingdom blessing. This is a serious error for two reasons.

First, the book of Judges makes it very clear that the Jewish people did not rule in the land exclusively, as they will in the future. They did not choose to conquer and reign over all of their enemies as God told them to do. The Bible clearly reveals that Israel still had much land to conquer.

Judges 1:19

“And the Lord was with Judah; and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.”

Judges 1:21

“And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem unto this day.”

Judges 1:27

“Neither did Manasseh drive out *the inhabitants of* Beth-shean and her towns, nor Taanach and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Dor and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Ibleam and her towns, nor the inhabitants of Megiddo and her towns: but the Canaanites would dwell in that land.”

Due to Israel’s failure, the Canaanites in Gezer and Kitron and many others, as listed in Judges 1:29-36, remained in possession of portion of the Promised Land. The Book of Joshua clearly shows that Israel conquered the land in Canaan in two major campaigns (Joshua 10-11). At the end of these campaigns a summary is given ("So Joshua took all that land, the hills . . ." and "so Joshua took the whole land ... – Josh. 11:16-23) which indicates that his work was done, the Conquest was completed. The same ideal is seen in chapter 13:1-6, but it also records "there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed . . ." and describes the various areas remaining with a list of unconquered cities (Joshua 13; Judges 1:27).

This statement (Joshua 21:43-45) reminds us that Joshua took all the land, as he fought and defeated his enemies, as a result of the Lord’s gracious hand of faithfulness. However, this does not mean there was no more land to conquer and enemies to rule over. Ideally, Israel was to destroy all their enemies, but in actual fact, many were left behind, and these became a snare to them (Judges 2:1-3). In fact, it is indicated that this was part of the will of God, in order to discipline them (Joshua 23:12-13, Judges 3:1-2). There was still much land to conquer and enemies to overcome. Therefore, the statement in Joshua 21:43-45 simply means that God in His faithfulness did give Israel a time of prosperity over the land that He promised to her, by giving Israel victory over her enemies, but it was not the complete, eternal, and uninterrupted blessing that He promised in the Abrahamic, Palestinian, and Davidic Covenants.

In Joshua’s day, the people were operating on the basis promise of the Abraham Covenant, but possession of the land was dependent upon their act of faith in possessing it (Joshua 1:2-5). However, their lack of faith in driving out all the inhabitants and possessing the land did not bring the people of Israel into the final and eternal promises of the covenant. Nevertheless, God’s promise to Joshua (Joshua 1:2-5) was literally fulfilled in his lifetime (Joshua 21:43-45). Every portion of the land that Israel possessed was theirs to enjoy, even though they did not possess all the land.

Second, we know that Joshua 21:43-45 was not a complete fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant promise, since this covenant was an everlasting covenant and continual or uninterrupted possession of the land. God promised that He would give the land to Abram and his descendants forever – not temporarily.

Genesis 13:15

“For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever.”

This has never occurred historically! In Genesis 17:7 God establishes His covenant with Abraham and his descendants "in their generations, for an everlasting covenant." In Genesis 17:8 all the land of Canaan is promised "as an everlasting possession." Therefore, the statements in Joshua 21:43-45 do not exhaust the fulfillment of the covenant promises given to Israel. This is very easy to understand, since what happened in Joshua's day, was not everlasting. Israel had partial (not eternal) possession of the land for seven centuries in the period of the Judges. Their return to the land after Egypt is a matter of history (historical fulfillment). It does not deal with Israel's future and final return to Palestine, as God's people, to inherit the blessing of the earthly Kingdom.

In fact, there are a number of passages written after the time of Joshua that promises a future for Israel (Isa. 60:18, 21; Jer. 23:6-6; 24:5-6; 30:18;31:31-34; 32:37-40; 33:6-9; Ezek. 28:25-26; 34:11-12; 36:24-26; 37:1-14, 21-25;39:28; Hosea 3:4-5; Joel 2:18-29; Micah 2:12; 4:6-7; Zeph. 3:19-20; Zech.8:7-8; 13:8-9). Amos 9:14-15, it is one of the clearest, future restoration passages. In addition, Deuteronomy 30:3-6 speaks of a still future restoration in belief.

The emphasis of this summary statement in the book of Joshua (21:43-45) must be seen against the backdrop of the Lord's overall charge and promise to give them the land in (Joshua 1:2-11). Joshua is recording the historical facts that God was faithful, even when the tribes of Israel did not conquer all their enemies and take control over all the land.

Keil and Delitzsch explain this aspect to us as follows:

“Notwithstanding the fact that many a tract of country still remained in the hands of the Canaanites, the promise that the land of Canaan should be given to the house of Israel for a possession had been fulfilled; for God had

not promised the immediate and total destruction of the Canaanites, but only their gradual extermination (Ex. xxiii. 29, 30; Deut. vii. 22).”

- ✓ Israel’s return after Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (historical).

Following King Solomon’s reign, Israel was divided into a northern (ten-tribe kingdom) and southern kingdom (two-tribe kingdom). All the kings of the north departed from the Lord, so judgment came upon them first, with the Assyrian captivity in 722-721 B.C. Later, in 606 B.C., the Babylonians would invade the southern kingdom and take the people captive to Babylon. The promise of a return was given to the people when Assyria would take the northern kingdom captive into their own country (Isaiah 10:5-6, 21-22). Later, Babylon destroyed Jerusalem, and the people were eventually taken captive back to Babylon (see Jeremiah 39:1-2). Jerusalem was left in ruins, the temple destroyed, and the articles of the temple were carried off to Babylon (2 Chron. 36:14-21). But the promise of return was given to them Under King Cyrus (2 Chron. 36:22-23). So Ezra and Nehemiah record the return of the Jewish exiles to their land (Ezra 2:1-70; 6:17; 8:25, 35; 10:5; Neh. 7:23; 12:47). Once again, this return was historically fulfilled.

- ✓ Israel’s return after Roman judgment (historical/present).

Deuteronomy 28:63-66

“And it shall come to pass, that as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good, and to multiply you; so the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you, and to bring you to nought; and ye shall be plucked from off the land whither thou goest to possess it. And the Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and there thou shalt serve other gods, which neither thou nor thy fathers have known, even wood and stone. And among these nations shalt thou find no ease, neither shall the sole of thy foot have rest: but the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: And thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life.”

This prophecy predicts worldwide dispersion of Jews among the earth as a result of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and even the Roman judgment. This dispersion was literally fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian judgments and also the A.D. 70 judgment of Jerusalem under the Romans. The

worldwide dispersion predicted in Deuteronomy 28 has been literally fulfilled and continues to this day. Jesus spoke of the coming Roman judgment and scattering of Jews in Matthew 24:1-2.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.”

The Roman Judgment took place in A.D. 70 when Titus the Roman general invaded Jerusalem killing over one million Jews. This particular judgment scattered God’s national people worldwide, unlike their previous judgments, under Egypt and the Assyrian/Babylonian captivities.

James mentions how Israel was still scattered during the days of his writing.

James 1:1

“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.”

The scattering of the Jews into all known parts of the world was a well-known fact during James’ day and even today. There were Jews who resided east of Palestine and those who were west of Palestine in the countries of Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and even Rome. Today they are in the United States and Soviet Union. They are spread throughout the entire earth. The word “scattered” (diaspora) means dispersion and suggests that Israel is scattered all over the world as seed is scattered everywhere by the wind. We develop the words “Diaspora” and “Dispersion” which refer to the Jewish scattering among the nations of the world as a result of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman judgments.

Today, Israel is still among the nations, even though she is beginning to return to the land. It’s estimated that not even half the Jews have returned to the land. But it’s interesting that Israel has now once again begun to filter back into the land in preparation for the end time events to occur and fuel the fire in the Middle East. This return has taken place within the last 130 years and it’s this return that sets the stage for the end-time events to occur.

The modern return to Israel began as early as 1871, when a few Jews began to trickle back into the land. By 1882, about 25,000 Jews had settled in the land. At the First Zionist congress in 1887, led by Theodore Hertzl, the goal of reclaiming the land for the Jewish people was officially adopted. But the registering was very slow. By 1914, the number of Jews in the land was only 85,000. During World War I, the British sought support from the Jews for the war effort. In return, the British foreign secretary issued a declaration approving of the Jewish goal of reclamation of the land. This encouraged more Jews to return to the Land. By 1939, when World War II broke out, about 450,000 Jews had managed to return.

The Second World War and the despicable treatment of the Jews by Nazi Germany created a worldwide sympathy and favorable environment of the Jewish people. Hitler's atrocities actually provided the greatest momentum for the establishment of a Jewish homeland. The United Nations soon approved a national homeland for the Jews, and British control of the land ended May 14, 1948. The new nation was given five thousand square miles of territory. At this time the land was populated by 650,000 Jews and several hundred thousand Arabs. Since those days, further waves of immigrants have poured into Israel from all over the world, most notably from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union. By the year 2001, 38 percent of the 13.2 million Jews in the world were back in the land of Israel. To put this in perspective, in 1948 only 6 percent of the Jews in the world were in Israel. Current projections indicate that by the year 2030 half of the Jews in the world will be back in the land of Israel.

This movement of Israel back to her homeland (Zionism) within the last 130 years has some important prophetic significance. For the first time in two thousand years, the Jews are truly returning to their land. However, we must remember that this return to the land is a return in unbelief. The Jews are not returning to the land as a believing remnant. This is why we have Jewish missions in Israel today. Israel is returning to the land today in unbelief and this is why God must send the Tribulation Period upon them. He wants to discipline them and bring them back to Himself. He wants them to realize that they have missed the Messiah and they are accountable to Him as their Messiah.

Israel's return from the nations after Roman judgment is really a historical and yet ongoing event, since the Jews are still returning today even as we speak. In other words, Israel's return is presently underway during the time

in which we live. The Bible assumes that Israel will return to the land after the A. D. 70 judgment, since Israel is seen in the land during the events of the Tribulation Period. With this present phase of Israel's return in mind, we can develop a brief outline as to why Israel must return to Palestine for the end times to begin.

William Blackstone wrote a book in 1908 called "Jesus Is Coming Again" and this book became a very popular and best-selling book. William Blackstone was a key promoter of what is called the Zionist movement (Israel moving back into her homeland). He obtained signatures of 413 prominent Americans and sent this document President Benjamin Harrison advocating the resettlement of persecuted Jews in Russia to a new homeland in Palestine. Blackstone also made a special appeal to President Woodrow Wilson that influenced his acceptance of a Balfour Jewish Declaration in 1917. Today there is a forest in Israel named the "Blackstone Forest" in honor of this man. William Blackstone is called the "Father of Zionism." This man had a great interest in the Jews returning to their homeland and he knew with this great happening the return of Jesus Christ was not far away! My friend, Jesus is coming again! The time is ripe. The Jews back in the land point to the soon and sure return of Jesus Christ.

James 5:8

"Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."

The Bible teaches that Israel will return to the land in four separate stages or phases:

- The nation's return after Egyptian bondage (historical)
- The nation's return after Assyrian and Babylonian captivity (historical).
- The nations return after Roman judgment (historical/present – still ongoing even as we speak).
- Israel's return after the Tribulation Period for the Millennium (future).

I do not believe that the prophets envisioned Israel returning to the land in 1948, but returning to Palestine for a final regathering and salvation, a time when she will enter into the Millennial Kingdom (Deut. 4:27-31; Isaiah 11:11-16; 14:1-3; 27:12-13; 43:5-7; 48:8-16; 60:20-21; 66:20-22; Jer. 3:17-18; 16:14-16; 23:5-8; 30:3, 10-11; 31:8, 31-37; Ezek. 11:17-21; 20:33-38;

34:11-16; 37:1-4; 13-14, 21, 24-25; 39:25-29; Hosea 1:10-11; 3:4-5; Joel 3:17-21; Amos 9:11-15; Micah 4:4-7; 7:20; Zeph. 3:14-20; Zech. 8:4-8; Matt. 24:31; Rom. 11:25-26). None of the verses in the Bible point to Israel's return to Palestine in 1948, but to her ultimate return to Palestine in salvation and belief, the time when she will inherit her Kingdom and covenant blessings. The contexts always refer to Israel's final salvation as a nation and her entrance into the Millennial Kingdom blessings – not her rebirth in 1948.

Amos 9:14-15

“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”

This has never happened to Israel historically but will happen to her in the future. God has promised that a spiritual remnant of saved Jews will inherit the promised everlasting possession of the land someday (Deut. 4:27-31). They will enter into the full and final blessing of the Abrahamic (Gen. 13:15; 17:7-8) and Davidic covenants (2 Sam. 7:16; Ps. 89:3-4) by dwelling permanently and securely in the land of Palestine, which God gave to them.

This is what Ezekiel 37 is also predicting and Ezekiel 39:25-29 which is a prophecy of Israel's final return and blessing following the Tribulation Period and Gog's invasion. Ezekiel did not envision Israel returning to the land in 1948 in unbelief but returning to the land in belief for a final and universal regathering. Many have confused this prophecy (Ezek. 37) with Israel's return to the land in 1948 but this is misleading.

Mark Hitchcock writes:

“Ezekiel 37 predicts a physical return of the people first to the land and then a spiritual return of the people to the Lord (37:9-10). The Jewish people have returned to their land, but their spiritual return to the Lord is still future (Zech 12:10). Their regathering to the land, however, is the first phase, and we are seeing it fulfilled before our eyes.”

I don't agree with this conclusion. Ezekiel 37 only reveals the Jews returning to the land in belief and new birth or salvation (Ezek. 37:13-14).

The same is true of Ezekiel 39:26-29. There is no mention of a return in unbelief that takes place over several centuries. The dead dry “bones” (Ezek. 37:1-4) are a picture of Israel in spiritual unbelief and how the nation will one day hear God’s truth and receive the Messiah as Savior. In the future Israel (the dead bones) will be brought out of her “graves” which depict the nations in which she is now scattered in unbelief (Ezek. 37:21). If you draw a line from Ezekiel 37:13 to Ezekiel 37:21, you will be given the interpretation and meaning of the graves.

The graves depict Israel’s spiritual death among the nations of the world. They are pictured as a bunch of dead bones waiting the day of their salvation and new birth from God (“put my spirit in you and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land” – Ezek. 37:14). Someday in the future, Israel (the dead bones) will live again. Israel will be supernaturally regathered by God (Matt. 24:31) from all parts of the earth (Isa. 11:12), so she will have the opportunity to be saved and enter the Millennial Kingdom, which was promised by the covenants and prophets.

Someday in the future, Israel will be regathered for a final blessing in the Millennium.

Isaiah 11:11-12

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.”

Like a second exodus from Egypt, Israel will be regathered supernaturally (Matt. 24:31) at the end of the Tribulation Period, so that Israel will receive God’s gift of spiritual life (“put my spirit in you and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land” – Ezek. 37:14). As a result, she will be prepared to enter the Millennial Kingdom, as depicted in Isaiah 11:3-9).

Ezekiel is using physical resurrection as a picture of Israel’s salvation and return from the nations in which she has been scattered. Again, the prophets always envisioned Israel’s final regathering to the land in salvation – not her rebirth in 1948.

Ezekiel 37:21 again records:

“Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land:

As previously mentioned, some have suggested this means Israel will first be brought into the land of Palestine in unbelief (1948) and then be converted at a later time. However, Ezekiel’s prophecy depicts Israel being saved (born again) and then being planted in the land.

Ezekiel 37:14

“And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land: then shall ye know that I the Lord have spoken it, and performed it, saith the Lord.”

Notice how the text says, “and ye shall live, and I shall place you in your own land.” The living precedes the returning. In addition, the New Covenant context, similar to other New Covenant texts (Jer. 30:10-11, 18-21; 31:8-14, 23-28), involve Israel’s regathering for cleansing and salvation and does not favor the view or understanding of the regathering of Israel in unbelief in 1948.

Ezekiel 37:22-28 goes on to say:

“And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all: Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions (not fulfilled in 1948): but I will save them out of all their dwellingplaces, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them (not fulfilled in 1948): so shall they be my people, and I will be their God. And David my servant (either the Messiah or David himself) shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my judgments, and observe my statutes, and do them (not fulfilled in 1948). And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: (not fulfilled in 1948) and my servant David shall be their prince forever (not fulfilled in 1948). Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of

them for evermore (not fulfilled in 1948). My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore” (not fulfilled in 1948).

John Walvoord concludes:

“It should be apparent that there is no literal fulfillment of this prophecy at the present time, for it includes too many elements that are not true in the world today. ... At the present time Israel has not been regathered, the nations Israel has not been restored to one kingdom. David has not been resurrected to be king over them, not everyone knows the Lord, and the people of Israel are not clearly identified as the people of God. The time of Israel’s trouble which precedes these events has not yet take place. Taken in their natural meaning, these promises of the new covenant are so specific that it is obvious that they have not been fulfilled at the present time.”

The word “gather” (Ezek. 37:21) frequently refers to God’s final regathering of Israel (Isa. 11:12; 43:5; Jer. 32:37) – not a continual regathering that takes place over the course of centuries and decades. Of course, we know that a historic regathering has already begun, as Israel returns to the land today in unbelief, but the prophetic regathering will take place in the latter days, when God supernaturally gathers the believing remnant of Jews back to the Promised Land. Reading the entire prophecy informs us that it’s depicting the time, when Israel returns to the land in belief and salvation, in order to inherit the promised blessings of the fathers and prophets. It’s a specific and definite time when God quickly “gathers” (Ezek. 37:21) Israel supernaturally from among the nations of the world, through angelic assistance (Matt. 13:40-41; 24:31), in order to immediately save them and prepare them for entrance into the earthly theocracy of Kingdom.

Matthew 24:31

“And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect (Israel – Isa. 45:4; Deut. 7:6) from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.”

Neither Ezekiel’s or Matthew’s prophecy pictures an ongoing regathering in unbelief throughout decades of time (19th – 21st centuries) but a universal regathering of Jews that will result in the immediate salvation of Israel as a nation.

Ezekiel 39:28 picks up on this same theme:

“Then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.”

Romans 11:26 summarizes Israel’s salvation in this day:

“And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.”

The worldwide dispersion predicted in Deuteronomy 28 has been literally fulfilled. In a similar way, the ultimate regathering of Israel has already begun in the later 19th century and extends to the 20th and 21st centuries, but it will be brought to actual prophetic fulfillment at the Second Coming.

Israel’s regathering to the land of Palestine in unbelief, since 1948, is not a direct fulfillment of Bible prophecy. Neither Ezekiel’s (Ezekiel 37:22-28) or Matthew’s prophecy (Matt. 24:31) pictures an ongoing regathering of Israel in unbelief throughout decades of time (19th – 21st centuries) but a universal regathering of Jews that will result in the immediate salvation of Israel as a nation (Ezek. 37:13-14). Thus, the regathering of Israel to Palestine for salvation at Christ’s Second Coming is the subject of prophetic revelation – not the return of unbelieving Israel in 1948.

Nevertheless, it’s also true that the Bible *assumes* (without directly prophesying about it) that Israel will return to Palestine in unbelief sometime before the Tribulation Period begins (Ezek. 38:8). Daniel 9:26 talks about the Roman judgment, which scattered the Jews into the world, but Daniel 9:27 immediately follows with the Antichrist’s covenant, which he makes with the Jews (Dan. 9:27). This must mean that Israel will in some measure return to the land after the Roman judgment and be living in Palestine during the coming seven-year Tribulation Period (Ezek. 38; Matt. 24:15-21; Rev. 11:1-2; 12). Bible prophecy *assumes* that Israel must be back in the land in some measure for the Antichrist to make a covenant with her (Dan. 9:27). At best, we can conclude that the Bible indicates Israel will return to the land at one point in the future, since prophetic events revolve around Israel being back in the land (Matt. 24; Rev. 12).

We know that Israel began to return in the 20th century and is still moving back to her homeland. However, since nothing needs to occur for Jesus to return in the Rapture (Phil. 3:20; 4:5; 1 Cor. 16:22; James 5:8), Israel’s

return in 1948 was not necessary for Jesus to return in the Rapture. God could have had caused the Jews return in the unknown period of time (a prophetic gap) that exists between the rapture and the beginning of the Tribulation Period. He could have planned Israel's return in another way; however, He has chosen to bring His people back to Palestine in unbelief, before the Rapture, in order to set the stage for end time events to take place. The return of the Jews to the land today is not a matter of prophetic fulfillment, but a matter of prophetic preparation, so prophecy can be fulfilled during the end times.

The 1948 date is important in that it becomes another event that sets the stage for the end-time scenario to be fulfilled. Like many other events taking place today, Israel's rebirth as a nation in 1948 becomes a super sign and key event that will prepare the world to enter the "end times" or the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 9:27). However, Daniel reminds us that between the 69th and 70th week (a final seven years of the 490-year prophecy) there will be a "prophetic time out" (Dan. 9:26) which has already lasted for some 2,000 years.

During this time no prophecy revolving around Israel's 490-year cycle will be fulfilled. In other words, no prophecies regarding Israel's prophetic destiny will be fulfilled until the final seven years of Daniel's prophecy begins. Paul also speaks about Bible prophecy as future events which follow the Rapture (2 Thess. 2:1-12) – not as events being fulfilled in our day. Therefore, we can conclude that the Bible prophetically and repeatedly predicts Israel's final regathering to the land in belief and salvation – not their return in unbelief since 1948.

Isaiah 11:12

"And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Isaiah 14:1

"For the LORD will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob."

Isaiah 43:5-6

“Fear not: for I am with thee: I will bring thy seed from the east, and gather thee from the west; I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back: bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth.”

Isaiah 49:12

“Behold, these shall come from far: and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim.”

Jeremiah 3:18

“In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.”

Jeremiah 23:7-8

“Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say, The LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; But, The LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.”

Jeremiah 31:10

“Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.”

Ezekiel 34:13

“And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country.”

Nehemiah 1:8-9

“Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations: But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.”

Psalms 147:2

“The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.”

Ezekiel 39:25-28

“Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name; After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid. When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there.”

Amos 9:14

“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.”

Zephaniah 3:19

“Behold, at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will save her that halteth, and gather her that was driven out; and I will get them praise and fame in every land where they have been put to shame.”

Zechariah 2:6

“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD.”

B. The reason for Israel's return.

There are three reasons why Israel must return to the land.

- So Israel can be disciplined by God during the Tribulation Period (Jeremiah 30:7-11).

Many fail to realize that one of the key purposes of the Tribulation Period is to judge His national people Israel (Jeremiah 30:7-11). God wants His ancient people to return to the land, so He can bring about the conversion of a remnant of His Jewish brethren, through His chastening hand (Zech. 13:8-9), who are already dwelling in the land. God will use this time of horror and judgment to bring many Jews to faith in Christ, especially a remnant who is in the land at His Second Coming to earth (Zech. 12:10). A large remnant within the nation, which is already in Palestine, will turn to Christ and be saved (Zech. 13:1), when He returns to earth as their Messiah (Isa. 53:3-6).

- So the Antichrist can make and break a covenant with the nation of Israel (Dan. 9:25-29).

We have already studied how the "one week" (one seven or seven years) of this prophecy in Daniel 9:27, refers to the time when the Antichrist will make a peace covenant with the Jewish people, who are in the land of Israel. There is a final week or period of seven years that is still unfilled and future. This final seven involves a prophetic week of years and points to a future time, during the seven-year Tribulation Period, when the Antichrist will forcibly make a peace covenant with the nation of Israel that is already in the land. He will "confirm" (forcibly establish and tie the nations of the world to this treaty). He will not only make this covenant with Israel (the Jewish nation) but with "many" nations (Dan. 9:27), making it mandatory for no other nation to invade Israel.

This tells us that Israel must return to the land, after the A.D 70 judgment, in order for this event to take place. At this very important moment in history, Israel is returning to the land, so this prophecy can be literally fulfilled in the days ahead. Everything is in place for God's prophetic clock to start ticking once again. Israel is looking for peace and is ready to accept a man who will promise them peace and provide this peace for them.

The whole issue of the Middle East process is leading up to a time when the nation of Israel will be given a peace settlement by a man who has political clout over the nation. This man will be the Antichrist (1 John 2:18). He will promise the nation peaceful protection for seven years. Again, the nation of Israel must be back in the land for the initial peace treaty to be signed, which marks the beginning of the Tribulation Period, according to time sequence of Daniel's prophecy. It's amazing to realize how everything

happening today is paving the way for this peace covenant. All we need is a man with political clout in the Middle East who will be able to confirm the covenant with the Jewish state of Israel and the nations of the world. I believe that the rider on the white horse is not far away (Rev. 6:2) who will ride on to the world scene and promise to solve the Middle East crisis. I can almost hear the hoof beats on the horizon!

It very interesting that orthodox Jews of today want to rebuild the temple and begin practicing their ancient Judaism. In fact, it's a known fact that the Jews have everything they need to rebuild the temple and begin sacrifices once again. All the Jews need is their ancient temple sight and apparently this will be provided for them by the Antichrist. His promise for peace and political arm of power will somehow bring the Jewish and Arab world together, so that the Jews will be able to reinstate their ancient sacrifices in a temple sight allotted to them. The Bible predicts that a Jewish temple will be rebuilt and functioning during the end times (Revelation 11:1-2). John was taught to measure the temple in the end times.

Israel is ready for a man to arrive on the world scene that will get their temple built and running again, so they can reestablish their ancient Judaism. The Antichrist is going to reinstate Jewish worship and give the Jews permission to start their sacrificial system once again. He is going to promise them peace for seven years and along with this time of peace they will be able to sacrifice animals as they did during the days of old. But all will come to an end or a screeching halt by the middle of the seven-year Tribulation Period.

The prophecy of what is going to occur during the final period of seven years cannot be missed. In the middle of the week, or the period of the seven years, the Antichrist is going to break His peace pact with Israel. His promise for world peace will not last and the nation of Israel will once again be sold out and betrayed. The fact that the Antichrist will "cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease" (Dan. 9:27b) would suggest Israel is once again sacrificing in the temple that has been constructed during the end times.

When the Antichrist breaks his covenant with Israel, he is going to do something that is going to astonish the Jew. He is going to build a statue in the holy of holies or the temple, a statue which is termed as "the image to the beast" and the "image of the beast" (Rev. 13:14-15). Apparently this

image will have overspreading arms (Dan. 9:27) that spread over the mercy seat. This is a terrible sacrilegious act that is going to take place. By erecting a statue of himself, the Antichrist will declare that he is the only true God and should be worshipped by the Jews. This will be the most evil thing that any orthodox Jew could ever witness. This action and detestable act will be nothing more than blasphemy and the practice of idolatry in the rebuilt temple within Jerusalem. Idolatry was the most blasphemous sin known to the Jews. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).

Jesus prophetically anticipated this evil act in Matthew 24:15:

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

What a horrible and utterly detestable thing this will be to the Jews. But this terrible atrocity can only occur if Israel is back in the land and once again has rebuilt the temple and started sacrificing. Israel, as a nation, in her homeland, sets the stage for this awful abomination to take place during the end times.

➤ So Russian and the Islamic nations can invade Israel (Ezekiel 38).

We are going to give an individual study of this in our next point on "Signs of the Times" since the merging together of Russia and Islamic nations is setting the stage for an attack against Israel. In short, the Bible predicts that Russia, along with her Islamic allies (Ezek. 38:1-6), is going to invade Israel, while she is in the land of Palestine.

Ezekiel 38:8-9

"After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them. Thou shalt ascend and come like a storm, thou shalt be like a cloud to cover the land, thou, and all thy bands, and many people with thee."

Dear friend, do you realize that none of these prophetic events could occur unless Israel is back in the land. The fact that Israel is back in the land means that all of these future prophecies can be literally fulfilled. This is

why I believe Israel's return to the land is the greatest "sign of the times" that we have today. Israel's regathering today is paving the way for all of these prophetic events to transpire or occur.

In February, 1896, Theodor Herzl, a brilliant Austrian journalist, published a pamphlet "The Jewish State" which swept through the Jewish world like a tornado. Within a few months, Zionist groups were springing up in Jewish communities everywhere. The pamphlet advocated a Jewish nation in a Jewish national land. "We shall live at last as free men on our own soil." In 1903, there was a great deal of discussion about the possibility of locating Jews in a homeland of their own in Uganda, South Africa. This was bitterly opposed by Herzl and most of the Zionists. They insisted there was only one homeland for the Jew, and that was Palestine. Well, the return of the Jews to the land, in 1948, is a significant development, since Israel must be back in the land for the prophetic events of the coming Tribulation Period to unfold.

Friend, we live in exciting times. It's amazing to think how close we are to the coming of Christ. Signs of the times are everywhere! Israel is back in the land. Everything is ready. The prophetic clock is at 11:59. Jesus is coming again! In light of what lies ahead we ought to be living for the Lord today. There is no time waist. Don't delay in serving the Lord and give your money to the Lord. One man said, "Shame on us, if we leave all of our money to the Antichrist!" Now that is something to think about. We ought to give our time, energy, and money to the true Christ!

7. The sign of Iraq and Babylon

The continued interest in Iraq is certainly preconditioning the world for what lies ahead.

Revelation 17:18

"And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.:

The Bible reveals that the wicked apostate church, represented by the whore of Revelation chapter seventeen, will have its religious headquarters in the actual city of Babylon. Both the Antichrist and whore (apostate church of the end times) will work together to rebuild and reestablish the

city of Babylon as a religious center (Revelation 17) and commercial center (Revelation 18) of the end times.

Revelation 17:3

So he carried me away in the spirit into the wilderness: and I saw a woman sit upon a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.

The woman and the “beast” (Antichrist) will work together to build a religious and economic empire in Babylon for the end times. They are seen supporting each other in this verse in order to promote their own agenda of religion, power, and greed. The Bible predicts that world religion and commerce will merge together in Babylon, which is in Iraq, during the end times.

Revelation 18:10 describes this city as the actual “city of Babylon.” Revelation 18:18 also calls it a city. There can be no doubt that what John is speaking about is a literal city and if we take the Bible literally, this means the actual city of Babylon must be rebuilt for the end times.

The Beast is associated with Babylon in Revelation chapter 17-18 which means he will have a major part in controlling the world’s commerce through this city. Eventually the city will be destroyed, as predicted by Revelation 18 and the prophets of Isaiah and Jeremiah.

Revelation 18:9-10

“And the kings of the earth, who have committed fornication and lived deliciously with her, shall bewail her, and lament for her, when they shall see the smoke of her burning, Standing afar off for the fear of her torment, saying, Alas, alas, that great city Babylon, that mighty city! for in one hour is thy judgment come.”

Revelation 16:19

“And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.”

These verses indicate that Babylon must be rebuilt for the end times, as a religious and commercial center, which in the end, will be destroyed by God. Yes, the ancient city of Babylon, which is in Iraq, will come back to life

and reemerge on the world scene as the religious, commercial, and political center of the world.

Since names of cities in the Book of Revelation always describe literal locations, it's necessary that we take the prophecy literally. It's referring to the literal city of Babylon and not to a cryptic or hidden reference to the city of Rome.

One of the places mentioned in Bible prophecy that seems to be lining up for the end times is Iraq, which is home to the ancient city of Babylon. The Bible predicts that Babylon will once again rise to power and become the most significant city of the end times. It will once again, under the next Nimrod, the Antichrist, become a religious and political power that will control planet earth.

The rebellion of human history, which followed the Flood, will eventually cycle back to where it all began – Babylon. In the same region and city where the first world emperor (Nimrod) led mankind in a universal political and religious revolt against God, so the future and religious Antichrist will lead the last collective and final revolt against God, before Jesus Christ returns as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Antichrist will rule the world from his headquarters in the literal, rebuilt city of Babylon on the Euphrates River in modern-day Iraq.

The Bible predicts that the commercial capital of the world will move back to Babylon in Revelation chapter 18 and Zechariah chapter 5. World Commercialism and economics will shift to the East and find their home in Babylon instead of in New York or Wall Street. For an Old Testament reference to the wicked and self-centered commercial aspect of Babylon, we can see the vision of the woman with the ephah (a sign of commerce) in Zechariah 5:5-11.

“Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what *is* this that goeth forth. And I said, What *is* it? And he said, This *is* an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This *is* their resemblance through all the earth.

An “ephah” (1 Sam. 1:24; Ruth 2:17) was a measuring basket used to measure up to 10 of gallons of dry grain (Ex. 16:36). Some suggest that the ephah represents God measuring all the people's sins and bringing

judgment against them for these sins before the Second Coming of Christ. However, it seems better that the ephah be understood more specifically as a symbol of corrupted and evil commerce and self-centered greed and gain, which the people had absorbed while in Babylonian captivity. The people continued to allow this particular sin to grip their hearts, even after the captivity, and they would continue to allow this sin of covetous and greed to run their lives up to the Second Coming of Christ. The ephah speaks of corrupted commerce, fueled by greed and covetousness, and prophetically links or ties commerce with the rebuilt city of Babylon in the end times.

Zechariah 5:6 states that “This *is* their (Israel’s) resemblance (appearance) through all the earth” (land of Israel) – This is what the people of Israel looked like in the land of Palestine. They had turned into a sinful nation fueled by greed and corrupt commerce. In this verse Israel’s specific sin of self-centered gain through commerce, which they had learned in Babylonian captivity, is actually personified as a wicked woman. In other words, the specific content of wickedness in the ephah depicts the sin of Israel, one of them being theft and greed (vv. 3-4). The full measuring basket is representative of the greed of commerce in the land of Israel which has been collected together for the specific purpose of being removed from Israel and returned to the city of Babylon in the end times. Wickedness will return to Babylon for its final stand.

Zechariah 5:7-8 then says:

“And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this *is* a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This *is* wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof.”

A woman is a figure in prophetic language that depicts something which is wicked. A woman is often linked with false religions, apostasy, and sin (Matt. 13:33; Rev. 2:20). In this case she is linked with godless greed and commercialism, as she is seen sitting or dwelling in it within the ephah, apparently enjoying the luxury and wealth that the commercialism brought to her. This woman is representing a terrible and wicked sin of Israel – the sin of greed and godless commercialism and covetousness which consumed the people (“This *is* wickedness”). The transportation of the ephah to Shinar was not a divine mission but an evil one. The fact that this evil woman is associated with the ephah or basket of commerce (“a woman

that sitteth in the midst of the ephah”) suggests that something terrible and wicked is going to take place in connection with world commerce and economics in the end times. This is what the vision is leading up to. The Bible teaches that Israel’s sins of greed will be transported back to Babylon, where they began, and these sins of covetousness and greed will resurface in the greed and commerce of the end time city of Babylon (Zech. 5:11 with Rev. 18).

Please note that the woman wants to escape and the angel is seen picking up this woman and throwing her down into the middle of the basket, and shutting the lead cover over her (vs. 8). Men, this is one way to get a woman to stop talking. You put her in a basket and place a lead top over it!

Actually, this woman is sealed in the basket so she can take a trip to the city of Babylon. The question is this. Why did the woman (representing godless consumerism and greed) want to escape from the ephah or basket? One possible interpretation is that she does not want to take the trip to Babylon. She knows that after being transported to Babylon she will ultimately meet her doom and judgment in the end times (Rev. 16:19; 18). Therefore, she is trying to escape before the end times begin and the destruction of Babylon occurs during the Tribulation Period.

Another possible interpretation of forcing the woman back into the ephah is that this woman is held back from starting her dastardly deed before God’s appointed time (compare 2 Thess. 2:3-8). It’s wonderful to contemplate that nothing can take place apart from God’s appointed time table. The mighty sovereign hand of God is in control of everything. Nothing will take place without His approval. God has His hand on the end times and all the events associated with them.

Zechariah 5:9-11 goes on to reveal:

“Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base.”

Zechariah now sees two other women entering the prophetic scene. They are winged women who have wings like a stork. These two women are

probably representative of God's agents or messengers who were going to transport this woman back to Babylon. They fly away with the ephah (measuring basket that represents godless consumerism, covetousness, and commerce) that contains this evil and wicked woman. Zechariah then asks the question: "Where are they taking the basket?" The answer is then given which opens up the end-time prophetic scenario and scene of commerce returning the rebuilt city of Babylon.

"To build a house in the land of Shinar."

What is this text alluding to and referencing? It's not difficult to understand. Babylon will be rebuilt in the land of Shinar to once again become the economic and political powerhouse of the end times.

Genesis 11:1-2

"And the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech. And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar; and they dwelt there."

It was in this same place, the "land of Shinar" or the country of Babylonia (Mesopotamia area – modern-day Iraq) where the city of Babylon was built in defiance against God.

Genesis 11:9

"Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth."

Daniel 1:2 identifies Shinar as the location to which Daniel and his friends were carried by Nebuchadnezzar. In short, every occurrence of Shinar identifies it as the land associated with Babylon. Zechariah saw wickedness, the wickedness associated with godless greed and covetousness, flying back to Babylon for the end times.

It's interesting to realize that Babylon was never destroyed in the manner in which Isaiah's prophecy depicts (Isaiah 13:19-20) or Jeremiah's prophecies predict (Jeremiah 50-51). These descriptions of Babylon's fall never occurred historically and must have a prophetic fulfillment attached to them. This would indicate a future fulfillment of the destruction of Babylon will take place in the end times (Tribulation Period).

The Bible teaches that Iraq will house the city of Babylon during the end times and become a center of world religion and commerce. The Beast and Babylon are connected and we must keep our eyes on Iraq today.

I think there are several main factors that indicate Babylon could quickly become the city described in end-time prophecy.

- The Saddam Hussein factor – Saddam had the dream that he was the modern day Nebuchadnezzar that was to rebuild Babylon. While Saddam is now out of the picture, he began the project of rebuilding the ancient city. The rebuilding of the city is not complete; however, the initial steps were put in process to rebuild this city.
- The oil factor – Iraq sits on at least the second largest known crude oil reserves in the world (estimated at 115 billion barrels compared to Saudi Arabia with 261 billion barrels). However, some believe that Iraq may have as much as 300 billion barrels or 30 percent of the known oil reserves in the world. Just next door, Kuwait has 10 percent of the known oil reserves. The ousting of Saddam from power will result in the lifting of the UN sanctions and limitations on Iraqi oil sales. Billions of dollars, euros, and yen will begin to flood into Iraq again. This fact alone makes the rebuilding of Babylon as a major economic center for the Middle East and the world a serious possibility. If Iraq someday takes control of Kuwait in the future under the Antichrist then Iraq would own 40 percent of the world's oil reserves.
- The resurgence factor – Iraq has seemingly come out of nowhere in the last 20 years and to this day continues to be the major focal point in the Middle East and Persian Gulf. The rise of Iraq could serve as a perfect prelude for the rebuilding of Babylon in the near future.

What a better place for the Antichrist to make his economic headquarters – an area surrounded by oil reserves (black gold). It is a strategic location between Iran, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, which are the other oil-rich nations in the world. Together these nations could form a world economic center in Babylon that would be unprecedented in wealth, luxury, and political and economic power. The ancient capital of King Nebuchadnezzar is going to come back to life. And the next Nebuchadnezzar to rise on this world scene

will be the Antichrist who will run Babylon as the economy trade center of the world by controlling the main oil fields of the world.

Some of the great dispensational writers of the past have come to the Biblical conclusion that Babylon will be rebuilt. These men did not see any headlines in the paper about Iraq, Sadaam Hussein rebuilding Nebuchadnezzar's place, oil, and the gulf wars. They simply wrote believing what God's Word says about the reemergence of Babylon.

Clarence Larkin, writing in 1919, said:

"That the ancient city of Babylon restored is to play an important part in the startling events of the last days of this Dispensation, is very clear."

William R. Newel, writing in his 1935 classic commentary on Revelation, said: "We are forced then, to the conclusion, that the overthrow of Babylon, as the revealed center of iniquitous luxury and Satan-worship, the culmination of man's great glory, lies yet in the future, in the land of Shinar, where Babylon's history began! ... The final form of Babylon is the literal city on the Euphrates, rebuilt as Antichrist's capital of the last days, opposing Israel as God's earthly people who will have been gathered back to their land."

Mark Hitchcock said:

"We don't know exactly how Babylon will be rebuilt, or what will motivate men to carry out this task. But the rise of Iraq to world prominence is no accident. Is the incredible oil wealth of Iraq just a stroke of good fortune? I don't think so. The resurgence of Iraq, the efforts that have already been made to restore and rebuild Babylon and the incredible oil wealth that could very likely be available soon for finishing the extravagant rebuilding of the city all point toward the picture the Bible paints for Babylon in the end times."

Keep your eyes on Iraq!

8. The sign of the European Union

The European Union or the merging together of the nations in Europe is another sign of the time. Today a united Europe is setting the stage for the Antichrist's kingdom that he will rule. The European Union (EU) is an economic and political union between 27 member countries, located

primarily in Europe. Committed to regional integration, the EU was established by the Treaty of Maastricht on 1 November 1993 upon the foundations of the European Communities. With over 500 million citizens, the EU combined already generates an estimated 28% share (US\$ 16.45 trillion in 2009) of the nominal gross world product and about 21.3% (US\$14.8 trillion in 2009) of the PPP gross world product.

The EU has developed a single market through a standardized system of laws which apply in all member states, ensuring the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital. It maintains common policies on trade, agriculture, fisheries and regional development. Sixteen member states have adopted a common currency, the euro, constituting what is called the Eurozone.

The Bible predicts that the Antichrist will bring together ten nations in Europe to form his end time powerhouse in the Europe and the Middle East. Many prophetic students have called this the Revived Roman Empire, since the Antichrist will resurrect and reunite the old Roman Empire, which today is seen in the modern nations of Europe and the Middle East.

Revelation 17:12

“And the ten horns which thou sawest are ten kings, which have received no kingdom as yet; but receive power as kings one hour with the beast. “

The ten European kingdoms are compared to ten horns in Revelation 17:12. Amazingly, Daniel, who was writing over six hundred years before John, predicted the very same alliance between the Antichrist and ten kings.

Daniel 7:24

“And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings.”

The ten horns are once again a reference to these ten kings which will arise “out of this kingdom” (the area of the old Roman Empire). Daniel had been writing history before it ever happened! He was predicting how the kingdoms of the world such as Babylon, Medes/Persians, Greece and the Roman Empire would emerge on the world scene and then be overtaken and cease to exist. Daniel predicted that in the future ten kinds would

emerge and unite under the Antichrist, during the end times, and these ten kings with their countries would form a great powerhouse.

Daniel predicts that individual leaders will eventually give their countries to the leadership of the Antichrist. This will result in Europe and the Middle East becoming the world's greatest power during the end times. The world power shift is moving to Europe and the Middle East. Power, politics, and pagan religions will unite together in Europe and the Middle East during the end times, with Babylon as its capital city.

Europe, and its predecessor, the European Union, which continues to be formed today, is paving the way for this end time alliance to occur between the Antichrist and the united nations in Europe.

Daniel also compares this ten kingdom confederacy under the Antichrist to ten toes on a statue (Dan. 2:40-44). In this great prophecy, we see Rome historically represented by the iron beast, but we also see Rome prophetically represented by the ten toes on the statue. These ten toes once again represent ten kings and their countries that will merge together with the Antichrist during the end times but which will also be destroyed by the King (the Lord Jesus Christ) at His Second Coming.

Daniel 2:44 prophetically declares:

“And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.”

In the end, Jesus Christ is going to win over this power house in Europe and destroy the powerful union of these nations. The Second Coming of Christ reassures us that the power of the Antichrist's kingdom will be crushed and defeated.

Today, we see the stage being set for this end-time European Union to occur. Everything is in place for the Antichrist to merge all of Europe and the Middle East together in this newly Revived Roman Empire. Common currency and cooperation among these countries is headed toward the end time formation of this United States of Europe, as it has been called. The power shift will definitely move to the east with the formation of this vast domain of power and politics.

9. The sign of the Jewish temple

The Bible predicts that the Jews will rebuild their temple during the end times (Tribulation Period). It has been nearly 2,000 years since there has been a Jewish temple on Mount Moriah. Since AD 691 the Muslim Dome of the Rock has stood on the temple site in commemoration of Muhammad's departure into heaven to meet Allah. The Temple Mount in Jerusalem has increasingly become the focus of religious and political conflict as well as the scene of repeated violence within the Middle East. The Israeli's and Palestinians have not been able to negotiate their separate claims of sovereignty over the Temple Mount site. That little area of ground is a great battle ground between Arabs and Jews. The whole problem in the Middle East revolves around this holy site.

Of course, the orthodox Jews want to reinstate their ancient Jewish religion on the temple sight as it was in the days of Solomon and Herod. Ezekiel foretold the days when the Temple will once again be rebuilt (Ez. 40-48 – see Ezekiel 40:1-2, 43:1-7) and this is why orthodox Jews today are looking to rebuild the Temple. They are looking for the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies that foretell the days when a temple will be rebuilt and Jews will be able to freely return to their ancient practice of Judaism.

So, what is stopping the Israeli government from resurrecting the temple and reinstating their ancient Jewish worship? The temple mount has been under Israeli control and yet the presence of the Islamic Religious Authority is allowed to remain in the area. As a result, Jews are forbidden from freely entering the site and can only go up in limited groups at specified times. And even this concession by the Arabs is not without its limitations for Jews are forbidden from reciting any prayers on the Temple Mount - a law closely enforced by the Arabs and local police.

So why don't the Jews just take over the Temple Mount and start their Jewish religion once again? Well, think of what would happen if Israel would remove the Islamic presence from the mount and rebuilt the temple? The repercussions from more than one billion Muslims worldwide and pressure from the international community, whose members have strategic investments in oil and military alliance with Muslims, has outweighed Israel's will to rebuild. Obvious military and political reasons stop Israel from taking over the sacred site.

A. The Background of the Jewish Temple

1. Jewish history

Jews believe that Temple Mount is one of the sites that was legally purchased by their ancestors and therefore remains the legitimate property of the Jewish people only. Therefore, orthodox Jews are placing unrelenting pressure on the Israeli government to create a Jewish presence at the temple and rebuild their ancient temple site. Continued reports tell us that the Jews have all the ancient artifacts and animals needed (even the red heifer) to successfully rebuild and reinstate Jewish worship on the temple site.

Since Israel originally had control over the Temple Mount, and since Israel is returning to the land of Palestine and Jerusalem today, orthodox Jews want to rebuilt the Temple on its ancient sight, in fulfillment of David's promise, covenant, and the ancient prophecies (Ezek. 46-48) that speak of a rebuilt Jewish temple in Jerusalem.

This ground holds special significance for the Jews not only as being the site of the Temple, but also because, according to Jewish tradition, it is the spot where Abraham brought his son Isaac to be sacrificed. King David bought the site from the Jebusites, as it is written 2 Samuel 24:24 (Turn), "So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver." *This occurred over 1,000 years before Christ was ever born.*

The threshing floor of Araunah, on Mount Moriah, was probably the very same spot where Abraham offered Isaac. It later became the site of Solomon's temple and then of Herod's temple in the time of Christ. Today it is occupied by a Moslem shrine - the Dome of the Rock. It will be the location of the temple in the Tribulation Period and finally the Millennial Temple.

The Jews have documented Biblical, religious, and archeological history connected with the Temple Mount. According to Biblical history and archeological finds the original temple was built by Solomon (1 Kings 8) approximately 1,000 years before Christ was born. It stood for more than 400 years but was destroyed in 583 BC by the *Babylonians*.

The Persian King Cyrus gave permission for the Jews to rebuild the Temple after the Persians destroyed the Babylonian Empire. This occurred on a historically recorded date of March 14, 445 B.C. Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple (Ezra 3) which was later damaged by the *Syrian general Antiochus Epiphanes* in 168 BC., who offered a pig on the altar, as a sacrilegious sacrifice in defiance against God.

During the period of time between the Old and New Testaments a Jewish revolt took place recapturing Jerusalem. In 164 BC, under the leadership of the Maccabees, the Jews managed to regain their freedom once again, fighting a war of liberation against the Syrian dynasty of the Seleucids. The city of Jerusalem was partially rebuilt and extensions were made to the temple that was rebuilt during the days of Zerubbabel. But this time of freedom did not last long for the Romans under Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63 BC although Jewish worship was allowed.

Perhaps a decade before Jesus was born in Judea, the Second Temple was in such severe need of repairs that the reigning King Herod the Great refurbished it completely, even expanding its size. Herod (a puppet in the hands of Rome) expanded and rebuilt the most magnificent temple which was used in Christ's days on earth. This refurbished second temple was destroyed by the *Romans in AD 70, under Titus the Roman general*, probably in response to the Jewish takeover of Jerusalem, during the time of the Maccabees. Herod's temple stood for less than 100 years and was destroyed six years after its completion.

The Roman occupation of the Temple lasted for some 300 years during which the Temple Site was dedicated to the god Jupiter.

After 325 Christianity through Emperor Constantine became tolerated throughout the Roman Empire and a Christian emphasis grew fast and became established. Between AD 330 and 638, the Byzantine Period, Jerusalem became the focus of the Christian religion *that was steeped in Romanism and popery*. Many churches and shrines were built in the city of Jerusalem. Little happened on the Temple Mount since this site had little significance in Christian history.

In 638 the Muslims conquered Palestine and occupied the Temple site. At the center of the Temple Mount they built the Dome of the Rock as well as a mosque known as al-Aqsa. The Muslims firmly established their religion

Jerusalem, building other shrines and mosques. Thus, Jerusalem had now become an important holy place for the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim religions.

The Muslim period was brought to an abrupt end in 1099 by the arrival of the Crusader armies of Catholic Christianity who under the pope's political authority were to recapture the city. The crusaders were the pope's pals who underwent religious campaigns between the 11th to the 13th centuries to gain political power for the popes and Church of Rome. These armies liberated the temple site and the city for Christianity but in the process massacred Muslims and Jews.

The Crusades of so-called Christian Europe had far-reaching political, economic, and social impacts, some of which have lasted into contemporary times. This is why Muslims hate anyone and anything that is associated with Christianity or Christ. They have not forgotten the terrible deaths at the hands of the Catholic crusaders.

For a brief period in the 12 century the Catholic Crusaders turned the city into a predominantly Christian city building religious sites such as the Church of Saint Anne.

In 1187 the Crusaders were ejected from Jerusalem by the Muslims who held sway until 1517.

In 1517 the Ottoman Turks (Turkish Empire) took control over the city until 1917 when they were defeated by the Allies during the World War. The Turks built on a vast scale, reconstructing the walls around the city and the temple area. Many of the walls of the Old City that we see today, as well as the Golden Gate and other significant buildings, were built by the Turks under Suleiman the Magnificent. The Turks preserved the temple mount.

The British took control from the Turks in 1917 and ruled by a mandate from the League of Nations in 1922.

In 1948, against the strong opposition of the Arabs, Israel was established as an independent nation. West Jerusalem came fully under Jewish control, to which East Jerusalem was added in 1967 after the Israeli victory in the Six Day War.

In spite of Israel's victory and ownership the Temple Mount site is still controlled by the Muslims. For obvious military, political and economic reasons Israel has not taken over the Temple Mount. Despite all efforts to bring unity to Palestine there has been only failure. Arabs and Jews remain poles apart.

Today the Temple Mount is dominated by the Islamic Dome of the Rock (Islamic shrine), which was built on the site of Herod's Temple between 685 and 691 AD. It was built as a shrine to commemorate the spot where Mohammed departed into Heaven to be with Allah.

2. Arab history

The Arabs also claim to have a religious connection with the Temple Mount and site. One passage from the Koran allegedly links Mohammed with Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. It is the seventeenth Sura, entitled "The Night Journey". In this Sura there is a vision by Mohammad in which he is carried at night: "...from the sacred temple to the temple that is more remote, whose presence we have blessed, that we might show him of his signs." Islamic tradition identifies the first temple as Mecca and the second as Jerusalem. Mohammed's journey was said to have been with the angel Gabriel. Muslim belief says they rode together on a winged horse called El Burak (lightning). After they arrived at the Temple Mount, Mohammed and the horse ascended through the seven heavens into Allah's presence. Thus, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem is also a sacred site for Muslims since this is where Muhammad their prophet allegedly ascended into Allah's presence.

The Arabs since the 1980's have strategically tried to destroy anything that might link Israel's past to the Temple Mount. The goal of the Arabs is to destroy all the evidence of the First and Second Temples while making the site completely Islamic claiming that Arabs possess the historical right to the Temple Mount.

While the world's news media have kept quiet, the Arabs have hauled truckloads of dirt and debris out from under the south end of the Temple Mount, dumping it in the Kidron Valley. They destroyed any opportunity for archaeologists to explore the first and second Temple periods that were evident under the south end of the Temple Mount by paving the area and creating a huge Moslem prayer hall.

The Arabs are trying to hide Israel's history and right to the Temple Mount.

Yasser Arafat said on October 5, 2002

"For 34 years [the Israelis] have dug tunnels [around the Temple Mount]...they found not a single stone proving that the Temple of Solomon was there, because historically the Temple was not in Palestine [at all]. They found only remnants of a shrine of the Roman Herod... They are now trying to put in place a number of stones so that they can say 'We were here.' This is nonsense. I challenge them to bring a single stone from the Temple of Solomon."

The Palestinians are saying the same things today. They are trying to rewrite history and claim that the Jews never had any temple built on their holy site. For hundreds of years the Moslems have used lies in an attempt to change the history of the world. Throughout their occupation of the Middle East, North Africa, and parts of Europe and Asia, the Moslems destroyed the holy places of the nations they occupied and built mosques in their place.

B. The Biblical Study of John's Vision

Revelation 11:1-2

"And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months."

The events associated with Revelation chapter 11 deals with the rebuilding of a Jewish temple during the second half of the Tribulation Period. We know this chapter is dealing with the second half of the Tribulation Period since there is a time of interlude between the sixth and seventh trumpet judgments (Rev. 6:12; 11:15) which sound and send forth their judgments during the second half of the Tribulation Period.

It's during this severe period of time or testing, when the force of judgment and persecution is at its greatest, that a Jewish temple will be in existence, so it can be "tread under foot" (Rev. 11:1-2) by the Antichrist. This coincides with Jesus' statement which is connected with the second half of the Tribulation Period when the "the abomination of desolation" will occur (Matt.

24:15). The antichrist will defile the temple by setting up a statue in its holy place. All of this occurs during the Great Tribulation (great pangs of sorrow and pain) or second half of the Tribulation Period according to Jesus' predictions (Matt. 24:15-22).

The time period when the two witnesses will prophesy is apparently the same time when the Antichrist will oppose the Jewish people and "tread under foot" (Rev. 11:2) the temple. This will occur during the second half of the Tribulation Period as outlined by Christ in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24:15-22; Rev. 12). Therefore, in Revelation chapter 11 we are looking at those events that will transpire during the second half of the Tribulation Period (the last three and one half years of Daniel's 70th week).

There are two questions to answer about the temple.

a. Will a temple be rebuilt in Jerusalem?

John was told by the angel to "measure the temple" and "the court which is without the temple" in order to judge the spiritual condition of Israel and remind us that they are still God's chosen people in whom He is interested. The fact that Revelation 11:1-2 declares that a temple must be measured suggests that it will be in existence during the future Tribulation Period. In short, the Jewish temple will be rebuilt in the end times.

Herod's temple was destroyed 25 years prior to the writing of the Book of Revelation. Therefore, this must be a third temple yet to be rebuilt by the Jews in Jerusalem in the end times. The Bible predicts that a literal temple will be rebuilt and erected in Jerusalem in the end-times. The current situation in Jerusalem is setting the stage for this to take place. The Bible predicts that a temple of some kind will be in existence during the Tribulation Period. We don't know how large and spectacular it will be but it will evidently be erected rather quickly so the Jews can begin to worship on their ancient temple site. There are rumors and reports constantly from both Jewish and Christian circles about the efforts to restore the temple. There is some debate regarding the exact location of the Holy of Holies into which only the high priest could go once a year on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur). Jews have a holy and awesome fear of accidentally stepping on the sacred ground.

The problem is the Dome of the Rock that sits on the Temple Mount. Although this shrine may not sit on the exact location of the Holy of Holies, it is evidently near it, and any efforts to build a Jews temple close to it would be met with great resistance by Arab nations. However, the Bible repeatedly teaches in its prophetic Scriptures that a temple will be built or erected for the seven-year Tribulation Period.

Daniel 9:27 proves the temple will be rebuilt:

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

The nearest antecedent (object nearest to the subject being talked about) is the pronoun “he” which refers back to “the prince who is to come” (v. 26). Titus the Roman general made no covenant with Israel, so who is in view? Apparently a future ruler of the revived or reorganized Roman Empire, the little horn of chapter 7, is in view. It cannot be referring to Titus or the Messiah since none of them did the things predicted of the prince in verse 27 (making a seven-year covenant with the Jews). Nowhere in the Book of Acts did Christ make a covenant with the Jews for seven years!!

The expression of Titus as “the prince that shall come” (vs. 26) or the Roman prince, who historically came to destroy the Jews in AD 70, is a prophetic type of another Roman prince that will come to destroy the people of Israel in the end times, during Daniel’s final week of seven years (the seven-year Tribulation Period). Like Antiochus Epiphanes (Dan. 11:21-35), Titus, the Roman Prince (Dan. 9:26), becomes a type or foreshadowing of a similar man who will do dastardly and wicked deeds. Some of Daniel’s prophecies leap the centuries of time and point to another similar event that will occur by another end-time ruler called the Antichrist.

❖ A forced contract (“confirm”)

This indicates that the Antichrist’s political clout and military power will allow him to force a treaty upon the Jewish nation for “one week” (*seven years – a prophetic week consisting of years*). During this seven-year treaty the Antichrist will give the Jewish nation the right to rebuild their temple without worldwide political upheaval and the immediate threat of Muslim war.

How he will do this, or what will happen, we do not know. Only the future will reveal this. We must remember that the Bible depicts the Antichrist as a political and military genius (Dan. 7:8, 20, 24; 11:38; Rev. 17:10) who's satanically inspired abilities will help him to accomplish world-renowned feats and accomplishments. Maybe he will be able to temporarily solve the Middle East crises and bring both Muslims and Jews together on the Temple Mount with their appropriate shrines.

However, as far as we can contemplate today, it would seem to be impossible for the Dome of the Rock to remain on the same Temple Mount as the Jewish Temple. It may be reasonable to assume that the Dome of the Rock is destroyed by some terrorist plot, by warfare, or even a natural disaster. The Antichrist may cease this as the opportunity to turn to Israel and make a covenant with her to rebuild the Temple.

The signing of this Jewish covenant will evidently result in the reinstatement of Jewish worship during the first three and one half years of Daniel's 70th week, since during the middle of the Tribulation Period, Daniel teaches that the Antichrist will break his covenant with Daniel's people (Dan. 9:27). This means that a Tribulation temple (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15; 2 Thess. 2:3-4) will be rebuilt and constructed during the Tribulation Period, after the signing of the covenant with the Jews.

The signing of the covenant to rebuild their temple and reinstate their temple worship is the actual beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period. Apparently the Jews will quickly erect their temple structure under the protection of the new Middle East hero (the Antichrist) and return to their ancient Jewish worship. The signing of the covenant will ensure their freedom of worship for three-and-one-half years (Dan. 9:27).

Preparations for the Jewish temple are already being made today and the stage is being set for the Tribulation temple to be erected under the authority of the end-time Antichrist. There is a Temple Institute in Jerusalem that is dedicated to reconstructing all the instruments of worship and they claim that they are ready to go.

Since the Antichrist must confirm the covenant with Israel to start their temple worship, it stands to reason that the rebuilding and commencement of Jewish worship can only occur when the Antichrist is on his rise to power

in the world. The Scriptures reveal that the Antichrist will only arise on the scene after the Church has been raptured (2 Thess. 2:1-4; Rev. 3:10), or when the world enters the period known as the end-times (Tribulation Period), when Bible prophecy is once again being fulfilled.

The Jewish nation will begin sacrificing animals once again in Jerusalem during the end-times or during the first part of the Tribulation Period. This is the time when the Antichrist will give the Jewish nation permission to rebuild and reinstitute their sacrificial system on the Temple Mount.

❖ A breached contract (“cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease”)

Israel’s ability to offer these sacrifices indicates that they will be back in the land worshipping at a rebuilt temple during the period of time when the Antichrist moves into world power.

Not all Jews will want to rebuild and sacrifice. Many Jews are atheistic and it is questionable whether or not they will practice their ancient worship. However, if they see *God’s miraculous intervention in the mountains of Israel, taking out their Russian/Islamic enemy*, there may be many who begin to realize that God is interested in them. This may cause them to have a change of heart and millions of Jews may go along with the ancient worship of Judaism.

In the middle of the week (this week of seven years) the Antichrist will make a breach of his contract with the Jews. He will command that all sacrifices cease and begin to persecute the Jews. In short, he will use the Jews for religious and political reasons, as he rises to world power, and then turn against them and all religion at the middle of the Tribulation (Rev. 17:16-17) proclaiming that he is the only true god. His actions to stop the practice of Judaism will be his final step as he moves to world dominance and dictatorship proclaiming that he is the only true god and that all mankind should worship him.

What’s going to happen when the contract is broken?

✓ The erection of a statute of idolatry.

As a result of the breached contract the Antichrist will erect a statute of himself in the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem within its holy of holies. This will

be done out of mockery to God and the Jewish religion. When the Bible speaks of “the overspreading (the extremity) of abominations” it probably is referring to how a statue of the Antichrist will cover the place of the holy sacrifice and become one of the most extreme idolatrous acts of man’s humanistic rebellion against God. When a man claims deity in the place where God is to be represented it becomes an extreme act of wickedness against the true and holy God. Antiochus, who foreshadowed the Antichrist, offered a pig on the altar. Now, the Antichrist erects a statue of himself on the altar declaring that he himself is God. How utterly extreme, vile, and wicked!

✓ The emotional response of the Jews.

The Jews will be stunned when they see this take place. It will be considered “abominations” (something detestable, despicable, and dastardly to every orthodox Jew). When the statue is erected “he shall make it (the temple) desolate” meaning that this dastardly and blasphemous act will cause the temple to be a place of that will stun or amaze every orthodox Jew. Jews will become awestruck as they witness this terrible idolatrous act. The antichrist will continue his wicked idolatrous perversion “even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (until the Antichrist who has stunned the Jews will meet his doom by Christ).

Daniel 12:11 proves the temple will be rebuilt:

“And from the time that the daily sacrifice (Jewish sacrifice during the Tribulation Period) shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up (some kind of statue of the Antichrist), there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days” (1,260 days or three and one half years of the second half of the Tribulation Period).

The fact that something will be “set up” in the temple seems to point to some kind of statue or idol which will represent the Antichrist in some way. It all fits together when Bible prophecy is taken literally. And everything today is fitting into the sockets of Bible prophecy.

Jesus spoke about the future abominable act of the Antichrist.

Matthew 24:15

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

What Christ says in this verse proves that a temple will be rebuilt. This occurs at the middle of the Tribulation Period and becomes the commencement of Israel’s worst holocaust yet! Israel’s worst days are still ahead!

2 Thessalonians 2:4 proves a temple will be rebuilt and prophetically states this about the Antichrist: “Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.”

The Antichrist will begin his reign of world rulership by sitting in the temple himself, declaring that he is the only true God, and demand that the entire world worships him. This will shock all orthodox Jewry for only the high priest was allowed to enter the holy of holies! This man who had allowed them to rebuild and reinstate their sacrifices will turn against them.

After the Antichrist sits in the temple, he will evidently build or erect a statue within the holy of holies, which represents him, and also declare by this dastardly act that he is the only true god. The fact that an image of the beast will be erected in the future rebuilt temple is clearly outlined in the prophetic Scriptures.

Revelation 14:11 proves a temple will be rebuilt:

“And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name.”

Revelation 19:20 proves a temple will be rebuilt:

“And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone.”

Revelation 20:4 proves a temple will be rebuilt:

“And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.”

Revelation 13:14-15 proves a temple will be rebuilt:

“And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed.”

Presumably, this lifeless “image to the beast” (vs. 14), or statue of the Antichrist, will become demonized and begin to speak within the holy of holies (Rev. 13:15). This miraculous feat will cause great amazement to everyone throughout the earth. This is not a *computerized* beast as some have tried to suggest. We have talking computers already. There is no amazement in this. But when a lifeless statue comes to life and begins to animate itself and speak, then the world will know that the Antichrist must be a true god, and they will worship the image of the beast (Rev. 13:15). In so doing, they will commit idolatry, through which they will actually be worshipping the Antichrist and Satan.

There can be no doubt about it. A literal temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem so this end-time scenario can come to pass. What a terrible time this will be for Jews.

The Jews are ready to rebuild! Preparations for the Jewish temple are already being made today and the stage is being set for the Tribulation temple to be erected under the authority of the end-time Antichrist. They have their utensils, stones, and red heifer line. There is a Temple Institute in Jerusalem that is dedicated to reconstructing all the instruments of worship and they claim that they are ready to go.

An advertisement appeared in the Washington Post, on May 21, 1967, before Jerusalem was liberated. The caption letters were 72 points - one

inch - high. The ad occupied a space of eleven by eight inches. TO ALL PERSONS OF THE JEWISH FAITH ALL OVER THE WORLD: A project to rebuild the Temple of God in Israel is now being started. With Divine Guidance and Help the "Temple" will be completed. Jews will be inspired to conduct themselves in such a moral way that our Maker will see fit to pay us a visit here on earth. Imagine the warm feeling that will be ours when this happy event takes place. "THIS IS MY GOD" is the book that was the inspiration for this undertaking. God will place in the minds of many person in all walks of Jewish life the desire to participate in this work. Executive talent, Administrations, and Workers on all levels are needed. All efforts will be anonymous. GOD will know those desiring to participate.

Please write to Box M-917, The Washington Post. Under no circumstances send contributions. "GOD'S WILL WILL PREVAIL."

Although the ban on visiting the Temple Mount is in effect it has not stopped those in Israel for thinking about the realization of a long lost dream, the rebuilding of the Temple. Once the city of Jerusalem was retaken this was no longer a pipe dream. Time magazine reported:

Since the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70, Conservative and Orthodox Jews have beseeched God four times a week to 'renew our days' as they once were---a plea for the restoration of the Temple. Although Zionism was largely a secular movement, one of its sources was the prayers of the Jews for a return to Palestine so that they could build a temple . . . Learned Jewish opinion has long debated when and how the temple can be rebuilt. The great medieval philosopher Maimonides, in his Code of Jewish Law, argued that every generation of Jews was obliged to rebuild the temple if its site was ever retaken, if a leader descended from David could be found, and if the enemies of Jerusalem were destroyed.

We are living in the last days, we are headed toward the end times, and Jesus is coming again!

“Signs of the times are everywhere,
There’s a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh.”

10. The sign of the Middle East

Fifty years ago, no one could have imagined that the Middle East would be the focus of the world. Yet today, with almost two thirds of the world's proven oil sources in the Middle East, radical Islam, and the Middle East crisis between the Arabs and Israelis, this region is constantly front and center in the news. The stirring up of the Middle East is a sign or another indicator that we are approaching the end times or nearing the beginning of the Tribulation Period.

The Bible teaches that world events will shift to the Middle East during the end times; therefore, all eyes should be placed upon what is occurring in the Middle East. The focus of attention will not be on the West but on the East. As the coming of Christ draws near, more attention and events will begin to transpire in the Middle East, which will set the stage and prepare the world for the end times to begin. The Middle East is where the vast majority of end time events will occur. Therefore, it makes sense that current world events will shift to the Middle East, since it's here that the drama of the end times will unfold.

The Bible predicts that several key events will occur in the Middle East during the end times. We will give a brief overview of them.

1. The rivalry over land

It is no secret that Israel and Palestinians have been fighting for land in the Middle East for decades. Both claim that they have rights to the land but God gave the Jewish people complete ownership of the land of Palestine.

Let's set the record straight. Israel, through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob has divine rights to the land of Palestine. God's unalterable Word and promises give us this clear revelation. The Arabs were never given or promised an inheritance in the land of Palestine. They should be humbled by the declaration of God's truth and stop declaring lies regarding their land inheritance in Palestine.

In Genesis 15:18-21 God promised to Abram:

"In the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates: The Kenites, and the Kenizzites, and the Kadmonites, And

the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Rephaims, And the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

The land promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were then passed down through Isaac’s line, through Sarah (not Ishmael’s line through Hagar).

Genesis 26:3-4 reveals the Lord’s words to Isaac:

“Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father; And I will make thy seed to multiply as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these countries; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.”

Genesis 17:21

“But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time in the next year.”

The Bible is very clear on this matter. The descendants of Ishmael and the other sons of Abraham do not have any claim to the land of Israel because they are not included in the covenant God made with Abraham. Only the Jews have rightful claim to the land of Israel through Isaac’s line.

The land promises of the Abrahamic Covenant were then passed down to Jacob - not Esau.

Genesis 28:13-14 records:

“And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed.”

The Muslim apologists are simply operating from a biased and faulty premise, instead of believing God’s Word and promises, when claiming that the blessings and promises came through the line of Ishmael. God’s record stands true. Israel has rights to the Holy Land through the line of Isaac (not Ishmael) and Jacob (not Esau). God has given Israel, which stems from the loins of Jacob, full rights to the land.

This constant fighting and unrest in the Middle East between the Arabs and Jews over land is a stage setting event that will trigger the need for a peace treaty. The Bible predicts that eventually the Antichrist will grant Israel a peace treaty to the Jews that will keep the Jewish people from Palestinian uprising against them and allow them to dwell in safety for three and one half years (Dan. 9:27).

Since the 1948 foundation of Israel, there has been a constant effort to bring peace between Israel and the Arabs. But the Arab nations surrounding Israel have been in a constant state of war with Israel since May 14, 1948. In 1948-49 Israel fought her very first war. After becoming an independent state Israel was immediately attacked on all sides by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Saudi Arabia. When a truce was implemented on January 7, 1949 Israel had expanded her land from 5,000 square miles to 8,000. In 1956 Israel fought the Suez war with Egypt. Eventually Israel invaded the Sinai Peninsula and took control. Later, Israel returned the Sinai to Egypt. In 1964 (I was one-year-old) and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed for the dual purpose of creating a Palestinian state and destroying Israel.

In 1967 the famous Six-Day War (June 5-10) occurred. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and seized control of Jerusalem. In 1973 Egypt and Syria initiated the Yom Kippur War. At 2:00 P.M. on October 6, 1973, On Israel's most holy day, the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), these two nations attacked Israel. After heavy fighting, Israel repelled the invaders. In 1982-85 there was the war with Lebanon. After numerous terror incidents, Israel attacked Lebanon on Jun 5, 1982 with the goal to disarm terrorists who were using Lebanon as a sanctuary. Israeli troops withdrew from Lebanon on May 31, 1985. However, Israel didn't pull all of its troops until May 24, 2000. In 1987 the first Palestinian Uprising began in Gaza. The uprising ended in 1993 with the signing of the Oslo Accords. In the year 2000 the Second Palestinian Uprising began. It was in September and continues to this day with terrorist attacking Israel.

As you can see, the brief history of modern Israel is a history of war – not peace. The attempts to peace have been futile. The United States, Soviet Union, The United Nations have all given the Middle East peace process their best shot. There have been over 50 years of failure. But they have all failed and we are still failing today. There is coming a man someday (the

Antichrist) who will forcibly make a peace treaty with Israel because of His political clout and guarantee peace to the nations (“with many” – Dan. 9:27) for seven years.

The prophecy of Daniel 9:27 declares;

“And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.”

The Antichrist will claim to give peace to the Middle East once and for all with this peace treaty. However, this will be short-lived (Matt. 24:6-7) and chaos will break out by the middle of the Tribulation Period in a bid for the oil and strategic place in the Middle East (Dan. 11:40-45).

2. The resistance against Jerusalem

Since the terrible events of September 11, we have all heard a great deal about “ground zero.” Ground zero is the place where the twin towers came crashing down in New York City. The horrible sight of ruin, rubble, and twisted, smoldering wreckage is a scene forever etched in our minds. It’s a place where so many lives were taken and so many lives were heroically offered up by firemen, police officers, and other rescue workers. Ground zero is the focus of attention. However, when it comes to Bible prophecy ground zero is not New York City. In actuality, ground zero and the focus of attention is on the city of Jerusalem. The Bible teaches that the tiny nation of Israel (the size of New Jersey) will be the focus of the entire world at the end of the age. The importance of Jerusalem in God’s program is evident from a quick survey of the Bible. A total of 802 verses in the Bible speak of Jerusalem (660 in the O.T. and 142 in the N.T.). Of these, 489 were prophetic at the time they were given.

Israel is at the center of the storm today for one simple reason: It’s claimed by two world religions (Judaism and Islam) as sacred ground. Jerusalem is the sacred battleground in the ongoing struggle between Jews and Muslims. For Jews, Jerusalem is the spiritual and emotional heart of their religion. Below is a brief overview of the significant events that make Jerusalem important to Jews.

- ❖ Abraham was called by God to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah (see Genesis 22:2).

Some Jews see this as the place where the Temple Mount should be in Jerusalem. It's believed that on "one of the elevated mountains" in this district, which today is one of the hills of Jerusalem, is where Solomon built the Temple. This place was the spot once occupied by the threshing floor of Ornan the Jebusite (2 Chron. 3:1).

Some Jews believe the altar of burnt offering in the temple at Jerusalem was situated on the exact site of the altar on which Abraham intended to sacrifice Isaac. The Jewish historian Josephus clearly connects the place of the temple with the same place where Isaac was offered up. The Muslim structure, the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, is also believed to be situated on this holy site – the Jewish temple site.

It's interesting to read about how traditions passed down from the Jewish fathers concludes the Holy of Holies was situated on the Rock within the mosque. And this is why there is so much controversy. The Jews want to establish their sacrificial altar on this spot once again. Many other Jewish scholars identify the Rock as the base of the Alter of Sacrifice and place the Holy of Holies to the west of it. Other Jewish tradition says that the stone marks the place where Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac and the Holy of Holies was built over the place where the ram was caught in the thicket - a short distance away. We can see why there is such a fuss over this Holy site. This is the land of Moriah and the place of their sacred temple structure.

- ❖ God chose Jerusalem as the place where the Israelites are to worship (Deut. 11:31-32; 12:5-6). God has given this land as a city to the people He chose – the Jews.
- ❖ King David made Jerusalem the capital city for Israel (2 Samuel 5:4-10).
- ❖ David purchased the land on Mount Moriah (see 1 Chronicles 21:18-22:1). Some of the Jews believe firmly that they have rights to this spot. They want to present sacrifices to the Lord once again just as David did on this holy spot.

- ❖ Jerusalem has been revered for 3,000 years by the Jewish people as a holy city above all other cities on earth. To many Jews, Jerusalem is the apple of God's eye (Zech. 2:8).
- ❖ David's Son Solomon constructed his temple on the site of Mount Moriah (see 2 Chronicles 3:1).
- ❖ After the destruction of Solomon's temple by the Babylonians and the seven-year exile to Babylon, the Jews returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple under the leadership of Zerubbabel but it suffered damage due to the Syrian ruler *Antiochus Epiphanes* in 168 BC.
- ❖ Herod then restored the temple to a much greater glory which existed in Jesus' day. When this temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70 the Jews were scattered all over the earth. When they began to return to Israel and become a nation in 1948, guess what city they named as their capital? Jerusalem.

Of course, this action inflamed Muslims all over the Middle East because Jerusalem is an important holy place in Islam. Arabs had come to the country during the Islamic/Turk invasion that took place in AD 638. It's interesting that Jerusalem is never mentioned in the Koran, the holy book of Islam, and yet they claim this as a holy sight. However, according to Islamic tradition, the temple mount in Jerusalem is the place from which Muhammad ascended to heaven on his night journey. The famous Dome of the Rock covers this rock where Muhammad allegedly left his footprints as he leaped into heaven. This is considered the third holiest site in Islam, behind Mecca and Medina.

Islam teaches that that land conquered in the name of Allah (the Islamic god) remains in his possession forever. Since Israel and Jerusalem were conquered in his name, it is a direct insult and disrespect to the Muslims for this land to be in Jewish hands. To Muslim, the establishment of the State of Israel by the United Nations is but another attempt to retake land that rightfully belonged to Allah. In fact, Islamic fundamentalists view America and her military presence in Afghanistan, Kuwait, and Iraq as a crusade attempt by Christians to reoccupy the Holy Land for Christianity. Our support for Israel is also seen as a threat to Allah and his land and consequently they will do anything to keep the land in their hands. America, as a supposed Christian nation, is seen as a threat to Islamic religion and

holy sites – a threat to take away their land, which belongs to Allah. Islamists believe that once a country has been under Islamic rule it can never be relinquished. This is why Osama bin Laden insists he wants Spain back since much of Spain was under Islamic rule for several hundred years in the medieval era.

The military expeditions (crusades) undertaken by the supposed Christians of Europe in the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries to recover the Holy Land and Asia Minor from the Muslims were not forgotten by the Muslims. The Muslims (Arabs peoples) look back and see the Crusades as a campaign by militant Christianity to overthrow what Allah had given to them. Today it's no different. They continue to see both Israel (Jews) the West (US. with its Christianity) as a vital threat to their ability to rule the land of Allah.

To many Americans this type of reasoning can seem ludicrous. But it is how many Muslims think. Allah is out to conquer the world. His plan is for global conquest. Well, the Temple Mount (Israel's holy site) is what ignited another Palestinian uprising that began on September 26, 2000.

On ancient maps Jerusalem was located at the center of the map. This signified it was the geographical center for man's activity. Jerusalem is still the city at the center of world attention. Thomas Ice and Timothy Demy observe: "Located 31 degrees 47 minutes north latitude, 35 degrees 13 minutes east longitude, Jerusalem no longer occupies the center of the cartographer's maps and efforts. It does, however, remain at the center of Biblical prophecy. The dynamic story of this glorious city continues today. History proclaims its past. Headlines proclaim its present. Prophecy proclaims its future. What is the future for Jerusalem? The Bible says that in the end times (during the Tribulation Period), Israel and Jerusalem will dominate the attention of the entire world in a negative way. Jerusalem will be at the center of international controversy and conflict. The nations of the world will become obsessed or intoxicated with the desire to possess the city.

In the end time (the closing of the Tribulation Period) all the nations of the earth will invade Jerusalem. Like today, the city will be center of attention and activity when the Messiah returns.

Zechariah 12:1-2

“The burden of the word of the Lord for Israel, saith the Lord, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.”

Zechariah 14:1-2

“Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.”

The prophetic texts sated above clearly reveal that the world’s armies are going to eventually converge on Israel in the end times in order to destroy her. This includes the United States. People ask me if the U.S is in Bible prophecy. I always take them to the verse that speaks of all nations being at the Campaign of Armageddon. Satan will gather the nations of the world out of hatred for national Israel and to ultimately fight the Lord when He returns. It’s amazing how everything is going to center or converge on this little nation of people and this little spot in the Middle East. Keep your eyes on Israel. The animosity against Israel today is setting the stage for all these events to occur.

During the end times the nations will be obsessed with gaining control over Jerusalem. It’s no wonder why so much attention is being drawn to this little place in the Middle East. Jerusalem is always in the news and it will continue to be a place of hot contention right up to the end, when Jesus returns in His Second Coming. The land of Israel and Jerusalem has always been a place of contention and peace will never come to this ancient land until the Prince of Peace returns (Isaiah 9:6).

What we see today is a fitting prelude to the Bible’s prediction of the place of Jerusalem during the end times. It’s amazing how this one small piece of land can capture so much world attention. The only explanation can be that the interest in Jerusalem is supernatural. God in His sovereign purpose has in one sense placed Israel in the eye of the hurricane to fulfill His Word. As we draw closer to the coming of Christ we know that Jerusalem, the Temple

Mount, and the threat of war in Jerusalem will remain in the world's headlines.

World events will focus on the city of Jerusalem in the Tribulation Period. So what is God telling us? He is saying, "Watch Jerusalem!" She is the key. She is ground zero.

Isaiah 49:16,

"Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of *my* hands; thy walls *are* continually before me."

Looking at Jerusalem with the military conflict today is like looking in a mirror that reflects what the Bible predicts will take place during the end time. The stage is being set for everything to fall into place for this little piece of land and city. We are moving to ground zero for Jerusalem. Jesus is coming again! It can't be far away!! What are you doing for the Lord? Are you dedicated to the work of the Lord? Are you ready for His coming? It could happen in a moment!

2. The rise of Muslim powers

The Bible predicts that during the end-times Muslim powers, including Russia, will attempt to destroy the Jews and overtake her land.

Ezekiel 38:1-5

"And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Gog (future leader of this coalition of nations), the land of Magog (ancient land of the Scythians - modern Russia), the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal (western Turkey), and prophesy against him, And say, Thus saith the Lord God; Behold I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal: And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armour, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords: Persia (Iran), Ethiopia ("Cush" – modern Sudan south of Egypt), and Libya (modern-day Libya west of Egypt) with them; all of them (other Arab supporting countries - Afghanistan, Pakistan, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria) with shield and helmet."

These ancient lands with their contemporary names and which are now Muslim supporters will converge on Israel, at the very beginning of the seven-year Tribulation Period, in response to the covenant Antichrist has made with Israel (Dan. 9:27). The Bible is very clear that they will invade the land of Israel during the end times.

Ezekiel 38:16 declares:

“And thou shalt come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land; it shall be in the latter days, and I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me, when I shall be sanctified in thee, O Gog, before their eyes.”

The “land” refers to Palestine (Ezek. 38:19 – “the land of Israel”). The Russian and Islamic coalition of nations will begin their descent upon the little nation of Israel (“my people of Israel” – Ezek. 38:14) with the intent to destroy it and wipe them off from the face of the map. But God says very clearly that He is against Gog and the Islamic coalition or the final Jihad that comes against Israel in the end times (“I am against thee, O Gog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal” – Ezek. 38:3). God is against Gog and his invading army and will demonstrate this by destroying them in the mountains of Israel.

Ezekiel 38:18-23

“And it shall come to pass at the same time when Gog shall come against the land of Israel, saith the Lord God, that my fury shall come up in my face. For in my jealousy and in the fire of my wrath have I spoken, Surely in that day there shall be a great shaking in the land of Israel; So that the fishes of the sea, and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the field, and all creeping things that creep upon the earth, and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall shake at my presence, and the mountains shall be thrown down, and the steep places shall fall, and every wall shall fall to the ground. And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man's sword shall be against his brother. And I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood; and I will rain upon him, and upon his bands, and upon the many people that are with him, an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone. Thus will I magnify myself, and sanctify myself; and I will be known in the eyes of many nations, and they shall know that I am the Lord.”

God will defeat Gog on the mountains of Israel and not allow them to destroy His beloved people. Of course, today, we see radical Muslim extremists wanting to destroy God's covenant people. Hatred for the Jews continues to rise in Muslim lands. This will reach the boiling point as the end times begin. Russia and her Islamic allies will come to destroy Israel and capture the Middle East, but God will stop them in their tracks. The stage is being set for this end-time battle to begin. The increase of Muslim hatred will escalate in preparation for this final Jihad (holy war) against Israel.

Note: For a detailed analysis of this battle see the authors study, "God verses Gog" (Russia in Bible Prophecy).

How close are we to the coming Russian and Islamic invasion of Israel? We can't be sure, but one writer described it in this way: "We could be very close! The house lights appear to be dimming. The curtain could go up at any moment. The Rapture could occur today!"

"Signs of the times are everywhere,
There's a brand new feeling in the air.
Keep your eyes upon the eastern sky,
Lift up your head for your redemption draweth nigh."