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The Seventh Seal and the First Trumpet

“An unheard-of disaster is coming. The end has come! The end has come! It has raised itself against you. It has come! Doom has come upon you — you who dwell in the land. The time has come, the day is near; there is panic, not joy upon the mountains. I am about to pour out my wrath on you and spend my anger against you; I will judge you according to your conduct and repay you for all your detestable practices. I will not look on you with pity or spare you; I will repay you in accordance with your conduct and the detestable practices among you. Then you will know that it is I the Lord who strikes the blow.”

Ezekiel 7:5-9 New International Version

First Parenthesis

There is an extended hiatus between the Sixth and *Seventh Seal*, a sort of parenthesis, in which two major events take place: the “sealing” of the believing *Remnant Israel*; and the removal to heaven of a great multitude of non-Israel believers out of the

imminent "*Great Tribulation*". Although the whole world is in a state of panic, fear and confusion, and the whole of nature is in a state of turmoil, there is called a lull in the storm of divine judgements for a short time.

John is given a Vision of Four Angels standing at the four corners of the earth to monitor the divine parenthesis while a Fifth Angel carries a divine seal to stamp God's name on the foreheads, like a phylactery, of the selected *Remnant Israel*, twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes, a total of 144,000. Who are those favoured ones who are sealed from judgement? There is great controversy in Christian circles about the literal or metaphorical significance of this number but, without listing these, my own understanding is that they are practising Judaisers, the firstfruits of the new return to God from among the world's unbelieving Jews, a particular class singled out because of spiritual qualifications based on the *Law* of Moses and teachings of Jesus, not practised by other Judaism communities, and distinctly different from the Overcoming Church already in heaven.

The second group in the divine parenthesis distinct from *Remnant Israel* is described as "*a great multitude that no one could number out of all nations . . . clothed in white robes and with palm branches in their hands*". The Overcoming Church believers have thrones and crowns; this "*great multitude*" has palm branches. The Overcoming Church is in heaven before the '*hour of trial*'; the palm-bearers are "*come out of that trial*"; the Overcoming Church rules, but this "*great multitude*" is ruled over. The "*great multitude*" of believers was once sinners and sufferers on the earth, members of its tribes and peoples; cleansed and sanctified by the blood of Jesus. They ascribe their salvation to God and to the Lamb. They are by nature and descent of the stock of Adam, and by grace of God the community of redeemed believers. Their place in heaven is assured, as those "*saved by fire*", citizens in the kingdom of God but not rulers in the *Overcoming Church of the Messiah*.

First Trumpet and Judgement

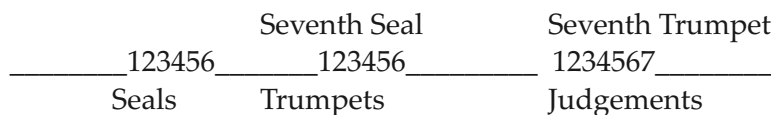
The opening of the *Seventh Seal* coincides with the sounding of the *First* of the *Seven Trumpets*, and this procedure coincides

throughout the subsequent *Apocalypse*; that is, the *Seventh Trumpet* coincides with the launching of the *First Judgement*, with each succeeding in intensifying of divine wrath. As the *First Vision* of the *Seven Churches* ended with the appearing of the Lord for his Overcoming Church, so this *Second Vision* of the *Seventh Seal* ushers in the start of the second half of the seven years of Daniel’s vision of “*the end times . . . the Great Tribulation*”.

When the *First Seal* is broken a “*voice like thunder*” is heard, and the same is true of the breaking of the other *Three Seals*. With the breaking of the *Fifth Seal* there is a “*great cry*” from beneath the altar; and when the *Sixth Seal* is broken a “*terrifying convulsion*” shakes the earth

But with the breaking of the *Seventh Seal* not a sound is heard “*for the space of half-an-hour*” in anticipation of the final consummation of the great *Apocalypse* of God, the beginning of the second three-and-a-half years of Daniel’s vision. It is also the silence described by the Psalmist in Psalm 76: “*From the heaven You pronounced judgement, and the land feared and was quiet . . . when you, O God, rose up to judge, to save all the afflicted of the land . . .*”

The sequence of *Visions* given to the Apostle John—*Church, Seals, Trumpets, Judgements*—are a mosaic of concurrent and not sequential events; sometimes they include the same overlapping event, occasionally elaborating on them, and sometimes adding new developments to them. On a time-line they would appear:



So the silence of the *Seventh Seal* ushers in the calm before the final storm, the time when God calls a halt to all debates, all distractions, all defiance, and draws every eye and thought in tense expectation of upcoming divine retributions. God’s grace and patience are at an end; He is about to intervene in power and wrath against all those who have so contemptuously dismissed him from their lives. After this awesome stillness the actions from the Throne are announced.

Seven Angels holding Seven Trumpets step forth, while another imposing Angel steps over to the altar with a golden censer of incense. According to ancient Jewish tradition the *Seven Angels* are named as “Uriel, who presides over terror and clamour; Raphael, who presides over the spirits of human creatures; Ragael, who is in charge of punishments on the world; Michael, who presides over nations, and human virtue; Sarakiel, who presides over the lives of all transgressors; Gabriel; who presides over paradise and the cherubim.”

The imposing Angel holding the golden censer offers up incense to God, which is said to be “*the prayers of saints*” — to those who pray, with those who pray, and for those who pray — all those saints still on earth passing through the Tribulations as a purging process. But why the offering of the incense prayers here when the Trumpets are just about to sound doom judgements? Because “*in wrath God remembers mercy*”. Before God wreaks vengeance on Satan and all his demonic followers, in heaven as well as on earth, He responds to the prayers of the remaining saints on earth. Their prayers have always been “*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven*” and now the time has come for God to answer their prayers.

At once the divine *finis coronal opus* is launched on the world: “*The Special Angel took the censer and filled it out of the fire on the altar and cast it into the earth*”. Immediately the heavens erupt with rolling peals of thunder, electrifying cloud-splitting lightning, mind-paralysing rumblings and colossal earthquakes. The angelic fire which activated the prayers of believers unleashes the lurid hell of the unbelievers who had mocked its very existence. And this was only the beginning of the final phase of God’s wrath.

The *Seven Angels* holding the *Seven Trumpets* now prepare to sound their blasts of *Apocalyptic* doom. As the *First Trumpet* peals forth “*there followed hail and fire mingled with blood and it was cast into the earth; and a third of the earth was burned*”. The divine record in the impersonal voice of the Apostle John does not convey the stupendous phenomena of hurricanes and tongues of fire mingled with blood falling from heaven while a third of the world is consumed with raging fires. There had been no cataclysm like it since Moses called down such literal phenomena from heaven on

Egypt—and that was only one nation, not a third of the world. There is no description of the related consequences of catastrophic economic disaster through the ecological catastrophe, much more sudden and violent than any climate change from global warming.

Second Trumpet and Judgement

The second *Trumpet Angel* sounded and “*something like a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea; and a third of the sea became blood, a third of the creatures in the sea died, and a third of the ships were destroyed.*”

It can only be assumed that this is a great spouting, seething, and thundering meteoric mass, accompanied with voluminous flames, plunging into the ocean and—again like Moses in Egypt—the water becomes blood, not “*like blood*” but real blood. Before this is mocked by some cynical atheist it should be recalled that the waters of the Nile were turned into blood by Moses lifting up his staff and smiting them sufficiently for Pharaoh and every Egyptian to believe it and to permit the Israeli people to leave Egypt. The “*sea*” area of the flaming holocaust is presumably the Mediterranean which is the region most mentioned in the *Apocalypse*. The oceanic eruption destroys all living creatures in the sea and, as a related consequence, the food supplies of the region.

Third Trumpet and Judgement

While the world is trying to adjust to the series of supernaturally catastrophic events the *Third Angel* blows the *Trumpet* and “*there fell out of heaven a great star flaming like a torch, and it fell upon a third of the rivers and springs of waters; The name of the star is called ‘Wormwood’, and a third of the waters is turned into wormwood, and many died*”. Another name for wormwood is *absinthe*, a bitter, intoxicating and poisonous herb which on occasions can produce convulsions, paralysis and death. A lethal consequence of this meteoric catastrophe is the embittering of waters that had not been affected by the previous judgement of blood.

It is difficult for us to imagine such catastrophic judgements, but a miniscule example might be the combination of the tsunami floods

in Burma and the mountain-convulsing earthquake in China—and these are minor in comparison with the sequence and enormity of the divine judgements being poured out on a disbelieving world.

Fourth Trumpet and Judgement

The rapid widening and intensity of the catastrophic disasters befalling the world is multiplied with the sounding of the *Fourth Trumpet*. The divine focus shifts from the earth to the heavens where a third of the sun is smitten, a third of the moon, and a third of the stars. At a stroke the sidereal calculations and projections of astronomers—and astrologers!—is destroyed, not to mention the disastrous disruption to the seasons and sources of light and heat to the world. The prophet Isaiah had declared:

*“The Day of the Lord is coming—a cruel day, with wrath and fierce anger—to make the land desolate and destroy the sinners within it. The stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. I will punish the world for its evil, the wicked for their sins . . .”*⁸⁷

Now that the “*day of the Lord*” is imminent, those who mock the Lord with their theories, who imagine they are the measure of all things in creation with their secular science, will find themselves in bewildered confusion as what they believe and boast is disintegrating in front of them—and there is still worse to come!

Fifth Trumpet

There is a second mysterious parenthesis between the *Fourth* and final *Three Trumpets* which I find difficult to understand:

“I beheld, and heard one eagle, flying in mid-heaven, saying with a great voice ‘Woe, woe, woe, to the dwellers on earth, by reason of the remaining blasts of the Trumpet of the three angels who are yet to sound.”

The King James’ *Authorised Version* renders the word as “*angel*”, not “*eagle*”, but apparently the major versions all agree that it should be “*eagle*” despite the confusion of a “*talking eagle*”. But there is no doubt about the message the “*flying eagles*” conveys: namely, that there are three “*woes*”, or judgements, pending that will exceed anything that had preceded them. With these *Three Trumpet/Woes* the

⁸⁷ Isaiah 13:9-11

doors of hell as well as heaven are opened and the demonic hordes are unleashed on the world.

The metaphorical "*flying eagles*", leading angels as eagles are the kings of birds, whose territory is said to be "*mid-heaven*", proclaim the doom of the pseudo-religious inhabitants of the earth whose specious claims to "*moral values*" has corrupted their witness and incurred the wrath of God. These "*pseudo-believers*" are targets of the first "*Woe*" of judgement, the other two "*Woes*" being directed against the unbelieving Jews

The *Fifth Angel* sounds the *Fifth Trumpet* and a star out of heaven falls to the earth, a sign of the judgement on Satan, isolating him from his previous access to the divine tribunal in heaven, described by Job. However, his restricted authority on earth and in hell remains, so he is able to "*open the Abyss*" and release its hordes of demons on the world. They have powers to disable like locusts, just as they had afflicted the man in the tombs cured by Jesus; and powers to destroy with the scorpion-like madness of the boy who cast himself into the fire until cured by Jesus. These unleashed demons now have powers to afflict the whole world, but their demonic powers are restricted to delivering agonising physical and mental tortures for only five months, making the victims wishing for death but unable to find it.

Sixth Trumpet of Judgement

When the *Sixth Angel* sounds the *Sixth Trumpet* the voice from the altar before the Throne commands the Angel to loose the *Four Angels* who "*are bound at the great River (Euphrates)*", who have been made ready for this "*hour, day, month and year*", to kill a third of mankind. These *Four Angels* are not the same as the earlier *Four Angels*, whose function is to *restrain* the forces of evil. These *Four Angels* from hell *release* the powers of evil, direct executors of the impending catastrophic judgments on the world, of whom it had been written by the Apostle Peter, "*God sent them to hell to be held in gloomy prison until the judgement of the great day*"⁸⁸ God in mercy, and the presence of the Overcoming Church on earth, had restrained them from their malicious destruction of all humankind; but now, with the

⁸⁸ 2 Peter 2:4

Overcoming Church in heaven, they are given freedom to work their evil purposes because of the world's continuing rejection of God.

It is said that they are located or unleashed "*beyond the great River Euphrates*", the site of the former Garden of Eden and its Satanic intervention, the region of all God-defying empires—Babylon, Medo/Persia, Greece—enemies of Israel and Israel's divine destiny. Some authorities suggest this "*beyond the River Euphrates*" means to be "*from the East*", and certainly China would have no difficulty in providing an army of the size stated. The Four Angels from hell then unleash all the world's innumerable forces of evil latent in human-kind—spiritism, idolatry, murder and sexual perversions—destroying a third of the human race in just over three months.

Second Parenthesis before the Last Judgements

"I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, 'Go and measure the temple of God and the altar, and count the worshippers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1, 260 days, clothed in sackcloth'."

Revelation 11 vv 1-3: *New International Version*

Mysterious Two Witnesses

As the world reels before the implacable series of divine catastrophes unleashed on an unbelieving majority of its population there is an intermission where the Apostle John sees *"a mighty angel descending out of heaven, clothed with a cloud, a rainbow around his head, his face like the sun, and his legs like pillars of fire"* This *"mighty angel"* is another manifestation of Jesus himself, further emphasised as in his hand is a *"little scroll"*, and this little scroll was to be *"eaten"*, opposed to the earlier scroll of *Seals* which

had to be “opened”. The “*intermission*” is a sign that the period of the “*Seals*” is drawing to a close, and the next, final, *Seal* of three-and-a-half years of *Judgements* is about to begin.

The *Mighty Angel* representation of the Lord Jesus places one foot on the land and the other on the sea, lifts his right hand to heaven and declares that there would be no more delay, that the mystery of God—the sum of all God’s past revelations—is about to be completed. John heard the voice from heaven telling him to take the scroll out of the hand of the *Mighty Angel* and eat it. When John did so, he found it was sweet in his mouth but bitter in his belly, a reflection of his subjective feelings regarding the escalating scenes of judgement he was observing.

But John was immediately transferred from being a “*seer*”, an “*observer*”, of events in heaven, to one of active participation as a “*prophet*”, and he is “*to rise and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and those who worship in it.*” A prophet is not only one who “*foretells*” events in the future, but who also “*forth-tells*” events in the present; in both categories he is a witness for God. This is a particularly Jewish command in its relating to the “*temple, the altar, and those who worship in it*”; and this Jewish-ness is emphasised with the stated exclusion of the “*Court of the Gentiles*” from the measuring.

(As a personal digression, this has a fascinating relationship to the present, when there is a minor faction of Jews in Israel who are reported to have assembled all the parts of the Temple to build it again on its ancient site; but that site is currently occupied by an Islamic mosque. The sensitivity of the Muslims was demonstrated a few years ago when some Jews attempted to claim the site as their own and there was a major riot.)

With this measuring of the Temple precincts Jesus as the *Mighty Angel* is giving his authority to his fellow-Jews to recover the site for the nation of Israel, a *casus belli* if ever there was one; and it is a potential looming threat of a major war involving not only Jews and Muslims but their political as well as religious supporters across the world.

In this potentially explosive situation it is said John is “*given a measuring rod and told to . . . exclude the outer court of the temple because*

it has been given to the Gentiles". Could this be because it is currently being occupied presently by the Muslims, who are Gentiles in Biblical terms—as are all nations who are not Jews by birth? The "*Palestine Question*" is the most explosive geopolitical issue facing the world at this present time; with the United States of America, the European Union, and the United Nations Organisation seeking to find a *modus vivendi* with the powerful Arab States surrounding Israel to avoid its Armageddon potential.

To return to the *Mighty Angel's* prophecy:

"The Gentiles will trample on the holy city for forty two months. And I will give power to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth" (my emphasis)

Who are these "*two witnesses*", introduced so suddenly and unexpectedly? Metaphorically, fire issues out of their mouths and kills those who would injure them; that is, they have the power of life and death by what they say. There is no rain during the time they prophesy, they have power over water to turn it into blood, and to smite the earth with plagues. The only possible answer is that they are Enoch and Elijah, the only two people who never "*died*" in the accepted sense; Enoch was "*translated*", and Elijah was carried to heaven in a "*chariot of fire*" whirlwind. Elijah undeniably was a Jew, but Enoch was a Gentile; or, rather, Enoch lived before there were distinctions between "*Jews and Gentiles*". Enoch lived and prophesied before Abraham and the Promise from God, and before Moses and the *Law of God*, dividing Israel from other nations. Enoch is a representative "*Gentile*", as Elijah was a representative "*Jew*".

So the *Two Witnesses* have supportive evidence for their titles as "*witnesses*" to being alive, and Elijah has evidence from Jesus himself who stated "*Elijah shall truly first come and restore all things*" Saint Augustine of Hippo in his *City of God* has stated categorically:

It is a familiar theme in the conversation and heart of the faithful that, in the last days before the judgement, the Jews shall believe in the true Christ by means of the great and admirable prophet Elias . . ."

The *Two Witnesses* "*are immortal until their work is done*", and it will take the first appearance of Satan himself on earth to confront and

kill them. Their bodies will be exposed in the streets of the Gentile occupied city of Jerusalem for three-and-a-half days while people from all nations and languages rejoice in their deaths. But after the three-and-a-half days of death their bodies are revived and terror strikes those who have been mocking their deaths, especially when a voice is heard from heaven, saying, "*Come up here*".

While people are still gazing heavenwards there is a great earthquake and a large area of the city of Jerusalem is destroyed, and seven thousand people lose their lives. As a consequence many believe and give glory to God.

The Last Trumpet and Seven Vials of Wrath

"In that day the Lord will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the southern border of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria, and those who were exiled in Egypt, will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem." (my emphasis)

Isaiah 27:12-13: *New International Version*

The Last Trumpet Sounds

The *Seventh Angel*, who has been waiting patiently for three-and-a-half years while the other events run their course, now sounds the fateful *Seventh Trumpet* to usher in the great climacteric of "*the last days of the world*". It is not just one blast because there are other later occasions when the Angel is called on to sound the *Trumpet* to announce the events.

The unfolding *Apocalypse* from the Throne of God requires an extended *denouement*, given in a later recapitulation which involves the details of *Seven Vials of Wrath*, the *Great White Throne Judgement* of the world's unbelievers, and the establishment of a *New Heavens and*

New Earth. But here the earlier continuity of events is brought to a temporary conclusion, leaving the details of the unfolding final three-and-a-half years of the world to be completed in the recapitulation. Briefly, the first three-and-a-half years invoke God's judgements on the Gentile world for their unbelief; while the second three-and-a-half years primarily invoke God's judgements on Israel, and a final joint judgement.

Previously we noted it was announced by a cloud-robed Angel that "*in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall sound, the mystery of God is to be fulfilled*". How many "*days*", and "*when*" they would be fulfilled is open-ended. When the *Seventh Trumpet* of the Angel is sounded there is a great acclamation in heaven, saying, "*The kingdom of the world has become our Lord's and his Christ's; and he shall reign to the ages of the ages*".

Following this great acclamation the *Twenty Four Elders* of the *Overcoming Church* fall to their faces and give glory to God for all that He has accomplished in unveiling "*the mystery of God*". They are joined with a variety of voices from heaven and earth praising God and calling on Him to complete the divine triumph. God responds by revealing "*the temple of God in heaven*" together with "*the ark of the covenant*", accompanied by "*lightnings, voices, thunderings, earthquakes and great hail*", just as He had revealed himself to Moses on Mount Sinai. The promise of eternal life in the heavenly "*temple*" and "*ark*" is revealed together with the judgements still to fall on those who rejected them throughout history.

The Woman Clothed with the Sun

As if to confirm this "*A great sign was seen in heaven, a woman clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; being with child she cries out to be delivered*". This vision to John emphasises that it is to be viewed not as a "*wonder*" to be awed, but as a "*sign*" to be observed—a representation of something else. Like all of John's Visions in the *Apocalypse* there are many diverse opinions of what the "*great sign of the woman*" means in the critical context of the unfolding of the final judgements, but any feasible interpretation must keep in mind the time and manner of all

surrounding events, especially the primary place of Israel in God's plans.

I believe, therefore, that the woman represents the "*Church of God*" which includes all God-believers from the beginning of time until this point, from Enoch to Abraham; from Moses to the *Prophets*, from Babylonian Judaism to Christians after Christ to the upcoming Armageddon. These were all believers in one form or another as subjects in the "*kingdom of God*", until after the resurrection of Christ (the "*man-child*" born of the woman) when all who are "*born again*" become children in the "*family of God*". The woman is "*clothed with the sun, and at her feet is the moon; and on her head is a crown*", all symbols of the divine royalty of the overarching "*Church of God*" believers throughout history. From God's perspective Israel is the true heir, Jacob rather than Esau; Judah rather than Reuben; David rather than Saul; the olive tree of which the Church is the Branch

The Red Dragon

But, at this critical point, there is another "*sign*" in the heavens, "*a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his head seven diadems*". There is no mystery about this *Dragon* because it is clearly stated it is "*the old serpent that is called the Devil and Satan, who seduces the whole world.*" Like the *Woman* with the man-child Satan is seen in both heaven and earth; the *Woman* is clothed in glory in heaven, yet in birth-travail on the earth. The *Dragon* is in heaven, drawing a third of the stars, or rebellious angels, and they are cast down to the earth, committed to destroying both *Woman and Child*, both Israel and the Church.

Satan is not literally a *Dragon* any more than the Church is a *Woman*. As has been noted, the sun-clad *Woman* denotes the historical Church in its entirety as a spiritual entity, and the *Dragon* denotes the Devil in his entirety as a demonic entity. This is not a mythical clash of equal Titans for global territory, but a wrathful God calling angels and humans to account for both betrayal of their destinies and destruction of His Creation. The *Dragon* "*dragging a third of the stars of heaven behind him*", is a sign that his demonic legions are less powerful,, and their reluctant "*dragging*" is a sign

that their evil powers are distinctly limited, less than those of the *Woman* who has twelve stars in her crown; The “*man-child*” the *Woman* brings forth is an offspring of the *Woman* and, as she is representative of the believers of all ages past, so the “*man-child*” is representative of the *Messiah*, the lodestar of all believers and ruler-in-waiting of the world. With the *Dragon* ready to devour the man-child at birth the latter is removed “*to God and the throne*”. The scene on earth shifts immediately to the mid-heaven where a war to the death takes place between the *Dragon* and his demons, and the Archangel Michael and his angels, in which the *Dragon* is routed. Then a great voice is heard declaring,

“Now is come salvation, and the power and kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before God day and night, has been cast down . . .”

But the angelic song also carried a warning that the *Dragon* “*had great wrath*” because he knew “*he had only a short time*”.

Beast out of the Sea: The Antichrist

The scene shifts to the shores of the Great Sea, possibly the Mediterranean, where the *Dragon* is seen standing on the sea-shore and a “*wild Beast*” emerges, with “*seven heads and ten horns, on his horns ten crowns and on his heads blasphemous names*”. The *Dragon* gives to the *Beast* “*his power and throne and great authority*” —in other words, he is the “*Antichrist*”, usurping that of Christ.

The subsequent activities of the *Beast* over the remaining time on earth indicate that these “*seven heads, ten horns, ten crowns, blasphemous names*” are symbolic, metaphorical representations of the major governments of the world, while the *Beast* personally embodies their political sovereignties in their final phases. The *Beast* is a single administration embodied in one distinctive individual—like Hitler and National Socialism, or Stalin and the Soviet Union—supported by ten different governments who accept his overall authority. Ultimately, as will be seen later, it is Babylon-revived with Satan as ruler.

The time is one of extreme unrest worldwide due to the earlier catastrophic interventions, out of which arises a “*Beast-like*” imperial power comprising ten rulers in a joint confederacy of evil

from the Mediterranean region. He will not be tolerant of any religion, but will be openly antagonistic against all religions, not by eliminating them but by integrating them in his own self-worship. Authority is given to him by Satan to rule over every “*tribe and people, and tongue and nation*”. It could be someone like Osama bin Laden of an extreme Islam, but more charismatic and ruthless.

Beast out of the Earth: Judas Revived?

Then John saw another “*Beast coming out of the earth, with two horns like a lamb, and speaking like the Dragon*”. He has all the powers of the *First Beast*, but his task as a “*False Prophet*” is to cause all who dwell on the earth to worship the *First Beast*. With his magical powers he is a religious leader, while the *First Beast* is the political ruler. Some influential commentators maintain that he is “*Judas revived . . . the son of perdition*” of the *Old Testament* prophecies, of whom it said when he died that “*he went to his own place*” as if reserved for a future purpose.

Be that as it may, the second *Beast*, “*False Prophet*”, is possessed of superhuman powers used in support of the *First Beast*, making an image of the *First Beast* and causing the image to speak, then ordering all who do not worship the image to be killed. As a further measure of worship of the *First Beast* he commands all who worship the *First Beast* to have a distinctive “*brand*” of the mysterious number “666” on their right hands or foreheads as a public sign of their loyalty. In the Hebrew alphabet the characters also have numerical significance, known as *gematria*, and these in turn have spiritual meaning, with the number “6” being “*the number of man*”, and “666” meaning “*the Abyss*”. “666”, is also a Greek symbol of evil made up of two characters which stand for the name of Christ, with the third a figure of a crooked serpent between them. Whatever the correct interpretation—and there are many!—this mystical insignia of the *Beast* is to be prominently displayed on everybody on earth, rich as well as poor, in submission and commitment to the *First Beast*.

The Response from Heaven

This parenthesis of *Satan’s* activities on earth is brought to a

sudden close with the Apostle John given a contrasting vision of what is happening in heaven. Instead of the *Beast* there is a *Lamb*; instead of the blaspheming earthlings with their demonic “666” symbol on their foreheads, there is a company of rejoicing believers with the name of the Father and the Son on their foreheads; instead of the doom and gloom on earth, there is singing and music from 144,000 of the redeemed *Remnant Israel*. They stand with the *Lamb* on Mount Zion, in the heavenly New Jerusalem, made famous on earth by King David, and their new song is the fulfilment of the inspirational psalms of David.

But this *Lamb* in heaven is no longer the apparently helpless and silent creature on the way to slaughter as represented on earth, but is clothed in divine power and wisdom. He is about to claim his own inheritance as all the prophets from the beginning of time have foretold to a sceptical world. Here he is surrounded by the *Overcoming Church*, plus the *Universal Church* from the beginning of time, and now the 144,000 of the redeemed *Remnant Israel* believers. These are those who set themselves to strive all their lives for the divine ideal—“*they are blameless*”—purchased by God, handpicked, responsive, bought for a price paid by Christ, from among the uniform mass of unbelievers.

Three Angel Messengers

Following on the revelation of the elect *Remnant Jews* the Apostle John is shown a series of three scenes, introduced by a series of angels “*flying in mid-air*” with distinct messages. The *First Angel* proclaims “*the everlasting gospel*”, a universal gospel of the kingdom of God reduced to its simplest requirement to all those who live on the earth:

“Fear God, and give him glory, because the hour of his judgement has come. Worship him who made the heavens, the earth, the sea and the springs of water”.

That was the original gospel of Jesus Christ reduced to its least requirement, the further evidence of a merciful God prepared to be forgiving even in the most extreme circumstances. It is a loving God offering a stark choice between acknowledging him as the true God

and eternal salvation, or following the Devil to eternal damnation.

The *Second Angel* follows with a dramatic denouement: “*Fallen! Fallen is Babylon that great city, because she made all nations drink the maddening wine of her fornications*”. Babylon, historically, was the preferred magnificent capital of all the three great ancient empires, Babylon, Medo-Persia and Greece, its breath-taking architecture, walls and gardens making it at one time one of the seven wonders of the world. It is also the one city in the Bible that figures almost antithetically equal with Jerusalem.

In the genealogy of Jesus his history is listed in three segments of fourteen: from Abraham (Babylon) to David (Jerusalem); from David to the Babylonian captivity; and from the Babylonian captivity to the Christ crucifixion (Jerusalem).⁸⁹From the time of King David in Jerusalem there is a series of almost thirty divinely-sent prophets the centrality of whose prophecies is the sin, arrogance and fall of Babylon in the final days of the world, when Satan and the Christ will engage in a monumental battle for dominance, resulting in the total destruction of “*Babylon the Great*” and all it represents historically and Biblically.

Here in the message of the *Second Angel* it is only the announcement of the forthcoming demise of Babylon in a holocaust of destruction as the world comes to an end. Like the modern Jerusalem, which is historically distant from the prophetic record as the crux of divine and human history (although it is central to the current geopolitical situation), Babylon, or modern Iran/Iraq, is also historically distant from the prophetic record (although Iraq’s former President Saddam poured billions of dollars into re-constructing ancient Babylon as a potential capital for Islam).

From the records of the past prophets, especially Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Daniel, Babylon is “*Satan’s Seat*” and the crux of his ambitions to rule the world. With the assistance of the two “*Beasts*” it appears as if Satan’s intention is to do this from the Mesopotamian region, and eventually from Babylon.

Third Angel

The message of the *Third Angel* is more general but even more

⁸⁹ Matthew 1:17

ominous. Crying with a *“great voice”* the Angel announces that *“whosoever is found worshipping the Beast and his image, or has the Beast’s mark on his forehead or on his hand, he shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God and be tormented throughout eternity”*.

In support of the *Third Angel* there is a voice from heaven to provide support and comfort to those who remain faithful to God throughout the reign of the Antichrist. Like the days of the first century Christians in the Roman Coliseum providing entertainment in martyrdom extravaganzas, they are assured from heaven, *“Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth . . . they shall rest from their labours and their works follow them.”*

The Harvest and Vintage

The scene shifts once again and John sees a white cloud, and on the cloud one is seated who looks like *“the Son of Man”*, with a crown of gold on his head, and a sharp sickle in his hand. An angel comes out of the temple calling out to the One on the cloud, *“Take your sickle and reap, for the time of reaping has come.”* Then the One on the cloud casts his sickle on the earth and reaps, fulfilling the prophetic parable of Jesus:

“He that sows the good seed is the son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are the angels.”⁹⁰

Another angel came out of the temple in heaven, also carrying a sickle, joined by one from the altar who has *“power over the (altar) fire”* His goal is to *“gather the ripe grapes of the wine of the earth”* Although the words are seductive their meaning is sinister in that *“the ripe grapes of the earth”* are those who are ripe for divine judgement. They are mown down by the angelic sickle and cast into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. It is the looming shadow of the coming Armageddon, the gathering of armies, the counsels of the world’s mighty leaders, under the iron rule of the Beast and his sinister adjutant, the False Prophet, and their goal is the destruction of *“the holy city”* Jerusalem.

⁹⁰ Matthew 13:38-39

Seven Angels and Seven Plagues

From the midst of the host of heaven John sees *Seven Angels* with the *Seven Last Plagues* emerging from the heavenly temple, dressed in shining linen with golden sashes. One of the four cherubim near the throne of God steps forward and gives to the *Seven Angels* seven golden bowls "*filled with the wrath of God*". Then a loud voice proclaims, "*Go and pour out the seven bowls of God's wrath on the earth.*"

Six thousand years of God's anger against the human race that had either ignored or mocked him is now unleashed on the world. The *First Angel* pours its contents on all those who carry "*the mark of the beast*" and they become plagued with painful ulcers. The *Second Angel* pours his plague on the sea and it becomes putrescent blood killing all sea life. The *Third Angel* pours his plague on the rivers and springs of waters and they, too, become blood, as a token of judgement on those who had shed the blood of believers. The *Fourth Angel* pours his plague on the sun and its intensity increases and scorches those who curse God. The *Fifth Angel* pours his plague on the *Beast* and the earth becomes black as night. The *Sixth Angel* pours his plague over the River Euphrates and opens the way for the mighty army coming from the Orient to attack Jerusalem from the Valley of Megiddo, or Armageddon, and all the city represents of defiance against the *Beast* and his policies. There is a short lull, then the *Seventh Angel* pours his plague into the air, a loud voice from heaven declares "*It is finished*", and a series of mighty earthquakes shattered the cities of the world, including Jerusalem.

This is the time prophesied by Isaiah when he said:

"The Lord is angry with all nations; his anger against all their armies. He will totally destroy them, he will give them over to slaughter. Their slain will be rejected, their bodies will set up a stench, and the mountains will be soaked with their blood. All the stars of heaven will be dissolved, and the sky rolled up like a scroll. The starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shrivelled figs from the fig tree . . . It is the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompenses for the controversy of Zion . . ."

The universal eruption on such an unprecedented scale will level mountains, rend the earth, and cause islands to disappear into the sea. This is the Son of God acting as men and women mockingly

challenged him as Messiah to act, when he had come to earth to save them. When he comes to claim his rightful inheritance those who mock will reel in awe and fear as the world around them is consumed with a raging destruction.

Chapter -15 -
will be available on this site on the 1st April 2009