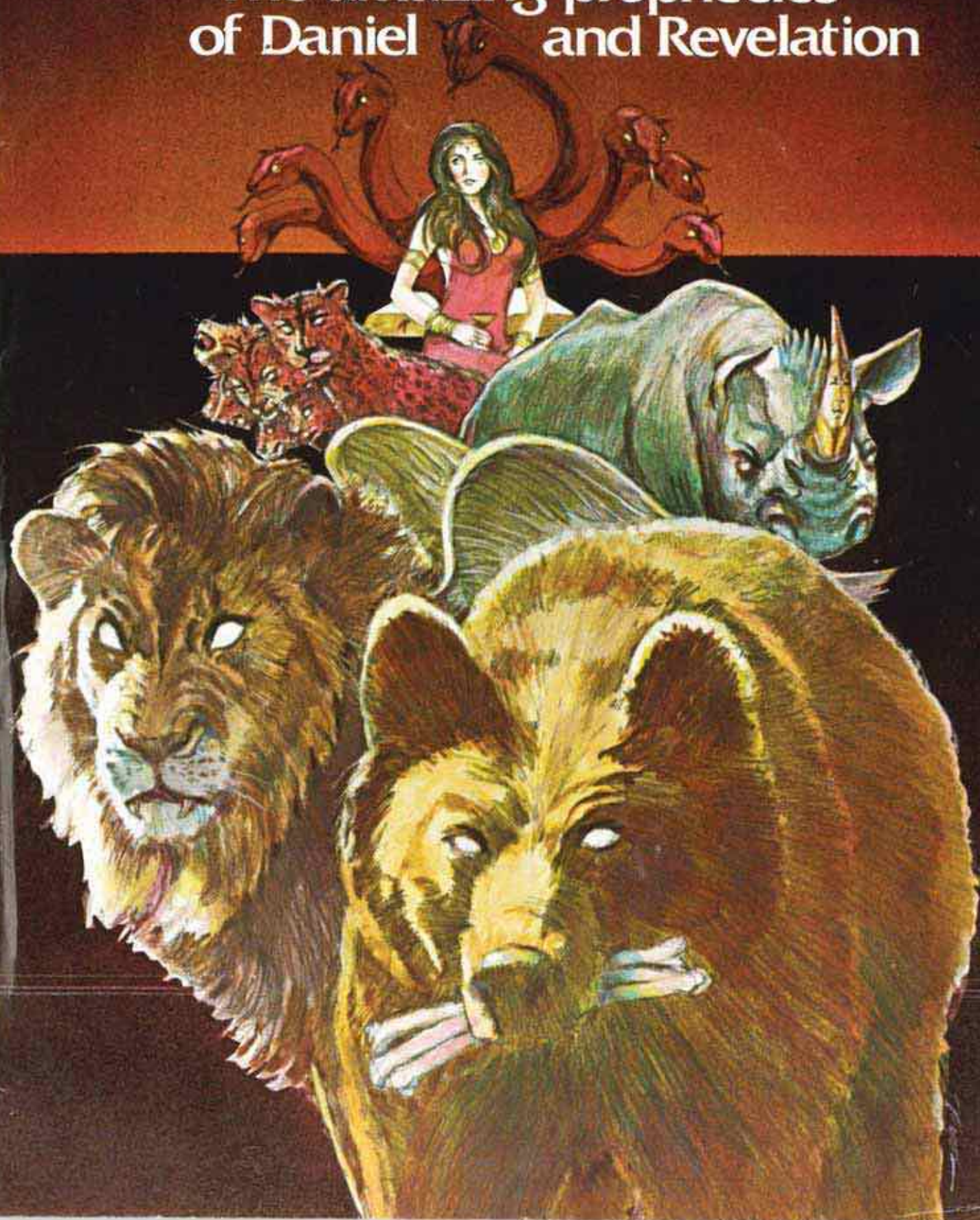


THESE TIMES

A SPECIAL ISSUE

The amazing prophecies
of Daniel and Revelation



**"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 stars arise in your hearts."
2 Peter 1:19**

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A Blueprint for the Future

Many people, when reading the Bible for the first time, find the books of Daniel in the Old Testament and Revelation in the New Testament full of alien creatures and mysterious symbols. As a result they often give up trying to read these two books, and miss out on the most breathtaking prophecies in the entire Bible.

However, Jesus Himself, speaking about the book of Daniel, commanded His followers, "Whoso readeth, let him understand" (Matthew 24:15). And in the book of Revelation Jesus added, "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7). These two books are the only ones in the entire Bible that our Lord so identified and instructed His followers to study.

Obviously, Jesus wants His people not only to read but to understand and follow the messages presented in these two books. Yet much of the Christian world has chosen to ignore or play down the significance of the great prophecies contained in these books.

Because of Christ's instructions and the fabulous wealth of information about yesterday, today, and tomorrow, *THESE TIMES* is offering *for the first time ever* the major prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, along with explanatory commentary, combined together under one magazine cover.

We hope the information in this 68-page special issue will help make these two books come alive for you. Remember, due to the limitations of placing this in a magazine format, this publication cannot include every passage of Scripture found in these two books. Rather we have utilized the main prophecies of Daniel and Revelation to provide an overview of the great controversy between the forces of good and evil from the days of Daniel through our days to the earth made new—when God brings earth's history to a close and ushers in eternity.

At the top of the following pages you will find the Biblical text of the key prophecies of the books of Daniel and Revelation from the King James Version set in bold type. Underneath are comments that will illuminate these prophecies and reveal their impact on subsequent history. We have also included relevant charts, illustrations, and photographs that will help clarify the meaning of the various passages.

Now, let's begin our study on the next page with the book of Daniel.



Chapter 2

And in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him. 2 Then the King commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the sorcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king. 3 And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

4 Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation.

5 The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known unto me the dream, with the interpretation thereof, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill. 6 But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the interpretation thereof.

7 They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation of it.

8 The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me. 9 But if ye will not make known unto me the dream, there is but one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and

Daniel's story begins in the early summer of 605 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar, son of the king of Babylon, Nabopolassar, raided the kingdom of Judah. Among the small group of captives that Nebuchadnezzar's chief attendant selected to take to Babylon and educate for service in the king's court were the young men Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, or, as the Babylonians called them, Belteshazzar, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

During his campaign against Judah, Nebuchadnezzar received news of his father's death and immediately returned to Babylon to take control of the kingdom.

After the four captives came to Babylon, they maintained a close relationship with God. As the years passed and they learned the Chaldean, or Aramaic, language and became proficient in the scientific knowledge of that time, they remained faithful to God despite the

corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation thereof.

10 The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean. 11 And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other than can shew it before the king, except the gods, whose dwelling is not with flesh.

12 For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon. 13 And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

14 Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon: 15 He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel. 16 Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

17 Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: 18 That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon. 19 Then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

20 Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: 21 And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding: 22 He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him. 23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

24 Therefore Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him; Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

25 Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

26 The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

27 Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers, shew unto the king: 28 But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these: 29 As for thee, O king, thy

God reveals the secret of the dream

seductive influences of the heathen court, and God blessed their faithfulness. Their healthful pattern of living, as well as their temperance in diet, contributed to give them unusual physical and mental vitality. Shortly after the Hebrews finished their training, Nebuchadnezzar had a most unusual dream. The record of this dream is found in Daniel 2. (See the text above.)

Verses 36-38. Daniel explicitly told Nebuchadnezzar that he was the "head of gold" in the dream. Since Daniel identified the other parts of the image as representing kingdoms, it is evident that the head of gold symbolized Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, Babylon. In this and later chapters the terms "king" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably.

The head of gold fitly represented Babylon, "the golden city" (Isaiah 14:4). Jeremiah called the city "a golden cup,"

"abundant in treasures" (Jeremiah 51:7, 13). Surrounded by massively fortified walls, the city lay on both sides of the Euphrates River, which watered its gardens and supported its commerce.

Verse 39. But "another kingdom inferior to" Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, represented by the breast and arms of silver, would conquer and supplant the golden kingdom. Darius, by a masterful maneuver of turning aside the waters of the Euphrates, led his Medo-Persian forces through the riverbed to take Babylon by complete surprise in 539 BC.

The next power—the one that uprooted and succeeded the Persians—was that of Macedonia, represented by the image's midsection of brass. Alexander, that young military genius who conquered the Mediterranean world but who could not conquer his appetite, in a lightning campaign bested the Persians in several battles, finally completely

routing them at the Battle of Arbela in 331 BC.

Verse 40. Unmistakably "the fourth kingdom," "strong as iron," represented by the legs of iron, was Rome. Rome conquered swiftly, ruthlessly, and with crushing force. She began to replace the Hellenistic, or Greek, Empire by a decisive battle at Pydna, 168 BC, and by 30 BC, with the subjugation of Egypt, she completed her control of the Mediterranean world.

Verses 41-43. Who but Daniel, under divine inspiration, could foretell that the mighty empire of Rome would suffer division? But when he came to the feet and toes in his explanation, Daniel predicted, "The kingdom shall be divided." Did Daniel's prediction come to pass? History records clearly that it did.

During the fourth and fifth centuries AD the empire of Rome in the west be-

Daniel explains the amazing dream to the king

thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. 30 But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

31 Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible. 32 This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, 33 His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. 34 Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces. 35 Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the

chaff of the summer threshingfloors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

36 This is the dream; and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king. 37 Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. 38 And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given unto thine hands, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

39 And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

40 And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise.

Courtesy of British Museum, London



came divided as several distinct barbarian kingdoms within her midst gained independent power. And these kingdoms, which later developed into the nations of Europe today, have ever remained divided.

Daniel declared that "they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay." Down through the centuries many powerful men have attempted to overthrow that prophecy and unite Europe. Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon, Kaiser Wilhelm, and Hitler all tried and to a man failed.

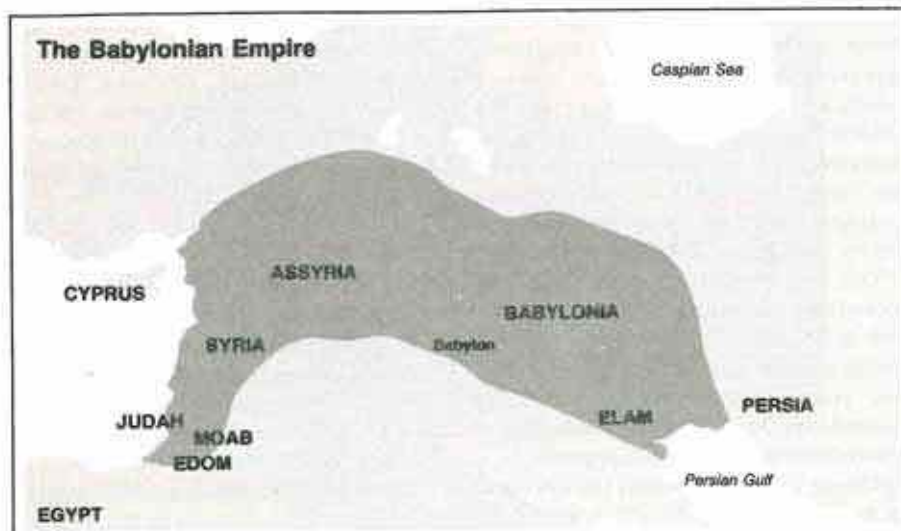
Attempts to bring an intermingling between these kingdoms, especially through the practice of intermarriage among royal families, also failed just as Daniel predicted in verse 43. The five

fateful words, "They will not hold together" (RSV), have accurately portrayed the sweep of European history from the disintegration of the Roman Empire till today. God's Word has clearly proved true.

Verses 44, 45. Daniel brings to view the dramatic climax to the king's dream in verses 34, 35, and 44, 45, where he describes the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom. From verse 44 we know that this development comes after the division of the Roman Empire.

The "stone" points to Christ's return and to His kingdom (see Daniel 7:13, 14). When He sets up His everlasting kingdom (Revelation 11:15) in conjunction with His second coming (Matthew 25:31-34), He will smite "the image upon his feet" (Daniel 2:34) and will "break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms" (verse 44). This earthshaking event will then fulfill the prediction, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed," for "it shall stand for ever."

This cuneiform tablet relating Nebuchadnezzar's achievements (above on left) was found by archeologists at Babylon. In it Nebuchadnezzar asks, "Is not this Babylon the great which I have built?" The ancient Babylonian Empire (map at left) encompassed most of the Fertile Crescent.



41 And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay. 42 And as the toes of the feet were part of iron, and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. 43 And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men; but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

44 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. 45 Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath

made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter; and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof is sure.

46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him. 47 The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret. 48 Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. 49 Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

God sets up His own kingdom

Chapters 3 to 6 continue the biographical account of Daniel's life. From the time he interpreted the dream recorded in chapter 2 in 603 BC to when he received the vision recorded in chapter 7, about 552 BC, over fifty years elapsed.

While the prophecy in chapter 2 dealt largely with political matters, the prophecies of chapters 7 to 12 deal especially with the future facing God's people. However, it will be seen that each succeeding line of prophecy builds

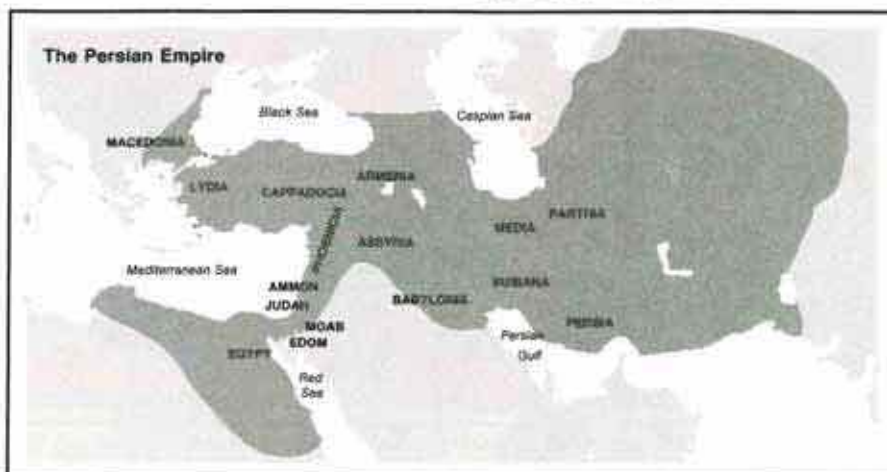
on the one before it, with the dream of chapter 2 being the base line.

In recording the vision of the four beasts and the judgment in chapter 7, Daniel gave four separate descriptions of what he had seen in the vision (verses 1-14). Then he was given the general meaning of it by an angel interpreter (verses 15-18). After further inquiry about certain parts (verses 19-22), the angel summarized the whole vision (verses 23-27).

This vision introduces two important new elements not mentioned in chapter 2. First, Daniel saw a new power, the "little horn," arise out of the divided Roman kingdom. Second, he saw pictured a judgment to come just before God set up His kingdom. In this judgment God would decide *against* the little horn and *for* the saints.



The Cyrus cylinder (above) contains Cyrus the Mede's own account of his overthrow of Babylon in 538 BC. It also gives sanction to the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, an account similar to that in Ezra 1. The Medo-Persian Empire (right) encompassed more territory than the Babylonian Empire it replaced (see p. 7).



Courtesy of British Museum, London

Chapter 7

Four great beasts emerge from the sea

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters. 2 Daniel spake and said, I saw in my vision by night, and, behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea. 3 And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

4 The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

5 And behold another beast, a second, like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

6 After this I beheld, and lo another, like a

leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

7 After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.

8 I considered the horns, and, behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and, behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things.

9 I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. 10 A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was

Verses 1, 2. Most prophetic symbols are used consistently throughout the Scriptures. In Revelation 17:15 "waters" is defined as meaning peoples and nations, and such a meaning fits the context of Daniel's description here quite well. The winds upon the sea fitly represent the strife that usually accompanies the rise and fall of earthly kingdoms.

Verse 3. According to the angel who interpreted this vision for Daniel, the four beasts arising from the sea symbolize four "kings," or kingdoms, which would arise. These four beasts parallel the four parts of the image in chapter 2.

Verse 4. The lion fitly symbolized Babylon, and, in fact, figures of this beast,

often pictured with eagle's wings, appear prominently on walls and monuments of excavated Babylonian ruins. The lionlike kingdom did lose its aggressiveness and become weak in its later years, as the picture of the loss of wings and change of character points out.

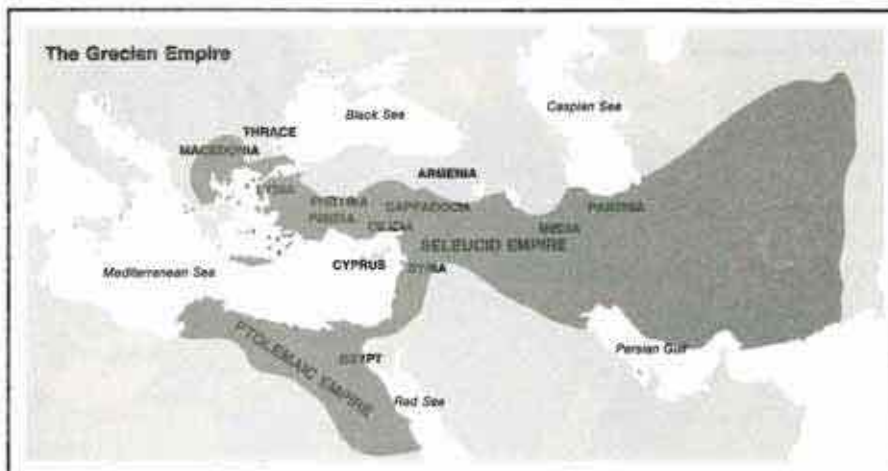
Verse 5. The bear can be none other than Medo-Persia. Its raising itself on one side denotes the Persians soon becoming the dominant power, while the "three ribs . . . between the teeth of it" probably symbolize three prominent territories that the Medo-Persian power conquered—Lydia, Babylonia, and Egypt. But just as a slow-moving bear proves no match for the savage

onslaught of the agile leopard, so the Persian armies were unable to cope with the swift advances of Alexander's warriors.

Verse 6. The leopard, symbolizing Grecia, had not two but four wings, an appropriate picture of the great speed of its conquests. The four heads indicate the division of Alexander's empire among his generals and their successors following his untimely death.



On this silver tetradrachm coin, struck about 300 BC (above), Alexander the Great, king of the third empire in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, appears wearing an elephant's skin headdress. The Grecian Empire (map left) encompassed all of the Medo-Persian Empire plus Macedonia.



set, and the books were opened.

11 I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spake: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame. 12 As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.

13 I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. 14 And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

15 I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me. 16 I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

17 These great beasts, which are four, are four

kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

18 But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

19 Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet; 20 And of the ten horns that were in his head, and of the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even of that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spake very great things, whose look was more stout than his fellows.

21 I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; 22 Until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.

23 Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in

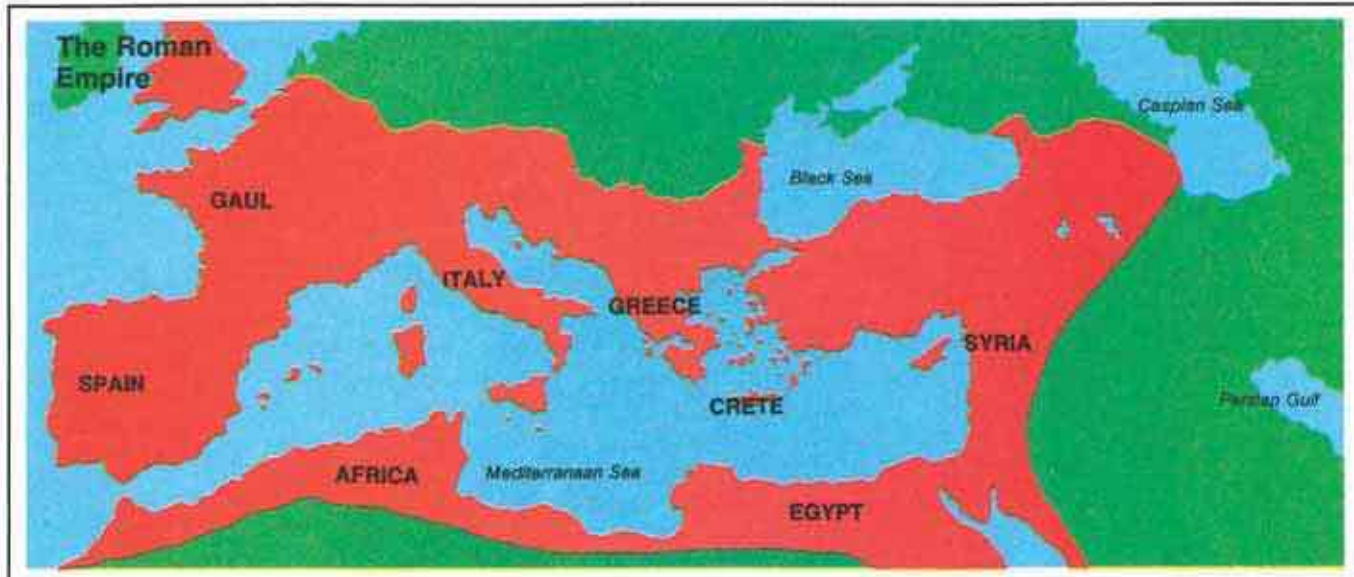
The angel explains the four beasts

Verse 7. The first mention of a metal in this vision, the iron teeth of the fourth beast, certainly ties this power to the empire represented by the legs of the great image of chapter 2. This beast had such a ferocious and terrible character that no beast in nature could represent it. Daniel described it as being "strong exceedingly" and diverse, or different, from the three preceding beasts. This beast had ten horns. These, the angel declared, represented ten kings or kingdoms that would arise out of the fourth beast (compare verses 20 and 24).

Verse 8. In the prophecy recorded in chapter 7 Daniel pictured the fourth kingdom, or Rome, as having two distinct phases. The nondescript beast symbolizes the fourth kingdom in its first phase as a mighty power that would come to dominate the then-known world after the Greek Empire. Historians have commonly termed this first phase as pagan Rome. The second phase is symbolized in chapter 7 by a "little horn" growing out of the head of the fourth beast. The little horn is a new feature in this vision.

Verses 9-14, 26-28. After Daniel saw human organizations struggle to grasp political and religious dominion on earth, the scene shifted to heaven. In the midst of the career of the little horn Daniel saw the heavenly court convene. The second new feature in the vision of chapter 7 pertains to the scene of final judgment in heaven. At some point of time after AD 1798 (the close of the 1260-year period referred to in verse 25), the great court would sit, and investigation would be made in the affairs of earth.

The key word in chapter 7 is *dominion*



The fourth beast mentioned in the Book of Daniel represented the Roman Empire. Being the largest of all the empires, it aptly fulfills the statement in verse 23 that it "shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down."

**The little horn
fights against
God and His
people**

pieces. 24 And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue three kings. 25 And he shall speak great words against the most High and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time.

26 But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion, to consume and to destroy

it unto the end. 27 And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.

28 Hitherto is the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me: but I kept the matter in my heart.

(verses 6, 12, 14, 26, 27). Who will rule the dominion of this world? Political and religious forces struggle to exercise authority, often trampling upon the rights of earth's inhabitants and coercing the consciences of those who fear God. But God has not abdicated His sovereignty over creation. The dominion of the oppressors will be taken away (verses 12, 26). God's people will be approved, the jewels of His kingdom made up (verse 27). Judgment will be rendered in their favor (verse 22).

Daniel saw God the Father, described as "the Ancient of days" surrounded by myriads of holy angels, sitting on a fiery throne. "The books were opened"; "the judgment was set." Then the attention of the prophet was drawn to "one like the Son of man," coming "with the clouds of heaven." This Distinguished Person who was presented before the Eternal Judge to be awarded rightful authority over the earth and an eternal kingdom is no other than Jesus Christ (see Mark 14:61, 62). He is earth's Rightful Ruler, and His followers are earth's rightful inhabitants. "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away" (verse 14).

Two years after Daniel received the vision recorded in chapter 7 he received another vision that also portrayed the course of history. This time, however, the Babylonian power was not included, and he saw only the three powers yet to follow. He describes this in chapter 8.

"Behold, there came up among them another little horn, . . . and . . . in this horn were eyes like the eyes of man, and a mouth speaking great things" (Daniel 7:8).



Seven ways to identify the little horn

WHAT does the mysterious little horn, spoken of in verses 8, 11, 20, and 24-26, represent? Daniel presents at least seven characteristics that clearly help identify this little horn in European history during the Christian era as papal Rome.

1. *Location* (verse 8): The little horn was to develop "among" ten nations of western Europe into which Rome divided.

2. *Time of rise* (verses 8, 20, 24): It would arise after the breakup of the Roman Empire—that is, after the fifth century AD. Further, it would arise after three of the ten horns had been uprooted. Three of the barbarian kingdoms that arose out of Rome espoused the views of Arius, who denied the divinity of Christ. All the other barbarian kingdoms came to accept the Catholic faith.

From AD 476 on, the three Arian powers dominated portions of the territory of Rome, but each in turn met defeat as the rulers of the Eastern Roman Empire rallied to support the Roman Church in the west. In 533 Justinian, the emperor of the Eastern Empire, legally recognized the bishop (or pope) of Rome as the head of all the Christian churches, but because of the Arian domination of Rome, the pope had no opportunity to actually exercise his civilly recognized power. Finally in 538 Belisarius, one of Justinian's generals, routed the Ostrogoths, the last of the Arian powers, from the city of Rome. Thus by the military intervention of the Eastern Empire the pope was freed from the dominating influence of states that restrained his activities in the civil sphere. This date, AD 538, plays an important part in identifying who this power is—as we shall see under number 7.

3. *Its nature* (verses 7, 8, 20, 24): Compared with the other horns the little horn was diverse, or different. It was "stout," or great. It exercised more than political power. Its attention to religious issues

characterizes this power as a combined religious and political system.

4. *Attitude toward God* (verses 8, 20, 25): The little horn would "speak great words" against God. (Compare Daniel 8:23; 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13:5.)

5. *Attitude toward God's law* (verse 25): It would view God's law as needing changes and would attempt to make changes in that law by its own authority. Papal Rome did, in fact, champion Sunday as a holy day instead of the seventh-day Sabbath ordained by God in His law.

6. *Attitude toward God's people* (verses 21, 25): This system would persecute "the saints of the most High." Those whom papal Rome considered heretical faced civil punishment. History attests that millions were put to death under this religiopolitical system. Church historian David Schaff summed up papal Rome's persecuting activities in these words:

"Down to the very close of the Middle Ages, the pages of history were disfigured by the decrees of popes and synods, confirming death as the penalty for heresy, and for persons supposed to be possessed with witchcraft. The great council of Constance, 1415, did not get away from this atmosphere, and ordered heretics punished even by the flames,—*puniantur ad ignem*. And the bull of Leo X, 1520, condemning Luther, cursed as heresy the Reformer's liberal statement that the burning of heretics is contrary to the will of the Spirit" (*History of the Christian Church*, Vol. V, Part 1, p. 524).

7. *Length of time permitted to rule* (verse 25): The little horn would rule "a time and times and the dividing of time." The Revised Standard Version reads "a time, two times, and half a time." The prophecies of Revelation provide the key to this symbolic period. There the same period of "a time, and times, and half a time" (Revelation 12:14) is equated with 1260 days (verse

6). From this we see that a "time" equals 360 days. In symbolic prophecy each day stands for a year—"each day for a year"—according to Ezekiel 4:5, 6.

For 1260 years, then, the little horn would exercise its sovereignty over God's people and His law through civil channels. This period began in 538, as we have seen. Exactly 1260 years later, in 1798, the French general Berthier entered Rome, declared a republic, and after taking the pope prisoner, proclaimed the political rule of the Papacy to be at an end.

The Book of Revelation later amplified on this loss of power by calling it a "deadly wound." But according to Revelation this wound was to be "healed" and all the world would yet be awed by Rome as it manifested a comeback, a resurgence of power (Revelation 13:3). Thus the 1260 years denote only the period of supremacy in Rome's long history during which God allowed this system to demonstrate its principles, policies, and objectives.

It should be emphasized that the little horn represents a *system*, a church-state combination, a religious power that would grasp civil power to enforce certain beliefs and practices. Because the Papacy did use such civil power as the prophecy predicted does not by any means bring individual Roman Catholics under condemnation. Multitudes of Roman Catholics have followed Christ as best they knew, and many have exhibited a true devotion to the cross. But the *papal system* during its years of supremacy did singularly fulfill the prophecy of Daniel 7.

This church-state system—just as other powers before it—failed to unite mankind. And that is what this prophecy brings out. Man's attempts to create peace through force of arms, legislation, or coercion of the conscience are doomed to failure. Christ wants in His kingdom only those who *choose* to be in it. As long as sin exists in the hearts of mankind, struggles for dominion and control will continue until the Prince of peace assumes the kingdom.

Chapter 8

Daniel sees a ram and a goat fighting

In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. 2 And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a

vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. 3 Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. 4 I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

5 And as I was considering, behold, an he goat

In this vision Persia is symbolically represented as a ram with two horns, one of which stands for Media, and the other "higher" one for Persia: "and the higher one came up last" (verse 3). Reproduced here is a ram's head, made of gold, from the Persian period. Persian art frequently employed the ram, even on such purely functional objects as jar handles.



came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. 6 And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. 7 And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could

deliver the ram out of his hand. 8 Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

9 And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. 10 And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. 11 Yea, he magnified himself even to the

The goat attacks and overcomes the ram

Verses 3, 4, 20. According to the angel who interpreted this vision, the ram represented Medo-Persia (verse 20). The two horns, the higher coming up last, strikingly portray the two phases of the Medo-Persian kingdom, the dominant Persian part of the kingdom arising last. This eastern kingdom did, in fact, push "westward, and northward, and southward," just as the prophecy foretold.

Verses 5-8, 21, 22. The he-goat, according to the angel, symbolized Grecia (see verse 21), the great horn being "the first king"—that is, the kingdom of Alexander the Great, the Macedonian leader who forged out the Greek Empire. Alexander "came from the west" and

swiftly struck down the Persian forces. Within a few years after his death, his empire became divided into four kingdoms (see verse 22).

Isolated columns and masonry remnants are all that remain of Persepolis, the capital of the Persian Empire (below). The thirty-three-acre palace complex begun by Darius I in 520 BC was burned by Alexander in 330 BC. This double shekel of Sidon (right), which dates to about 340 BC, depicts a Persian king riding in a war chariot.

Courtesy of The American Numismatic Society
Photograph by Leri Sonnenfeld



God cleanses the sanctuary and delivers His people

prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. 12 And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

13 Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? 14 And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

15 And it came to pass, when I even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. 16 And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. 17 So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

18 Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright. 19 And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the

Verses 9, 23-25. At "the latter time," or toward the end of the divided Hellenistic (Greek) kingdom, the angel declared that "a little horn" would arise (see verses 9, 23). Who is this little horn? Some have suggested that this symbol points to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, a Syrian king who ruled over Palestine in the second century BC and who disrupted the Jewish worship services. Others, including many of the leaders of the Reformation, have believed that this little horn represents Rome in both its pagan and papal forms. The following considerations show that Rome fits exactly the specifications given by Daniel, whereas Antiochus does not:

1. Chapters 2 and 7 point to Rome as the successor of Grecia. In turn, they show Rome in a divided and modified state succeeded by the kingdom of Christ. The little horn of chapter 8 fits this pattern exactly, for it follows Grecia and finally is supernaturally destroyed, or "broken without hand" (verse 25; compare Daniel 2:34).

2. We should expect both Grecia, which became "very great" (verse 8), and the little horn, which became "exceeding great" (verse 9), to surpass in some way the Medo-Persians, who only became "great" (verse 4). Rome fits this specification, while Antiochus falls short.

3. Rome did extend its empire to the south (Egypt), the east (Macedonia), and "the pleasant land" (Palestine), just as the prophecy predicted (verse 9).

4. Only Rome stood up against "the prince of the host," "the Prince of princes" (verses 11, 25). This Prince is

none other than Jesus Christ (see notes on Daniel 9:25; 11:22). Against Him and His people as well as His sanctuary, the power of Rome fought a most amazing warfare. This description covers both the pagan and papal phases of Rome. While pagan Rome withstood Christ and did indeed destroy the Jewish temple, papal Rome effectively obscured the priestly, mediatorial ministry of Christ in behalf of sinners in the heavenly sanctuary (see Hebrews 8:1, 2) by substituting a priesthood that purports to offer forgiveness through the mediation of men.

Verses 10-12. The little horn, according to Daniel, was to wage a warfare of a distinctly religious nature, its energies bent on bringing to naught the sanctuary and its services.

Verses 13, 14, 26. What is this "sanctuary" that is so closely related to the restoration of God's people? A thousand years before Daniel foresaw the final and ultimate cleansing of the sanctuary, God instructed the Israelites to build a place wherein He could dwell (Exodus 25:8). To understand Daniel 8:13, 14, we must understand something of that earthly sanctuary and its services.

It was not that God desired to confine Himself to a "temple . . . made with hands," but He wished to more clearly illustrate for Israel the plan of salvation and its central truths: Christ's atoning

sacrifice and His priestly ministry in behalf of penitent sinners.

Christ's work of atonement was to restore the divine image in man, to make man as he had been before the Fall, at-one with God. Hence His work was called "the atonement." That work of atonement is made possible through Christ's gift of Himself. At the cross He gave His very life, and now in heaven as man's advocate He ministers the benefits of His substitutionary death and sinless life to those who will accept Him (Romans 5:10; Hebrews 7:25). Christ's ministry is to display the self-sacrificing, self-renouncing love of the Godhead, to display the power of the gospel to redeem men from sin.

But how could God convey these truths to the unbelieving Israelites who



A central object in the ancient Jewish sanctuary was a four-horned altar (see Exodus 27:2; 1 Kings 2:28). This horned altar was found at Megiddo and dates to the tenth-ninth century BC.

Courtesy of Israel Museum, Jerusalem

last end of the indignation; for at the time appointed the end shall be.

20 The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. 21 And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. 22 Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

23 And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. 24 And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall

destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. 25 And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. 26 And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

27 And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

An angel tells Daniel the very year the judgment will begin

had just come out of slavery in Egypt? In the sanctuary God showed the ultimate purpose of the gospel, that He might dwell in the hearts of His people. And in the services associated with the sanctuary He pointed out how He would bring this about—through a work of reconciliation.

God commanded that the priests in the sanctuary perform various acts every day throughout the year. Foremost of these acts was the offering every morning and every evening of an innocent lamb as a sacrifice for the sins of the people (Exodus 29:38, 42). By these public offerings and by their private sacrifices, the people were taught to trust in the coming Lamb of God for the forgiveness of their sins (see John 1:29).

The services of the sanctuary culminated each year in the Yom Kippur, or Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16; 23:27-32). This was a day of judgment, the most solemn day of the year. Then, in a ceremony called the cleansing of the sanctuary, the high priest disposed of the sins of the people that had been transferred to it throughout the year. Those who, with repentant hearts, afflicted their souls on this day had their sins blotted out, and they stood before God with a clean record, while those who refused to repent were cut off from Israel (Leviticus 23:29).

Moses patterned the sanctuary he built after God's dwelling place in heaven (Exodus 25:8, 9; Acts 7:44; Hebrews 8:1, 2). And these two sets of rituals (the daily and the yearly sacrifices) pointed forward to two phases of

Christ's priestly ministry in heaven. The daily services in the earthly sanctuary symbolized Christ's continual ministry for His people (Hebrews 7:25), while the ministry of the high priest on the Day of Atonement represented Christ's intercession for His people during the judgment, which precedes His second coming (Daniel 7:9-14).

As Christ appears before the Father in the judgment, they go through the books together and settle accounts (compare Ecclesiastes 12:14 with Psalm 56:8 and Malachi 3:16). God judges for the repentant saints who, like ancient Israel on the Day of Atonement, have confessed their sins.

According to the explanation Daniel later received concerning this vision, only a portion of the 2300 days pertained to the Jews and Jerusalem, where their sanctuary was located (see Daniel 9:24). Thus the cleansing of the sanctuary referred to here in Daniel 8:14 points not to the Jewish sanctuary but to the heavenly sanctuary, which is to be cleansed prior to Christ's second coming (Hebrews 9:22, 23).

The 2300 "evening-mornings" (as the original Hebrew reads), or full days, signify 2300 years, each day in this symbolic prophecy representing a year. (The day-for-a-year principle for prophecy is found in Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34.) The beginning date for this period, 457 BC, is identified in Daniel

9:25. Thus the 2300 years ended in 1844. At that time the judgment began in the heavenly sanctuary (see chart on pages 18 and 19). The cleansing of the sanctuary in this vision describes the same event as the preadvent judgment in chapter 7. Chapters 8 and 9 indicate that the heavenly court is presently in session.

The sanctuary types of the Hebrew people portray how Christ, our High Priest, will minister for His people in the heavenly sanctuary judgment prior to His second coming. Before the witnessing throngs of heavenly intelligences (Daniel 7:10), true believers will be separated from the false and cleared of all accusations Satan has made against them (compare Matthew 22:9-14; Revelation 12:10). The record of their sins will be blotted out, and their names will be retained in the book of life (Revelation 3:5).

But the prophecies of Daniel 7 and 8 disclose the wider perspective of the final outcome of the great moral controversy between God and Satan. Through the activities of the "little horn" Satan has continued his attempt to challenge the authority of God. The acts of the horn power have reproached and trampled upon the heavenly sanctuary, the throne center of God's government. These visions point to a pre-Advent judgment in the sanctuary court, where God will secure a verdict of condemnation upon the little horn, and thus upon Satan himself. In the light of Calvary all Satan's charges will be shown to the loyal universe to be false. God will be cleared, His character will stand unassailable, His government of love will be rendered secure.

The Hebrew sanctuary

1. ALTAR OF BURNT OFFERING.

The first thing an Israelite would see upon entering the courtyard of the sanctuary was the "altar of burnt offering." On this the priests sacrificed all the offerings brought to them by the people day by day (Exodus 27). Both the sacrifices and the altar itself pointed to Christ, who sacrificed His own life so that repentant sinners might live and find peace with God (John 1:29; Isaiah 53:7; Hebrews 13:10).

2. LAVER.

Before the priest could offer any sacrifice upon the altar of burnt offerings, he first had to wash his hands in the laver (Exodus 30:17-21). This showed that God required purity and cleanliness on the part of those who mediated between Him and his people. Because Christ alone among men has epitomized the purity God requires of a mediator, he alone can truly mediate for fallen man (Hebrews 7:26; Matthew 27:4; 1 Peter 2:22).

3. CANDLESTICK.

Against the south wall of the holy place stood a golden candlestick with seven lamps. "The lamps were never all extinguished at one time, but shed their light by day and by night." Each morning and evening the high priest trimmed and lit the lamps and replenished the oil that they burned (Exodus 37:17-23; 30:7, 8). The candlestick represented both Christ and His people—all who convey light. Those whose hearts are set aflame by the oil of the Holy Spirit bless others and act as light to them (Revelation 4:5; 1:20; John 1:9).

4. HOLY PLACE.

The daily services centered in the holy place of the sanctuary. Day by day throughout the year the repentant sinner brought his offering to the sanctuary. After confessing his sins upon the innocent animal, he killed it. A priest then applied some of the blood to the horns of the altar of burnt offering and ate some of the flesh of the sacrifice. Sometimes he sprinkled the blood on the inner veil.

5. ALTAR OF INCENSE.

Each morning and evening the priests took coals of fire from the altar of burnt offering and placed them on a small altar

before the veil that separated the holy place of the sanctuary from the most holy. They then placed incense on these coals so that smoke ascended and filled the two apartments (Exodus 30:1-10). This represented the work of Christ as He presents before God the prayers of His people, mixed with His righteousness (Revelation 8:2-4).

6. TABLE OF SHEWBREAD.

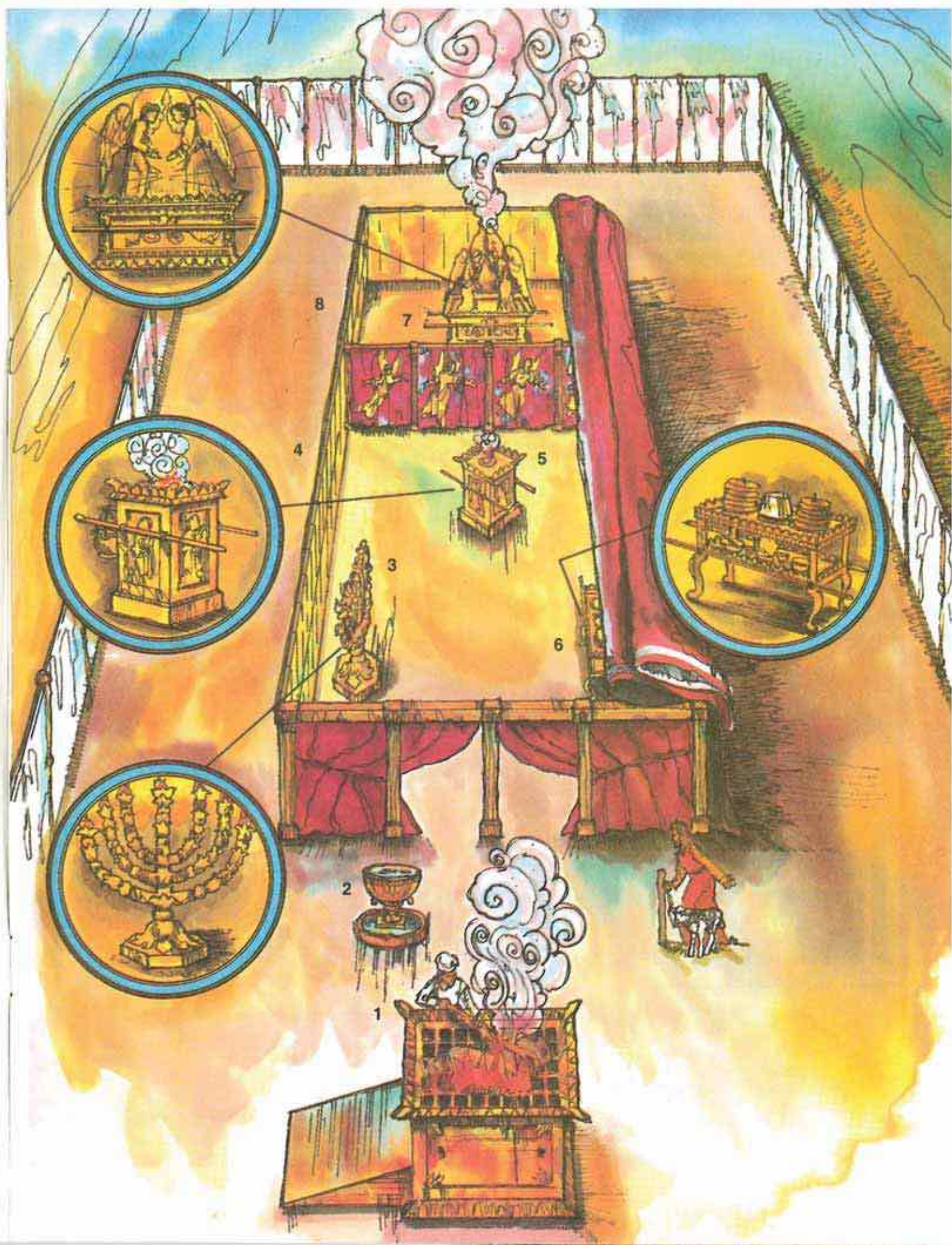
Against the north wall of the holy place stood a small table upon which the priests placed bread each Sabbath. Each week the priests ate the old bread and placed new loaves on the table. This bread was called "shewbread," or "bread of the presence," because it remained before the presence of the Lord (Exodus 25:23-30). It represented Christ, who is ever in the presence of God for us. Just as surely as we need food to live, so we need Christ, "the living bread" (John 6:35-63).

7. ARK.

In the most holy place stood an ark, a wooden box that housed the two pieces of stone upon which God had written His law. The mercy seat, a golden lid resting upon the ark, covered the law. At each end of the mercy seat stood the figure of an angel (Exodus 25:10-22).

8. MOST HOLY PLACE.

At the end of each year the Israelites participated in a day of judgment. On this day, the Day of Atonement, they gathered around the sanctuary and waited as the high priest went into the most holy place to plead for them before the Lord. Those who came to this ceremony with repentant hearts had the record of their sins blotted out or erased as the high priest mediated for them and cleansed the sanctuary. Thus God judged Israel (Leviticus 16). The activities of the high priest on the Day of Atonement prefigured the work of Christ as He comes before the Father in the judgment just before He returns to this earth. As they go over the records, Christ pleads His shed blood for those who have repented of their sins. The false are removed from the book of life, and the true are retained (Revelation 3:5). Thus God accepts His people in Christ counting them guiltless (Daniel 7:9-14; 8:14; Hebrews 9:23, 27; Revelation 11:19).



Chapter 9

70 week prophecy explained

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; 21 Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the

beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. 22 And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. 23 At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

24 Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the

When the Medo-Persians conquered Babylon, Daniel retained a high post in the new government. Years had passed since he had seen the vision recorded in chapter 8, which had predicted a long period during which God's people and His sanctuary would be trodden underfoot.

Verse 24. After Gabriel told Daniel to "understand . . . the vision," a reference to the vision recorded in chapter 8, he abruptly introduced that portion of the 2300 years that would be given to the Jews to prove themselves.

This shorter period of time the angel identified as "seventy weeks," or 490 days, which would be given to the Jews

to fulfill God's purpose for man and to "bring in . . . righteousness." But instead, they would fill up their cup with iniquity, and their time of probation would pass.

As in the earlier references to the 1260 and 2300 days, the seventy weeks, or 490 days, in this symbolic prophecy represent 490 years. During this first portion of the 2300 years the Jews would be given the opportunity that Daniel prayed for.

Verses 25-27. Gabriel pinpointed the beginning date for the 490 years as the "going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem." In 457 BC a Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued such a

decree (see Ezra 7:12-26). From this decree to "the Messiah the Prince" would be "seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks," or sixty-nine weeks (483 years).

Following His baptism in the Jordan, Jesus received His anointing with the Holy Spirit. At that point God publicly recognized Him as the "Messiah," or Anointed One, for the first time. This event occurred in AD 27, exactly 483 years after 457 BC. After this Jesus entered upon His ministry.

For "one week" (seven years) God confirmed the covenant of salvation with the Jewish people through His shed blood. But "in the midst of the week" He caused "the sacrifice and the



transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. 25 Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. 26 And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for

himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations shall he make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

The Messiah must first come and die

oblation to cease." All the offerings and sacrifices of the Jews pointed forward to the all-sufficient sacrifice of Christ on Calvary for the sins of the world. When Jesus died "in the midst of the week," or three and a half years after His anointing at the Jordan River, then type met anti-type, and unseen hands rent the inner veil of the Jewish temple from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). From then on the sacrifices in the early temple had no more meaning.

The crucifixion of the Messiah (at right) three and one-half years after His baptism marked the midpoint of the final week of the Jewish era.



The angel Gabriel supplies Daniel with the interpretation to the long 2300-day/year vision of Daniel 8:14. He explains that 70 weeks (490 days) of that longer prophecy belong to the Jews ("thy people") and to Jerusalem ("thy holy city"). At the beginning of the final week of this shorter prophecy the Messiah would appear, and in the midst of the week He would be killed ("cut off"). At the end of that last week the gospel would cease being offered exclusively to the Jews and would go also to the Gentiles, the rest of the world. This event took place in AD 34 as a result of the persecution that arose following the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:1, 2).

Photograph by Genesis Project

THESE TIMES 19

1810 years

Investigative
Judgment begins
1844

[years];



"And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born" (Revelation 12:3, 4).

The Book of Revelation

Revelation is *not* a closed book with a secret message. Rather, it is a prophecy, a divine picture of what the future holds, given not simply to satisfy our curiosity but to *reveal* God's power and wisdom in directing the events of history for our benefit.

So important is this book that He has promised to bless all who will (1) read the message of this revelation of Jesus Christ, (2) "hear" or understand it, and (3) "keep" it or act in harmony with the admonitions of this book.

The expressions "things which must shortly come to pass" and "the time is at hand" both point to the fact that the prophecies were to begin with John's time and extend down through history to the new earth God will one day create (Revelation 21:1, 2).

Although space prohibits us from commenting on every verse in the book of Revelation, we have selected the ten major prophecies from Revelation to include in this special issue. Five of these visions center around the number seven, which stands for completeness and perfection. These are: the letters to the seven churches, the seven seals, the seven trumpets, a seven-headed leopard beast, and the seven last plagues.

The remaining five visions include the great red dragon, which persecutes God's people; the three angels' messages; the great whore Babylon; the binding of Satan; and the earth made new.

Through all the symbolism and imagery, God presents the ongoing struggle between good and evil, between God and Satan, over the control of Planet Earth. The struggle always takes place in the context of God's people, first in Palestine in the book of Daniel and in the early part of Revelation; then in Rome, the headquarters for the Christian world, and eventually it expands to include the United States (chapter 13) and its role in the final events of earth's history.

Revelation also shows the inevitable outcome of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. It depicts the archenemy of mankind bound up on a desolate earth for a thousand years while the righteous spend that time with Jesus in heaven (chapter 20). Then it shows Satan with all his evil angels and human followers assembled outside the gates of that gigantic city of God, the New Jerusalem, preparing to attack the city and take by force that which he could never win by deceit and cunning.

Following their judgment, the wicked from throughout the ages are annihilated by the fire that purifies the planet and prepares it for the new earth, the eternal home of the redeemed (chapters 21 and 22). Truly this book of Revelation has a message of hope and joy for every human being who longs for something better and for everyone who awaits the soon returning King of kings, Jesus Christ.

Chapter 1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John: 2 Who bare record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw.

3 Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.

4 John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne;

5 And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth.

Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, 6 And hath made us kings



Chapter 1:9. John received his visions while a prisoner on Patmos, a small, barren, rocky island in the Mediterranean Sea about forty miles off the southwest coast of Asia Minor. According to Irenaeus, an early Christian who talked personally with Polycarp, who knew John, John wrote the Book of Revelation near the end of the reign of the Roman emperor Domitian (AD 81-96), a cruel tyrant who persecuted Christians.

Verse 10. Though imprisoned because of his faithfulness to Jesus Christ, John still worshiped his Lord on His holy day. God *does* have a special day, as this verse clearly shows. Some interpreters believe the term "Lord's day" refers to Sunday, and while many decades later some Christians did begin to refer to Sunday in this manner, *the only day recognized by the earliest Christians, including John, as belonging to the Lord was the seventh-day Sabbath—the day we now call Saturday.*

At creation the Godhead, including Jesus Christ, set aside the seventh day of the week as a special day for men to worship them. Jesus said of Himself, "The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath." He Himself kept the Sabbath, as did His apostles, including Paul and John. The Sabbath is one of the means He uses to minister His life to men (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13; Mark 2:27; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2).

and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. 7 Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.

8 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.

9 I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. 10 I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, 11 Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia; unto Ephesus, and unto Smyrna, and unto Pergamos, and unto Thyatira, and unto Sardis, and unto Philadelphia, and unto Laodicea.

12 And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; 13 And in the midst of the seven

candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. 14 His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; 15 And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. 16 And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. 17 And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me,

"Fear not; I am the first and the last: 18 I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. 19 Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

20 The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand, and the seven golden candlesticks. The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches: and the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.

John sees an amazing vision of Jesus Christ

Verses 11-20. While worshiping God, John suddenly heard a voice behind him. Turning quickly to see the Divine Speaker, John saw "one like unto the Son of man" (one of Jesus' favorite names for Himself) walking among seven lampstands. In His hand He held seven stars.

Jesus is fully God (the "Alpha and Omega"), yet He humbled Himself to become fully man ("the Son of man"), one with us. This supreme truth undergirds the whole Book of Revelation. It forms the very basis of His priestly ministry in our behalf before God the Father.

When he saw the majesty and holiness of Jesus, John sensed his sinfulness and unworthiness and fell down like a dead man (cf Daniel 10:7-10). He realized the implications of what he had heard and seen. A healing touch from Jesus quickly restored him, however, and strengthened him for what he was about to see.

Jesus explained to John that the seven golden candlesticks (more accurately translated "lampstands") represented seven churches in nearby Asia Minor, while the stars symbolized the "angels," or divinely appointed messengers who watched over these churches.

Several considerations indicate that Jesus meant for His messages to have a wider application than to just these seven local churches. First, there were

many other Christian churches in the region, some more prominent than the ones mentioned here. But Jesus selected only seven—obviously for a reason. The number "seven" appears fifty-four times in the Book of Revelation, and elsewhere in the book it has a symbolic significance. Throughout the Bible the number signifies completeness. For instance, God completed His work of creating our world in seven days (Genesis 2:2; cf Leviticus 23:15; Joshua 6:4). Thus the seven churches represent, in a sense, Christ's *complete* church.

Second, the *whole* Book of Revelation is aimed at members of the seven churches (see chapter 22:16), yet portions of the book obviously describe events that affect the whole world, events that reach until Jesus returns to our earth. Thus the messages in Revelation must apply to the Christian church as a whole, both in John's time and *throughout the Christian era*.

Third, the seven messages end by focusing on the idea of judgment, a universal event. Indeed, the name of the seventh church, Laodicea, means literally "the judging of the people." And later, the book gives pictures of the judgment at the end of history.

Fourth, the phrase—which is repeated seven times—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches" (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6,

13, 22), has a universal ring to it. It is an appeal for *all persons* to listen to the messages given to *all the churches*.

Geographically, the churches Jesus selected form a circuit on the map. Their sequence in this circuit suggests that they symbolize the entire cycle of Christian faith and progress as exemplified in the history of the visible church.

Recognizing this, we must also be aware of the fact that it is impossible to mark the definite beginning and ending of each division, or church. They blend into one another, and the characteristics of all continue in some measure until the return of Jesus.

In His messages to the seven churches Jesus reveals Himself as One able to meet the individual needs of every human being. The seven messages usually contain, in addition to an address ("To the angel of the church in Ephesus," etc.), seven further parts: (1) a description of Jesus drawn from the overall picture presented in chapter 1, (2) a description of the good points of the church to which the message is directed, (3) a view of its failings, (4) practical advice by Jesus on how to correct the bad points, (5) a warning of what will happen to those who fail to heed this advice, (6) a call for *everyone* to hear Jesus' message to the churches, and (7) a special promise by Jesus for those who will follow His counsel.

Chapter 2

Christ calls upon His people to return to Him

Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks;

2 I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and has found them liars: 3 And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. 4 Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. 5 Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. 6 But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitanes, which I also hate.

7 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcom-

eth will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

8 And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive;

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

11 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.

12 And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write; These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges;

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

Chapter 2:1-7. The Christians in Ephesus were faithful, orthodox, and hardworking—characteristics typical of Christians in general at the time when John wrote the Book of Revelation. These early Christians shunned the immoral “works” or actions of those who taught strange ideas about religion, such as the Nicolaitanes—a sect that emphasized freedom to the extent that its members thought they did not need to keep God’s moral law. But even as the early Christians rightly upheld God’s law as a proper guide for the Christian way of life, their love for Christ—that

love which can alone fulfill God’s law—began to diminish (Romans 13:10).

Verses 8-11. To those in the church at Smyrna, Jesus declared, “I know!” Jesus understood their trials and poverty, not only because He is God and thus knows all things, but also because He Himself had become one with suffering humanity and lived in the midst of trials and poverty. In His message to the Smyrnaeans Jesus assured them that He would reward their self-sacrificing love—a love that stood true even in the face of death—with eternal life.

The experience of the church at Smyrna paralleled that of the Christian church as a whole following the time of the apostles until the early fourth century, when the Roman Empire stopped

persecuting Christians. The worst time of persecution came during a ten-year period from AD 303-313—the “ten days” prophesied by Jesus. (A “day” in prophetic terminology often represents a year. See Ezekiel 4:6.)

Verses 12-17. The city of Pergamos (or Pergamum) was the capital of the Roman province of Asia. A rich, important city, it served as a center of emperor worship and various pagan religions. Jesus perceptively described Pergamum as a city in bondage to the dictatorship of Satan, the leader of all evil forces (see Revelation 12:9; 13:1, 2). The great failure of the church at Pergamum was that it allowed pagan, unchristian influences into its midst, accepting the teaching of “Balaam”—a reference to a man who influenced the Israelites shortly after they left Egypt to unite with pagans and become involved in idolatry and immorality (Numbers 22-25; 31:13-16).

The experience of the whole church following AD 313, when Emperor Constantine legalized Christianity, resembled that of the church at Pergamum. Following this time the church increasingly accepted pagan ideas and practices into its midst and advanced steadily down the path of apostasy foretold by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. The church’s only hope lay in its willingness



The candle as we know it today was not in general use in ancient times. Lamps then consisted of shallow clay bowls that contained oil and had a wick protruding from one edge or from a spout. Accordingly, the “seven golden candlesticks” John saw were stands surmounted by such lamps. This unique lamp with seven wicks (left) dates from about the sixth century BC.

Courtesy of Peli Printing Works, Ltd, Israel

eth. 14 But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. 15 So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. 16 Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

17 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.

18 And unto the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass;

19 I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. 20 Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself

a prophetic, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. 21 And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. 22 Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. 23 And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works. 24 But unto you I say, and unto the rest in Thyatira, as many as have not this doctrine, and which have not known the depths of Satan, as they speak; I will put upon you none other burden. 25 But that which ye have already hold fast till I come.

26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star. 29 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Christianity turns away from Christ

to let the sharp "two-edged sword" of truth wielded by Jesus cut away their selfishness and pride (cf Hebrews 4:12).

Verses 18-29. The church at Thyatira contained two distinct classes of Christians: those who committed adultery with "Jezebel" and were thus really not Christians, and those who remained

faithful to Christ. The name Jezebel, used figuratively here, alludes to the pagan wife of Ahab, an Israelite king who ruled in the 9th century BC. A cunning and clever queen, she persecuted and killed God's true prophets and promoted paganism and idolatry in Israel.

The church of the Middle Ages (from the early 500s to the 1500s) strikingly

resembled the church described by Jesus in His message to the Thyatirans. During this period only a few Christians remained faithful to Christ. Most accepted the "deep things of Satan" and walked along the mysterious and tragic path of pride and compromise with evil (see 1 Kings 16:31; 19:1-3; 21:23-25; 2 Kings 9:21-37; cf Revelation 17).



Ephesus, the first church mentioned by John, was the leading city of the Roman province of Asia. Its location on the major highway that crossed Asia Minor from Syria, together with its position as an important seaport on the Aegean, made it a trade center of the ancient world. Paul spent three years here, longer than at any other place on his recorded missionary journeys.



These columns and blocks are all that remain of the agora, or marketplace, of Smyrna, the most famous one of antiquity. It was the only marketplace constructed in three stories, with the lowest level of shops belowground, another level of shops at the street level, and a third row on top of the colonnaded sidewalks that surrounded the whole marketplace.

Chapter 3

Christ offers salvation to all who will accept Him

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

2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: For I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.

5 He that overcometh, the same shall be

clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

7 And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; these things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

8 I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name. 9 Behold, I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee. 10 Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come

Chapter 3:1-6. Those in the church at Sardis had received Christ with joy and sincerity, but like the Christians at Ephesus, they too had left their first love. The Protestant Reformation in the 1500s went through a similar experience. Like the early Christians the first Protestants realized the love and power of Christ in their own lives. Martin Luther, John Calvin, and numerous others sought to bring the church back to its original purity and power. But unfortunately, like the early church, Protes-

tantism as a whole failed to maintain its close relationship with Christ.

Within a few short decades the Protestant movement entered a period of doctrinal controversy. Various denominations were formed—each with a different creed or list of teachings to which members had to subscribe. Formalism crept in, and spiritual death resulted, though the church still appeared to be alive.

But even so, there were always some faithful Christians, both in the Roman

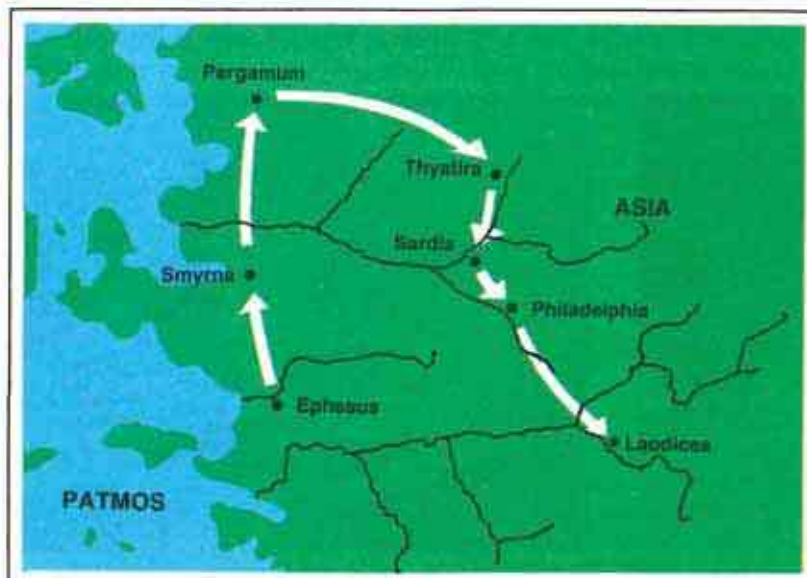
Catholic and Protestant churches, who "did not defile their garments," who maintained pure characters (see Isaiah 64:6). Christ promised victory (symbolized by the white raiment), eternal life, and His own testimony in their behalf before God the Father and before the angels.

Verses 7-13. Jesus had only words of approval and advice for His followers in the small town of Philadelphia (the name means "brotherly love"). Though they faced trials and were tempted to deny their Lord, they remained faithful to Jesus, ever placing their trust in Him. Their experience parallels that of many Christians in the 1700s and early 1800s. During this period Christianity experienced a remarkable revival.

Starting with such men as the Wesley brothers and George Whitefield, who recognized the formalism that had crept into the church and called for a return to true godliness, the revival grew until it climaxed in the early 1800s with a strong upsurge of interest in the return of Jesus. Thousands all over the world, recognizing the quickly fulfilling prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, proclaimed His soon return.

Before this group, Jesus, the Holy and True One who has the "key of . . . David" (a symbol of His power and authority to lead and govern His people; see Isaiah 22:20-22), set an "open door."

God's temple in heaven has two rooms, each with its own "door." Following His resurrection Jesus entered through the first door into what the



A messenger from John in Patmos would have crossed by boat to Ephesus, the first of the churches listed, and then taken a circular route northward, then east and south, to the last church, Laodicea, exactly in the order given in Revelation. These cities lie in comparatively close proximity to one another, the distance from one church to another never greater than fifty miles.

upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

11 Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.

12 Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. 13 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God;

15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. 17 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: 18 I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. 19 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent.

20 Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

21 To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. 22 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Christ sets an open door before His people

Bible calls the holy place to intercede for mankind. But in 1844, according to the Book of Daniel (Daniel 8:14; 7:24-27; see page 19), Jesus went through the second door into the most holy place to begin a special work for mankind. (This is explained more fully on pages 16 and 17. At that time He began the first phase of what the Bible calls the judgment. This judgment is *now* going on (cf Revelation 11:19; 14:6, 7).

The "open door" Jesus set before the church at Philadelphia is the door into the most holy place in heaven. In simple terms, over one hundred years ago Jesus began inviting mankind to the judgment. As a compassionate High Priest, having already paid the penalty for our sins at Calvary, He wants to present us faultless before His Father. And though we are sinners, He invites us to trust in Him and to accept His perfect righteousness in the judgment.

Verses 14-22. Jesus had no easy message for the church at Laodicea. He knew exactly their sad condition, and He spoke to them as a "faithful and true witness."

The city of Laodicea (the name means "a people judged") had several hot mineral springs in its vicinity. According to Aristotle, the townspeople manufactured a powder used throughout the Roman world as an eye medicine. Jesus used these examples to describe the sad plight of His people in Laodicea who were neither "hot" nor "cold" in their religious experience. They looked upon themselves as spiritually rich, and

though they had a *form* of religion, they lacked the true *power* of Christianity. Their experience parallels that of Christianity in general since the beginning of the judgment in heaven in 1844.

Today, the Christian church, caught up with its own importance, looks upon itself as rich and in need of nothing. Yet Jesus has declared that those in Laodicea *know not* their poverty and blindness. Oh, that all might renounce their selfish ways and allow Christ to live out His life in them and clothe them with His righteousness so that they might reflect His image (cf Zephaniah 2:3; Joel 2:12, 13; James 4:6-10).

To all Laodiceans Jesus offers gifts that may be received for the asking: "gold tried in the fire," a symbol of the faith that develops from a love relationship (James 2:5; Galatians 5:6); "white raiment," a symbol of the purity of character that comes from submitting to Christ and allowing Him to live out His life in them, so that others see Him, not them (Revelation 19:7, 8; Isaiah 64:6); and the "eyesalve" of God's Word to help them see their sinfulness and need of Jesus' righteousness (Psalm 119:18, 105).

Jesus closed His comments to the Laodiceans with one of the most eloquent pleas in the Bible. His was a message of love, He declared. Though the Laodiceans were poor and blind and naked, He, the Ruler of the universe, wanted only to come and dwell with them. And so He is willing to humbly come to us to seek entrance into our lives. *We have only to let Him in.* It's that simple. By His invitation Jesus reveals

the nature of God, the self-sacrificing, self-renouncing One, and presents before all men the choice by which they will be judged. Who will accept the invitation?

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Historical periods represented by the seven churches

AD 31	Ephesus
AD 100	Smyrna
AD 313	Pergamum
AD 538	Thyatira
AD 1517	Sardis
Ad 1798* *or AD 1755	Philadelphia
1844	Laodicea
end of time	

Chapter 6

John introduces the four horsemen of the Apocalypse

And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. 2 And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer.

3 And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see. 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.

5 And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand. 6 And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine.

7 And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see. 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

Chapter 6:1-8. The first four seals brought to John's view four horsemen riding in succession. In this parade of history Jesus revealed to John a progressive view of worsening conditions. Following the going forth of the Christian gospel, "conquering and to conquer," at the time of Christ and His apostles, history witnessed a growing apostasy, together with increased turmoil and tribulation. Finally, the fourth horseman appropriately signifies God's agencies of judgment. (Regarding the sword, hunger ["famine," RSV], death ["pestilence," RSV], and beasts of Revelation 6:8, compare Ezekiel 14:21.)

Verses 9-11. In the face of oppressive persecution of God's people, the fifth seal raises the question of justice (cf Genesis 4:10). Throughout history men have wondered why wickedness seems to always go unpunished. The fifth seal brings assurance that it will not, but his-

tory must first run its course in order to allow as many as possible to accept Jesus Christ and even to die for Him if need be. At the close of the Middle Ages, the Reformation of the sixteenth century brought a new realization on the part of many Christians of the valor of those who had died for their faith under the oppression of the church-state system that had developed.

Verses 12, 13. Under the sixth seal John saw that even nature would respond to the apostasy that threatened God's people. The prophet Joel declared over 2,500 years ago, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come" (Joel 2:31).

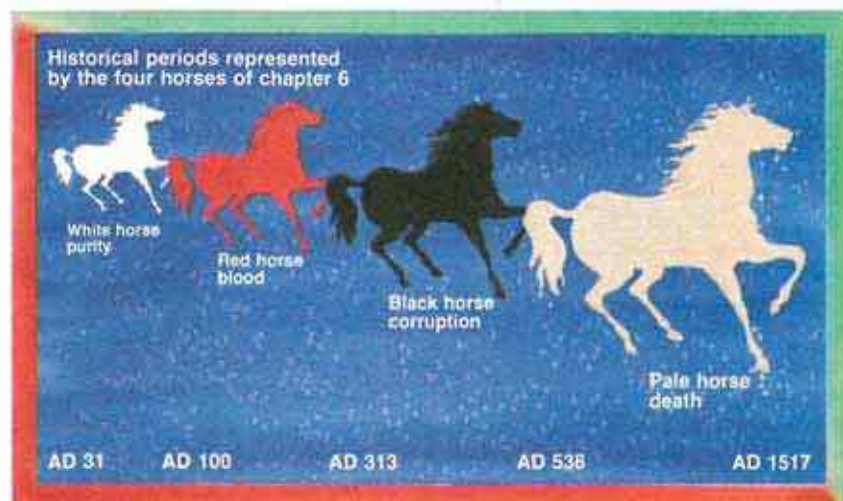
Following the Reformation in the sixteenth century certain signs did occur in answer to the events predicted in verses 12 and 13. In 1755 the Lisbon earthquake, one of the largest ever recorded,

shook Europe, Africa, and North America and covered four million square miles. May 19, 1780, brought a remarkable darkening of the sun and moon. For hours an intense darkness covered all of New England. When nighttime came the darkness became more terrifying. Finally, after midnight the darkness went away, and a blood-red moon appeared. Then in November, 1833, an astounding meteoric shower, the most intense ever recorded, covered nearly the whole North American continent. Not only did these events exactly fulfill the prophecy, but they also came in the precise order foretold. Many recognized these as signs that Jesus would soon return.

Verses 14-17. The opening of heaven as a scroll is yet future and will occur at Jesus' second coming. Then those who have rejected His love will realize the immensity of their apostasy and flee from His presence.

Before the opening of the seventh seal one great question must be answered: "Who shall be able to stand" during the terrifying time described in verses 14 through 17? The Bible declares that Jesus will come with great brilliance like a consuming fire. The presence of His glory will destroy the wicked. Are there any pure enough to stand in His presence?

Chapter 6 ends with the awesome question, "Who shall be able to stand" in the day of the Lord's wrath just before the second coming of Jesus? Chapter 7 breaks the mounting tension of the opening of the seals and answers that question, assuring us that Jesus Christ has provided a way of deliverance.



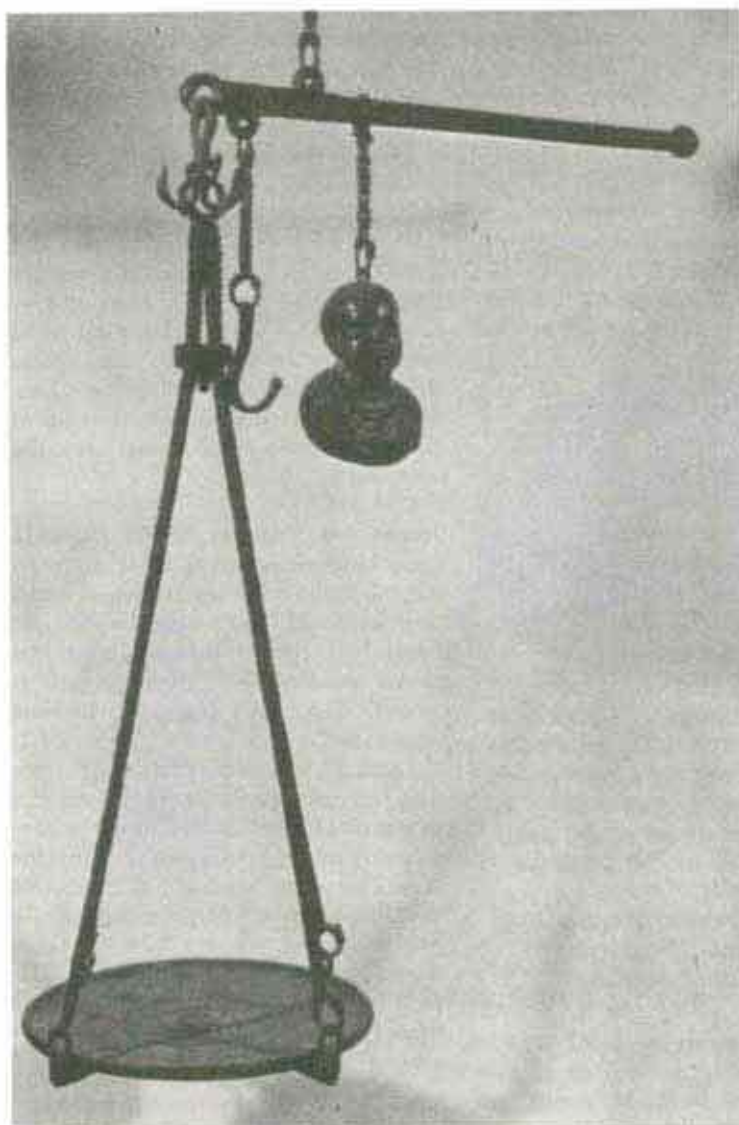
over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth.

9 And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? 11 And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.

12 And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and lo, there was a great earthquake; and the

sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; 13 And the stars of heaven fell into the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. 14 And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. 15 And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; 16 And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the lamb: 17 For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?

Signs appear in the sun, moon, and stars



The pair of balances (verse 5) symbolizes the poor spiritual condition within the church after the legalization of Christianity in the fourth century, when church and state were united. This balance (above) was found at Pompeii.

Courtesy of National Museum, Naples.



"A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny" (verse 6) refers to a measuring cup like this one (above) from the time when Revelation was written. It is marked with the date and a line showing a capacity of 16 sextarii, which equaled one "measure" (about .98 of a quart). This measuring cup full of wheat represented a day's ration for a day of labor, which was one denarius (below).



Courtesy of The American Numismatic Society

Chapter 7

The seal of God is placed on His people

And after these things I saw four angels standing on the four corners of the earth, holding the four winds of the earth, that the wind should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree. 2 And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, 3 Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. 4 And I heard the number of them which were

sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and for and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. 5 Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. 6 Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthali were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. 7 Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. 8 Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand.

Chapter 7:1-3. As God prepares to remove His restraining power from the wicked and to punish them through the seven last plagues (see Revelation 14:9-11; 15; 16), Jesus gazes in mercy upon His people. Realizing their need for more time to clearly commit themselves to Him, He commands the four (a number used by Bible writers to portray that which is universal) angels restraining the forces of destruction to wait for a short space of time till He can seal His people.

Like the rising of the morning sun in the east, the sealing angel lightens the whole earth with his glory as he comes to God's people (cf Revelation 18:1).

The seal he brings is a mark that identifies God's people and protects them from the destruction that will disrupt the whole earth under the seven plagues (cf Ezekiel 9). Those who are sealed, according to Revelation 14:1-5, which gives a fuller description of this group, have God's name written in their foreheads—in other words, they display His character in their minds.

By beholding Jesus Christ, they have become changed into His image. In recognition of their acceptance of His atoning love He seals His character, His law of love, in their minds (see Isaiah 8:16; Deuteronomy 6:8; Hebrews 8:8-10).

A seal is a sign (see Romans 4:11) that indicates ownership or authorship. Those who receive God's seal are therefore those who recognize Him as *Creator and Lord*, those who do His will and keep His commandments. Thus just before

Jesus' second advent there must be a work of revival and reformation among God's people and, based on their love for Jesus, a new recognition of their obligation to keep the commandments of God (see Revelation 14:12; 12:17).

The Bible teaches that God has particularly designated the fourth commandment, the one concerning the keeping of the Sabbath, as a *sign* of His relation to His people. Of all the commandments listed in Exodus 20, only the

Sabbath commandment contains the essential elements of an official seal. Only it brings to view both the *name* and *title* of the Lawgiver. By presenting Him as Creator of all things, it shows His right to receive worship. Thus the Sabbath embodies God's seal (see Ezekiel 20:12, 20).

Those who exalt God's law as did Jesus Christ and by faith in Him restore His Sabbath to its rightful place will receive the seal of the living God. And because they are willing to trust in Him and keep His law, God will protect them during the blowing of the four winds of destruction soon to be loosed upon the earth.



Seals were a badge of authority in ancient times and when applied to soft clay covering the flap of a document, it would guarantee that the sender (the owner of the seal) was responsible for the contents therein. This cast of a seal belonging to an official under King Jeroboam states, "Belonging to Shema, Servant of Jeroboam."

Verses 4-8. The 144,000 (12 times 12 times 1000) represent an ideal group. In the Bible the number twelve is often associated with God's kingdom. Ancient Israel had twelve tribes. Christ had twelve apostles. The word *Israel* (verse 4) means "God ruled" and designates one who lets God rule (see Psalm 73:1; Genesis 32:28). Only those who enter into a covenant relation with God and recognize Him as Lord may truly be considered part of Israel. Because of this the New Testament explicitly declares that the Christian church now constitutes God's true Israel (see Romans 2:28, 29; Galatians 3:28, 29; 6:15, 16; Ephesians 2:11-16; 1 Peter 2:9, 10). Thus the 144,000 are those Christians who are alive at Christ's second coming.

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; 10 And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. 11 And all the angels stood around about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God. 12 Saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.

13 And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white

robes? and whence came they? 14 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. 15 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. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. 17 For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

How God will protect His people from a great time of trouble



Seals, a fairly common artifact from Biblical times, were used by their owners to convey authority, to legalize documents, to mark pottery and other items for identity, and to seal structures from outside tampering (such as sealing the stone of the tomb containing Jesus (Matthew 27:66)). Two popular types of seals were the cylinder seals (upper right in photo) and the ring seal. The cylinder seal would be rolled over soft clay, like a miniature kitchen rolling pin, to impress the message engraved in the seal. Inscriptions on the smaller ring seals (center and upper left in photo) dealt exclusively with the names and offices of the owners. This photo shows seals and other artifacts from tombs at the Plain of Accho.

Chapter 8

The four judgments upon the Western Roman Empire

And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour.

2 And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets.

3 And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. 5 And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth: and there were voices, and thunderings, and lightnings, and an earthquake.

6 And the seven angels which had the seven trumpets prepared themselves to sound.

7 The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees were burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up.

8 And the second angel sounded, and as it were a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea: and the third part of the sea became

blood; 9 And the third part of the creatures which were in the sea, and had life, died; and the third part of the ships were destroyed.

10 And the third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven, burning as it were a lamp, and it fell upon the third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; 11 And the name of the star is called Wormwood: and the third part of the waters became wormwood; and many men died of the waters, because they were made bitter.

12 And the fourth angel sounded, and the third part of the sun was smitten, and the third part of the moon, and the third part of the stars; so as the third part of them was darkened, and the day shone not for a third part of it, and the night likewise.

13 And I beheld, and heard an angel flying through the midst of heaven, saying with a loud voice, Woe, woe, woe, to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the other voices of the trumpet of the three angels, which are yet to sound!

Chapter 9

And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key to the bottomless pit. 2 And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun

Chapter 8:1. The sequence of the seven seals has now brought us to the time of Christ's second coming, as various commentators point out. But His second advent is not here described, nor is the reading of the will actually pictured; for God wants to present history from yet another vantage point or two before He explains how He will bring an end to sin and suffering and bless His people with immortality.

Now with the seven trumpets Jesus rounds out His messages to His people by showing them how throughout history God has combined justice and mercy in warning of danger and in punishing evil.

Bible writers often associated the sounding of trumpets with the idea of judgment, the primary meaning of a trumpet blast being that of *warning*.

Trumpet blasts of warning were also sounded at the approach of enemy armies (see Jeremiah 4:5-7).

Verses 2-6. The work of the angel depicted here represents Christ's work in the heavenly temple as Intercessor for

mankind. His perfect righteousness alone, symbolized by the fragrant incense, can make the prayers of sinful beings acceptable to God. Through His intercession He purifies and makes fragrant every sincere prayer.

Verses 7-12. The trumpets fall into three distinct groups: the first four present judgments connected with objects in nature such as hail, stars, and the sun; numbers five and six present judgments connected with living things such as locusts and horsemen; and the seventh presents the great final, all-encompassing judgment that affects all mankind.

The highly symbolic language used in Revelation 8:7-9:21 has perplexed Bible scholars. Though we may not be able to understand every symbol and its application in these chapters, God does want us to see His moral purpose in sending the trumpet judgments. Every curse has its cause. The trumpet judgments come because of sin.

Bible expositors have seen an application of the trumpet judgments in the his-

tory of Rome, that empire that the Book of Daniel associated so closely with God's covenant people. Though Rome became a "Christian" empire, the Christianity it accepted was an apostate form and not the reality. And because Rome in general spurned the will of God, it fell prey to His judgments.

The first judgments fell upon the Western portion of Rome, the portion of the empire that rejected God first. Barbarian tribes such as the Goths attacked Rome by land (verse 7), followed by the Vandals, a tribe whose ships controlled the whole Mediterranean (verses 8, 9). During the fifth century the Western Empire had a bitter experience as the Huns overran Rome and humiliated its citizens by exacting taxes from them (verses 10, 11). Finally, in AD 476 the Heruli dethroned the last emperor and extinguished the imperial glory of the Western Empire (verse 12).

Chapter 8:13-9:11. Following the first four trumpets an eagle (the original Greek has "Eagle"—a symbol of doom [Matthew 24:28]—not "angel" as the

and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit. 3 And there came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth: and unto them was given power, as the scorpions of the earth have power. 4 And it was commanded them that they should not hurt the grass of the earth, neither any green thing, neither any tree; but only those men which have not the seal of God in their foreheads. 5 And to them it was given that they should not kill them, but that they should be tormented five months: and their torment was as the torment of a scorpion, when he striketh a man.

6 And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and shall desire to die, and death shall flee from them.

7 And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. 8 And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as teeth of lions. 9 And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. 10 And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months. 11, And they had a king over them, which is the angel of the bottomless pit, whose name in the Hebrew tongue is Abaddon, but in the Greek tongue hath his name Apollyon.

12 One woe is past; and, behold, there come

two woes more hereafter.

13 And the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God. 14 Saying to the sixth angel which had the trumpet. Loose the four angels which are bound in the great river Euphrates. 15 And the four angels were loosed, which were prepared for an hour, and a day, and a month, and a year, for to slay the third part of men.

16 And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand; and I heard the number of them. 17 And thus I saw the horses in the vision, and them that sat on them, having breastplates of fire, and of jacinth, and brimstone: and the heads of the horses were as the heads of lions; and out of their mouths issued fire and smoke and brimstone. 18 By these three was the third part of men killed, by fire, and by the smoke, and by the brimstone, which issued out of their mouths. 19 For their power is in their mouth, and in their tails: for their tails were like unto serpents, and had heads, and with them they do hurt.

20 And the rest of the men which were not killed by these plagues yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, and idols of gold, and silver, and brass, and stone, and of wood: which neither can see, nor hear, nor walk: 21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

Two judgments upon the Eastern Roman Empire

King James Version reads; see the Revised Standard Version and other versions) announced to John that the last three trumpets would bring widespread doom. Long before John's time the prophet Hosea declared, "Set the trumpet to your lips, for a vulture [or an eagle] is over the house of the Lord, because they have broken my covenant, and transgressed my law" (Hosea 8:1, RSV).

Though it took longer, the Eastern Roman Empire followed the Western Empire in turning against God's law. And as He had done with the Western Empire, God mercifully held back the sure results of its rejection of Him, but finally He had to punish the Eastern Empire too. This time, however, He did not use barbarian tribes to punish those who rejected Him but, instead, allowed the followers of Muhammad to war against them. From out of the desolate wilderness of Arabia (graphically depicted here as a "bottomless pit," or "abyss"), the Muhammadans swept through the Eastern Empire.

For five prophetic "months" (or 150 years, counting a day for a year—see

Ezekiel 4:6) the followers of Muhammad, known as the Ottomans, especially tormented the Eastern Empire. On July 27, AD 1299, the Ottomans first invaded the territory of Nicomedia in the Eastern, or Byzantine, Empire. In 1453 the last of the Byzantine emperors, Constantine Palaeologus (Deacozes) was defeated by the Ottomans.

Verses 12-21. Under the sixth trumpet John saw God release certain destroying forces for 391 days and one hour (360 days + 30 days + 1 day + 1 hour). From the time of the Reformation on, Bible scholars such as Martin Luther, Joseph Mede, John Napier, Sir Isaac Newton, Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and scores of others have identified the sixth trumpet with the forces of Muhammadanism. During the great revival of interest in Bible prophecy that swept the world in the early 1800s, this particular portion of Revelation became a subject of intense study.

One writer who lived during this time recorded these words: "In the year 1840, another remarkable fulfillment of

prophecy excited widespread interest. Two years before, Josiah Litch, one of the leading ministers preaching the second advent, published an exposition of Revelation 9, predicting the fall of the Ottoman Empire. According to his calculations [based on the prophetic period of the "hour, and a day, and a month, and a year"], this power was to be overthrown 'in AD 1840, sometime in the month of August.' . . .

"At the very time specified, Turkey, through her ambassadors, accepted the protection of the allied powers of Europe, and thus placed herself under the control of Christian nations. The event exactly fulfilled the prediction."—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pp. 334, 335.

Thus the apostasy of the nominally Christian empire of Rome—west and east—led to its punishment by God. The second half of Revelation shows that history is to be repeated during the final struggle in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

Chapter 10

Daniel 8:14 the key to Revelation 10 and 11

And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: 2 And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth, 3 And

cried with a loud voice, as when a lion roareth: and when he had cried, seven thunders uttered their voices. 4 And when the seven thunders had uttered their voices, I was about to write: and I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not.

5 And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, 6 and swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that

Chapter 10:1-4. As John watched, "another mighty angel . . . [came] down from heaven." Many commentators believe this glorious messenger represents Jesus Christ. Elsewhere the Bible describes Him in connection with a rainbow and a cloud. These two signs together symbolize God's promise, or covenant, to show mercy to mankind (see Ezekiel 1:28; Psalm 104:3; Genesis 9:12-16; Jeremiah 29:11-13).

In his hand he holds a "little book," which is open. Over five hundred years before the time of John, God showed the prophet Daniel His plan to ultimately bring an end to sin, persecution, and suffering. Though Daniel did not understand all God had shown him regarding His divine purpose, he faithfully wrote everything down. Then God directed him to close up and "seal" what he had written (see Daniel 8:26; 12:4). A long period would pass, God told His servant, before men would really be able to understand what he had written con-

cerning the judgment. An apostate church-state system would arise for "1260 days" (or years—see Ezekiel 4:6—a period that lasted from AD 538 to 1798) and persecute God's people, but finally God would dethrone and punish this power. At that time He would open, or unseal, Daniel's book so that His people could understand His ultimate plan to judge mankind and bring an end to sin.

Beginning about 1798, the end of the 1260-year period, a remarkable interest in Bible prophecy swept throughout the whole Christian church just as God had promised Daniel. All over the world, ministers and laymen from many Christian denominations—Baptist, Methodist, Congregationalist, Disciples of Christ, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, and others—began to study the books of Daniel and Revelation anew, and Christianity experienced a remarkable awakening. The movement climaxed in the 1840s as thousands of Christians com-

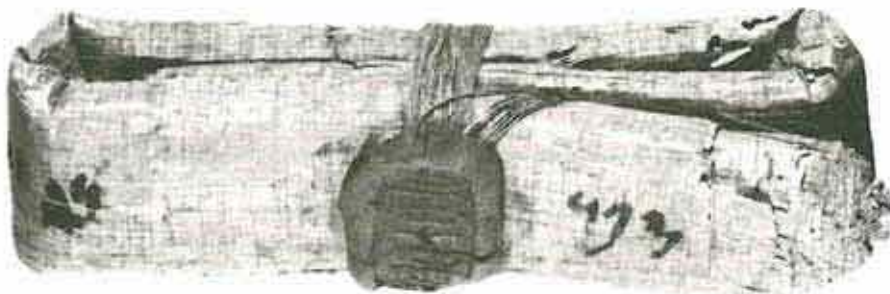
passed land and sea (see verse 2) to proclaim the startling message, "Jesus is coming!"

Verses 5-7. The angel announced to John that two events would occur in connection with the seventh trumpet first, the ending of "time," and second the finishing of the "mystery of God." In order to help John understand these two important interrelated events and thus prepare him to understand the seventh trumpet, the angel directed his attention to two other subjects in the Bible: the 1260-day prophecy outlined in the Book of Daniel, and the sanctuary, or temple (See the Daniel commentary for an explanation of the 1260-day period and the sanctuary.)

According to the New Testament, God's mystery is the "gospel,"—the plan of salvation provided by God (see Ephesians 6:19).

The Creator will finish His eternal plan, His mystery, the covenant angel declares, during the time of the seventh trumpet, which brings the final judgment, the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary spoken of by the prophet Daniel.

Verses 8-10. Though not fully understood at the time, the text that spurred the worldwide interest in Jesus' second advent during the early 1800s was Daniel 8:14: "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." Numerous prominent Bible expositors in many denominations associated this text with the purification and restoration of God's people at Jesus' second coming. And hundreds of thousands of sincere Christians eagerly fed upon the prophecies of Daniel that promised deliverance from the present world order (cf. Jeremiah 15:16); but when their expectations



"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not" (Revelation 10:4). To successfully seal up a document so none could tamper with the contents, the author would roll up the papyrus scroll and fold the ends over the center, bind it with string, and knot the string on one side. Over the knot he would place moist clay and seal it with his personal seal. This sealed contract (above) was found at Elephantine.

therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer: 7 But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

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

earth. 9 And I went unto the angel, and said unto him, Give me the little book. And he said unto me, Take it, and eat it up; and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey. 10 And I took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey; and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter.

11 And he said unto me, Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.

**Jesus unseals
Daniel's
prophecies
about the final
judgment**

failed and Jesus did not come, they experienced "bitter" disappointment (cf Ezekiel 2:8, 9; 3:1-3).

God still had an important lesson to teach His people. Many of them were to learn that the prediction "time [should be] no longer" (verse 6) referred to *prophetic time* and not to literal time.

There was yet a work for them to do, a proclamation to be made, "before many peoples, and nations, and tongues" (verse 11). Daniel 8:14, the longest time prophecy in the Scriptures, reached to the closing ministry of Jesus as man's high priest in the heavenly sanctuary (see commentary on Daniel). Thus

prophetic time ended at the close of that period in 1844. During Christ's final priestly ministry, an important threefold message, God's last invitation of mercy, was to encircle the globe (see commentary on Revelation 14:6-14).



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

Chapter 11

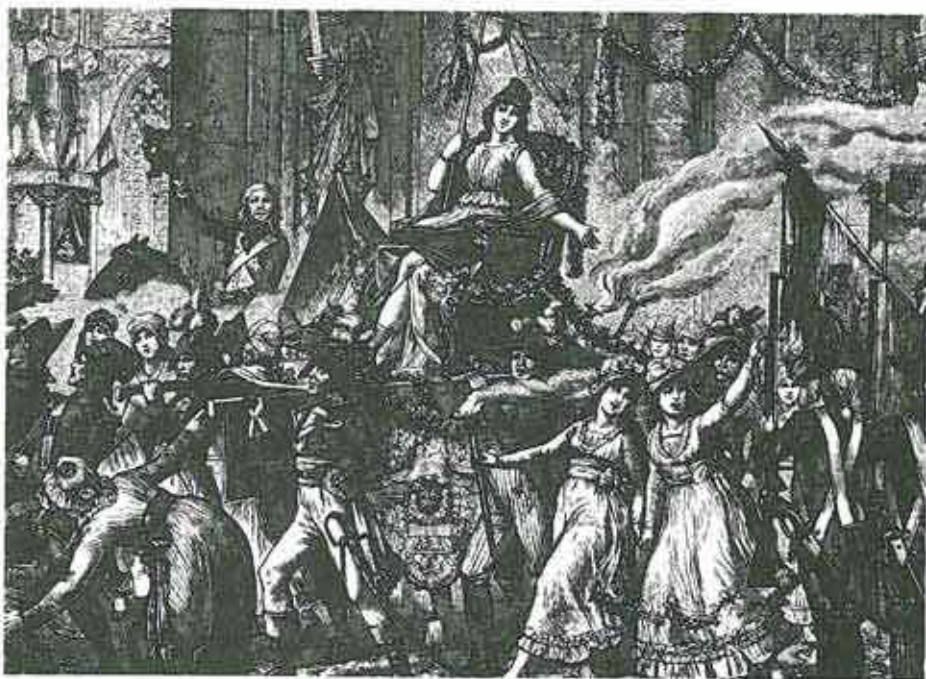
Satan wars against the Bible

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. 2 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.

3 And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. 4 These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. 5 And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their

enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. 6 These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will.

7 And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. 8 And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. 9 And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. 10 And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two



As a symbol of France's utter rejection of religion, the people enthroned a veiled female, whom they termed the Goddess of Reason, and carried her into the convention hall. Taking her by the hand, the orator of the French Convention announced, "Mortals, cease to tremble before the powerless thunders of a God whom your fears have created. Henceforth acknowledge no divinity but Reason." After receiving an embrace by the president, this new goddess was paraded amid an immense crowd to the cathedral of Notre Dame and set upon the high altar to take the place of God Himself.

Chapter 10:11-11:6. The experience of John in eating the sweet-tasting book and then being disappointed was prophetic of the experience of many Christians in the 1840s who, through their study of the Book of Daniel—especially Daniel 8:14—expected Christ to come in their day. The angel's message embraces all of God's people who went through the great Advent Awakening. These sincere Christians needed a fuller understanding of the heavenly temple and the nature of the apostasy during the 1260-year period when the Gentiles—those who did not worship within the temple—trode underfoot "the holy city," or God's people (see Daniel 7:7, 23).

According to the angel, during the 1260 years from 538 to 1798, God's two witnesses would prophesy "clothed in sackcloth." These witnesses are the two channels through which God supplies light to His people, and they appropriately symbolize the Old and New Testaments (see Zechariah 4:1-6, 11-14). During the 1260 years when the apostate Roman Papacy "cast down the truth to the ground," it nearly blotted out the knowledge of God's Word (Daniel 8:11, 12). Yet the Scriptures, though clothed in garments of grief and mourning, still continued to prophesy and witness.

Verses 7-13. By keeping the Scriptures from men, Satan brought about a master deception through the Papacy, a system that purported to represent God on the earth but that really represented the

prophets tormented them that dwell on the earth.

11 And after three days and an half the spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. 12 And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. 13 And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven.

14 The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly.

15 And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. 16 And the four and twenty elders, which

sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God. 17 Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. 18 And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.

19 And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament: and there were lightnings, and voices, and thunderings, and an earthquake, and great hail.

The final universal judgment of mankind

outworking of the principle of sin. God had promised His prophet Daniel that at the end of the 1260 years He would unseal his writings and bring about an increase in the knowledge of his prophecies among men.

As the end of the 1260 years drew near, Satan saw that God would soon fulfill His promise and bring about a reformation among His people. In response, the great deceiver brought forth a new manifestation of satanic power in a climactic effort to destroy God's Word. Several facts indicate that verses 7-13 apply to events at the time of the French Revolution in the 1790s.

During its revolution, France as a nation manifested the same licentiousness as Sodom and the same atheistic defiance as the ruler of Egypt who declared to Moses, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" (Exodus 5:2). In November, 1793, the National Assembly abolished religion and banned the Bible by law. Historians have called this bloody period in France the Reign of Terror.

In June, 1797, three and a half prophetic days (or years—see Ezekiel 4:6) after it rejected God and suppressed the Bible, the French Assembly passed a decree granting tolerance of the Scriptures. Following 1798 the Scriptures were exalted before the world, and God unsealed the Book of Daniel to reveal to His people His plan for a final reformation.

God has presented the French Revolution as a lesson of what rejection of His Word can lead to. History will be re-

peated. The same spirit that produced the French Revolution and its bloody terror will soon involve the whole world in a struggle similar to that which convulsed France. This struggle is described more fully in chapter 13.

The sounding of the seventh trumpet brings the final judgment of mankind, the cleansing of the sanctuary foretold by Daniel. While the first six judgments mentioned in Revelation 8 and 9 affected only a portion of mankind (one third), the seventh judgment is universal.

Verses 15-18. God showed John, first of all, a summary of what would happen under the seventh trumpet. In essence this trumpet has to do with the setting up of God's everlasting kingdom (verses 15-17; cf Revelation 19:1-6; Daniel 2:44, 45; 7:27). Verse 18 gives a more detailed view of the events that occur in conjunction with the event. First, the nations of the world will become "angry." Since the seventh trumpet began in 1844, world conditions have certainly worsened (see Daniel 8:14; 7:9, 10, 13, 14). This anger of the nations will culminate in the great final battle of Armageddon described in Revelation 16. The "wrath of God" consists of seven great plagues through which God will punish the wicked just before Jesus' second coming (see Revelation 15:1).

At His second coming Jesus will "reward" all His servants with eternal life (cf Revelation 22:12). Then a thousand years later, according to Revelation 20, He will punish the wicked with eternal

death. Thus the seventh trumpet has a comprehensive scope.

Verse 19. In order to help John understand the seventh trumpet, God directed his attention to the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, where the ark of His "testament," or *covenant*, is located. In the services of the earthly sanctuary this room was opened *only* on the great Day of Atonement for the cleansing of the sanctuary and judging of God's people (see pages 16 and 17 for more information). This yearly service in the earthly sanctuary symbolized the work of Jesus Christ in cleansing the *heavenly sanctuary*, the true temple of God, at the end of time (see Hebrews 8:5; 9:23). According to Daniel 8:14, this work began in 1844.

Jesus' work for His people in the most holy place is to establish God's everlasting kingdom. In particular He is now drawing attention to the ark of His *covenant* and the *law* that it contains, that eternal law of love written by God in His Ten Commandments (see Exodus 20; 25:16; 31:18; Deuteronomy 10:2, 5).

God's covenant is the key to Revelation 12 to 22. And the law upon which it is based, symbolizing as it does the character of God, is the focal point in the final drama of the great controversy between Christ and Satan (see Revelation 12:17; 14:12).

Chapter 12

The great conflict between Christ and Satan

And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars: 2 And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered.

3 And there appeared another wonder in heaven; and behold a great red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns upon his heads. 4 And his tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven, and did cast them to the earth: and the dragon stood before the woman

which was ready to be delivered, for to devour her child as soon as it was born. 5 And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne. 6 And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she hath a place prepared of God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and threescore days.

7 And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, 8 And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Chapter 12 summarizes the most awesome drama ever to be enacted. The characters in this drama are drawn from Genesis 3, which describes how the serpent deceived Eve and introduced her to sin. At that time God promised the woman, Eve, that He would provide a way out from the curse of sin through one of her descendants who would bring redemption.

Verses 1, 2. As John watched, he saw a "great wonder," or sign, in heaven. Before him appeared a pregnant woman. "Clothed with the sun," she reflected the very glory of God (see Psalms 104:2; 84:11). Throughout the Scriptures God represents His *true* church—both in its Israelite and Christian stages—as a pure woman (Isaiah 54:5, 6; Jeremiah 6:2; Ga-

latians 4:26; 2 Corinthians 11:2).

Verses 3-5. As the woman prepared to give birth to her baby, a "great red dragon"—later identified as Satan, an angel who rebelled against God and His government and thus originated the problem of sin (verse 9)—came and stood before the woman to kill her child. The dragon's seven heads, ten horns, and seven crowns symbolize its domination over all the world (see Daniel 7:6, 24; 8:8, 21, 22; Zechariah 1:18, 19; Ezekiel 21:25, 26).

Throughout history Satan has used various earthly governments and kingdoms as tools in his battle against God. And various prophets have used the symbol of the dragon to depict these pagan powers. Thus, in a secondary

sense, the dragon that John saw represents the powers through which Satan has worked (Ezekiel 29:3; 32:2; Isaiah 27:1).

Though God created him the highest of the angels, beautiful and perfect in every way (see Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28), Satan became proud and self-sufficient. He rebelled against God's law of self-sacrificing love and contended that, though God required self-sacrifice on the part of the angels, He Himself practiced no self-denial.

When God came in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Messiah destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron, Satan *attempted* through the agency of pagan Rome to destroy Him (Psalm 2:5-9; cf Acts 13:33). By his actions he revealed himself for what he truly is, a

The 1260-day prophecy

THIS 1260-day time prophecy is referred to seven times in the books of Daniel and Revelation. It appears as 1260 days in Revelation 11:3 and 12:6; as 42 months in Revelation 11:2 and 13:5; and as three and a half times (or years) in Daniel 7:25; 12:7, and Revelation 12:14 (see Revised Standard Version).

1260 days	= 1260 days
42 months x 30 days	= 1260 days
3½ years = 42 months	= 1260 days

AD 538
Rome freed
from Arian
control.
Bishop of
Rome begins
his reign.

1260 days
42 months
3½ years

AD 1798
Rome
captured by
French army.
Pope taken
prisoner.

10 And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. 11 And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. 12 Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

13 And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child. 14 And to the woman were given two wings of a great eagle, that

she might fly into the wilderness, into her place, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the serpent. 15 And the serpent cast out of his mouth water as a flood after the woman, that he might cause her to be carried away of the flood. 16 And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the flood which the dragon cast out of his mouth.

17 And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.

Satan tries to destroy Christ and His church

murderer (John 8:44). But God allowed Satan to only "bruise" His Son, not destroy Him (Genesis 3:15). Jesus died as an innocent victim to show the self-sacrificing love of God. Then God miraculously delivered Him and brought Him to heaven to stand by His throne (Matthew 2:16; Philippians 2:5-10).

Verse 6. Realizing that he had failed in his attempt to destroy the Son of God, Satan worked, as Revelation 13:1-10 explains, through the instrumentality of a corrupt church-state system during the Middle Ages to persecute sincere Christians, thus forcing them to flee into the wilderness for 1260 days (or years—see Ezekiel 4:6) like the prophet Elijah (see 1 Kings 17-19; Luke 4:25; James 5:17; Daniel 7; Revelation 13:1-10).

Verses 7-9. Once again John saw the controversy, this time in greater detail. The "Michael" he refers to is the Son of God (cf Jude 9; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; John 5:28; Daniel 10:13, 21; 8:25; 9:25).

Through His death on Calvary Christ caused Satan to be cast out of heaven, severed from the affections of the faithful angels he had known there, for then they saw the implications of his controversy with Christ (John 12:31, 32).

Verses 10-12. The angels in heaven sympathized with Christ as He died on Calvary, but with His death and resurrection they broke forth in a shout of victory. Jesus had conquered the power of sin and death; He had made it possible for men and women to find salvation. The Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth had triumphed.

Verses 13-17. But the controversy was not yet over. Realizing this, Satan turned upon the church to persecute and destroy it. But as He did with ancient Israel (Exodus 19:4) and Elijah (1 Kings 17-19), God brought His people into the "wilderness" and nourished them with food from heaven (John 6:31-35; Hosea 2:14). Millions of Christians died for their beliefs under the tyranny of the Inquisition, but many escaped.

When God led the Israelites in the wilderness, He eventually brought them to Mount Sinai. Here God taught His law of love (Exodus 19). In the same way He especially directed the attention of His people following 1798, the end of the 1260 years of persecution, to His law in the most holy place of the heavenly

sanctuary (chapter 11:15-19; see also 14:12).

That there should be a group of people who allow Christ to dwell fully in them and let Him write His law of love in their minds (see Hebrews 8:10; 10:16) causes Satan to become "wroth," or angry, for by allowing God to change them from sinful beings at enmity with Him to become His devoted sons and daughters, they demonstrate the power of His goodness and mercy and vindicate Him before the universe as the Only One worthy of worship. Against a last-day remnant of God's faithful followers, Satan will make war, especially in the great battle of Armageddon soon to come (see comments on Revelation 16:13-16; 17:14).

Thus Jesus introduced John and his readers to the great final conflict described more fully in the following chapters of Revelation.

Notice especially the two characteristics that distinguish God's true followers from other groups or churches just before Jesus returns. First, they will "keep the commandments of God." This indicates that they will recognize Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and allow Him to write His law of love in their minds (Hebrews 8:8-10). In addition, they will have "the testimony of Jesus." According to Revelation 19:10 this is the "spirit of prophecy."

Because they live by faith in the merits of Jesus alone, He will send His Holy Spirit, the same Spirit that inspired the prophets of the Bible, to work in their midst in a special manner (Acts 5:32; cf Joel 2:28-30).

Based on the year-day principle, as illustrated in Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, a day in prophecy stands for a literal year in earth time. Hence this 1260-day prophecy refers to a 1260-year period of time that began in AD 538 (see the little horn on page 13) and stretched to 1798, when the French general Berthier, at the command of Napoleon, marched his army into Rome, took the pope prisoner, and proclaimed the 1260-year political rule of the Papacy finished. (This overthrow of the Papacy is referred to again as a "deadly wound" in chapter 13:3.)

Chapter 13

Satan deceives mankind through a corrupt church-state

And I stood upon the sand of the sea, and saw a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and upon his heads the name of blasphemy. 2 And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as

the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority. 3 And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. 4 And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?

5 And there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies; and power

Chapter 13 explains in greater detail two organizations, or systems, that Satan will especially use in his final attempt to destroy God's remnant and thus frustrate His eternal purpose.

As John stood on the beach of the island of Patmos, he saw a startling sight. Rising up before him out of the sea came a beast with seven heads and ten horns. The beast had the body of a leopard, the feet of a bear, and the mouth of a lion. These symbols are based on Daniel 7, which depicted the future in terms of four great powers that were to dominate history. In his vision Daniel saw first a lion (symbolizing Babylon), then a bear (Medo-Persia), then a leopard (Greece), and finally a "dreadful and terrible" beast (Rome). According to his vision, the fourth empire, Rome, would come to be dominated in its final stage by a "little horn," a terrible power that would persecute God's people for "a time, two times, and half a time" (see page 38).

John's prophecy is nearly identical with the description of the little horn in Daniel 7, and it unquestionably points to the time when the apostate papal church system of the Middle Ages began to dominate the state. Paul, looking for-

ward to the time when this "falling away" from the truth would arise, referred to this power as the "man of sin," the "mystery of iniquity" (see Daniel 7:8, 25; 8:23-25; 11:36; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

The Book of Revelation elsewhere shows that there are many sincere individuals in the Roman Catholic organization (see Revelation 14:7; 18:4). God does not condemn such ones. Rather, it is the system to which God objects—the mingling of church and state, or, as Revelation 17:1 shows, the prostitution of the church to the state.

Notice how these verses describe four phases through which the leopardlike beast must go. First, it would emerge from the sea (a symbol of heavily populated areas—see Revelation 17:1, 15; cf Daniel 7:3) and receive from the dragon, Satan, (1) his power, (2) his seat, or throne, and (3) great authority (verse 2).

Second, it would rule for forty-two prophetic months, or 1260 years, a period that began, as the comments earlier show, in AD 538 (verses 2, 5). During this 1260 years, the beast would blaspheme God; His name, or character; His tabernacle, or temple, in heaven; and

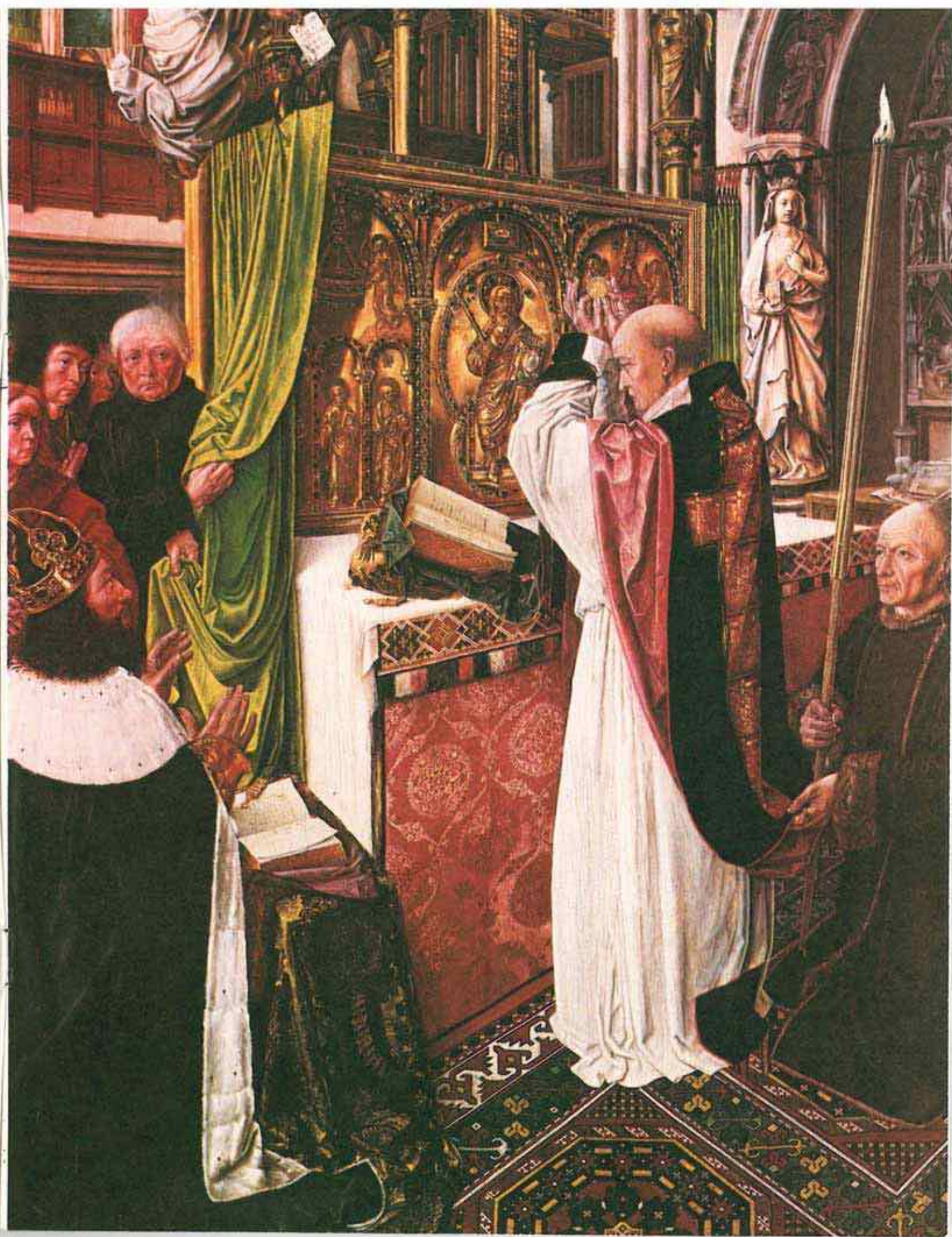
those who "dwell in heaven." Just as both Daniel and John predicted, the papal church-state system effectively "cast down the truth" of Jesus' continual intercession for His people by focusing the attention of the people on human priests and their mediation (see Daniel 8:11, 12; 11:31). It exalted man, sinful man, in the place of Jesus.

Third, after the forty-two months, one of its heads would receive a "deadly wound." In 1798, exactly 1260 years after the pope became free to exercise his supremacy over the state, the French general Berthier brought to a climax the blow that the Reformation had given to the Papacy, by entering Rome and taking the pope captive. As John so clearly prophesied, "He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity."

Fourth, according to verses 3 and 4, the beast will be resurrected shortly before Jesus' second coming (cf Revelation 17:12-14). For a short period it will repeat its past history by prostituting itself to the kings of the earth and persecuting God's people. Then only those who have accepted the ministry of Jesus for them in the heavenly sanctuary will escape its bewitching influence (see verses 15, 16).



In 1798 the French general Berthier (left) marched his armies into Rome, captured the pope, and removed him to France. The extravagant splendor and ritual of the late medieval mass (opposite page) contrasted sharply with the sparse dwellings and humble way of life for the common worshiper. Moreover, the Papacy's claims to divine titles, to have power to forgive or not to forgive sin, and its application of Christ's powers and virtues to Mary, His mother, harmonize with this beast power that "opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, . . . his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven" (verse 6).



United States is Identified in Prophecy

was given unto him to continue forty and two months. 6 And he opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. 7 And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations. 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.

9 If any man have an ear, let him hear. 10 That leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.

11 And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. 12 And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. 1

Following his vision of the beast from the sea, John saw another animal, this one "coming up out of the earth." Later passages in the Book of Revelation describe this beast as a "false prophet," a highly successful impostor (see Revelation 16:13, 14; 19:20). At least four points identify this beast.

1. *Time of rise.* The beast from the earth must arise at the end of the 1260-year rule of the beast from the sea (verse 12). In addition, in its final dragonlike stage it is contemporary with the resurrected phase of the sea beast (verse 14). Thus, it must begin about 1798 and rule until Jesus' second coming (see Revelation 19:20).

2. *Place of rise.* The first beast of Revelation 13 and all the beasts mentioned in Daniel 7 arose from the "sea," which, according to Revelation 17:15, represents "peoples" and "nations." In obvious contrast, the second beast mentioned in Revelation 13 comes up from the *earth*—a term used in chapter 12 to indicate a sparsely populated, wilderness region (verse 11; cf. Revelation 12:16). The original Greek word used in verse 11 and translated "coming up" indicates that John saw this power springing up like a plant.

Only one nation, or power, fits these first two specifications: the United States of America. It alone, of all the major world powers, emerged in the late 1700s in a wilderness area.

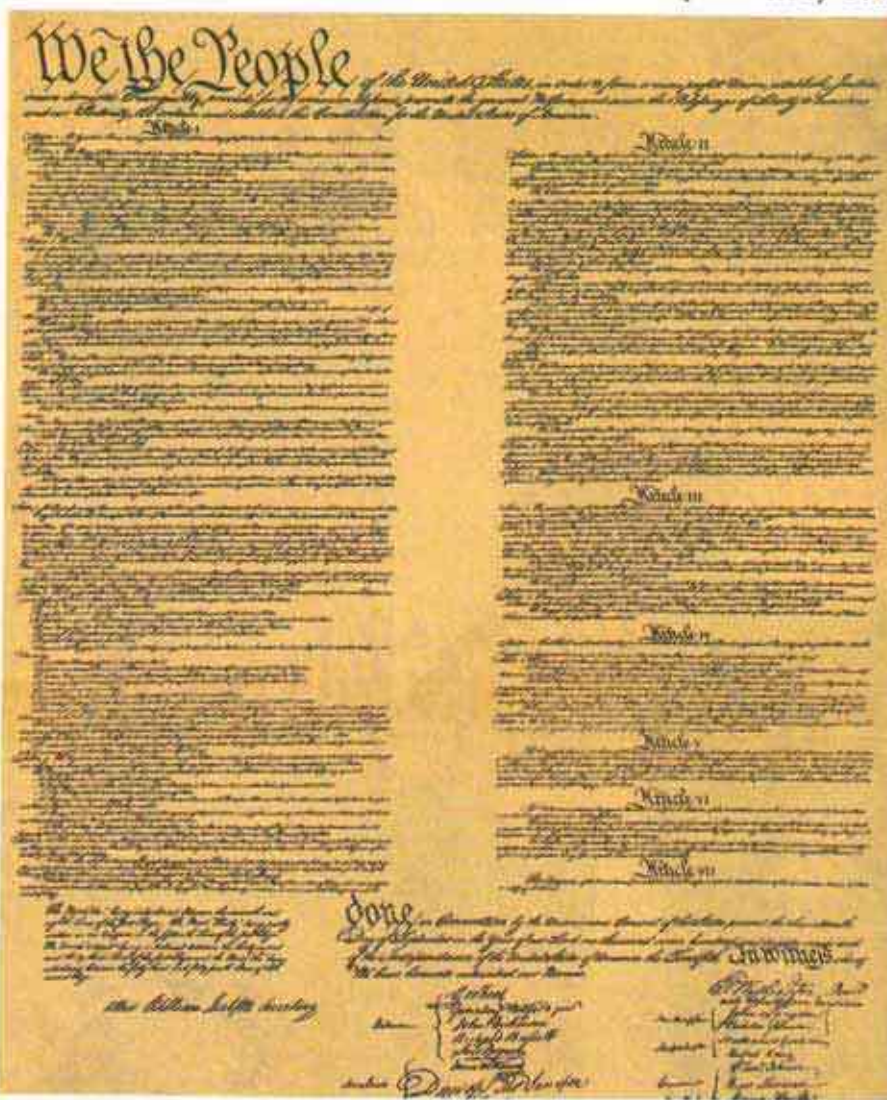
3. *Influence.* The animal from the earth exercises a worldwide influence. The whole world follows its example (see verses 12, 16, 17). Again the specification fits the United States.

4. *Apparent nature.* Throughout the Book of Revelation the figure of the lamb represents Jesus Christ. The lamb is an innocent, peaceful animal—a sharp contrast to the beasts that represent the powers used by Satan. The animal from the earth, strangely, has "two horns like a lamb"—it appears on first sight to be

lamblike, innocent, even Christian in appearance. Those who founded the United States based the nation's Constitution on two great principles, civil and religious liberty. These two principles are inseparably connected with the republican form of government, which

allows the people to rule through their chosen representatives, and the Protestant understanding of the principle of religious liberty.

According to John's prophecy, the United States is to play a central role in Satan's final attempt to destroy God's



The "two horns like a lamb" (verse 11) may be understood as the two notable features of the United States system of government, civil and religious liberty. These two unique rights are guaranteed to all residents of America in the Constitution of the United States.

And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, 14 And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. 15 And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast

should be killed.

16 And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: 17 And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

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.

The United States becomes dominated by the church

people and so thwart His eternal purpose. To do this it must undergo a change, a remarkable change. Notice what will happen to the United States.

1. It will *speak as a dragon* (verse 11). A country "speaks," or expresses itself, through legislative processes. This prophecy predicts that America will enact some law which will support the resurrected first beast, the Papacy, and in so doing it will manifest the very spirit of Satan, the dragon.

2. Through actual *persecution* it will require all men in some manner to worship or pay homage to the Roman Catholic church-state (verse 12; cf verses 2, 5).

3. It will *deceive* the inhabitants of the earth through *miracles*, as it tries to get them to make an "image to the beast" (verses 13, 14; cf Revelation 16:13, 14; Matthew 24:24; 1 Timothy 4:1). Thus America will become the focal point of a great counterfeit religious revival in which spiritualism is to play a prominent role.

4. It will *create an image of the beast* (verse 15). Two powers combined to form the original beast: the republic of Rome and the apostate early Christian church. The first beast arose as a union of church and state. In like manner, when the religious bodies of America join forces to secure government support to enforce their beliefs, the republic of the United States will thereby create an "image" of the original beast.

5. It will create this image through legislation, causing all men to *worship* the beast through homage to its religious teachings (verse 15). Ultimately this oppressive legislation will involve a *death penalty* for dissenters.

6. It will use economic pressures to force men to identify themselves with the "mark" of the beast, either by their actions ("in their right hand") or by actual mental assent ("in their foreheads").

The Book of Revelation presents several points that identify this important mark and its nature. First, it will involve worship. Those who receive it worship the beast (verse 8; cf Revelation 14:9). Second, it is something upon which nearly all professed Christians, Catholics and Protestants alike, will agree. Third, those who receive it are contrasted in Revelation 14:9-12 with those who keep the commandments of God. Thus, the mark involves an attempt to disregard God's law.

Long ago the prophet Daniel declared that the "little horn" (the same power as the beast from the sea described in Revelation 13:1-10) would "think to change times and laws" (Daniel 7:25). In particular the apostate Roman Papacy has "thought" to change the fourth commandment of God's law by substituting worship on the first day of the week, Sunday, for God's appointed day of worship, the seventh-day Sabbath. Moreover it presents this change as a *mark* of its ecclesiastical authority.

Numerous Catholic catechisms recognize this fact. For instance, Peter Geiermann's, *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine* (1957 ed), says,

"Q. Which is the Sabbath day?

"A. Saturday is the Sabbath day.

"Q. Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

"A. We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday."

The only religion that leads to God is that which comes from God. He alone is the source of truth and light and righteousness. That religion which springs forth from the mind of fallen men is sin. It is the very essence of the man of sin to place himself above God, to exalt the creature over the Creator, to attempt to "improve" the law of self-sacrificing love that represents the character of God. And so the mark of the beast is a

creation of man—the man of sin.

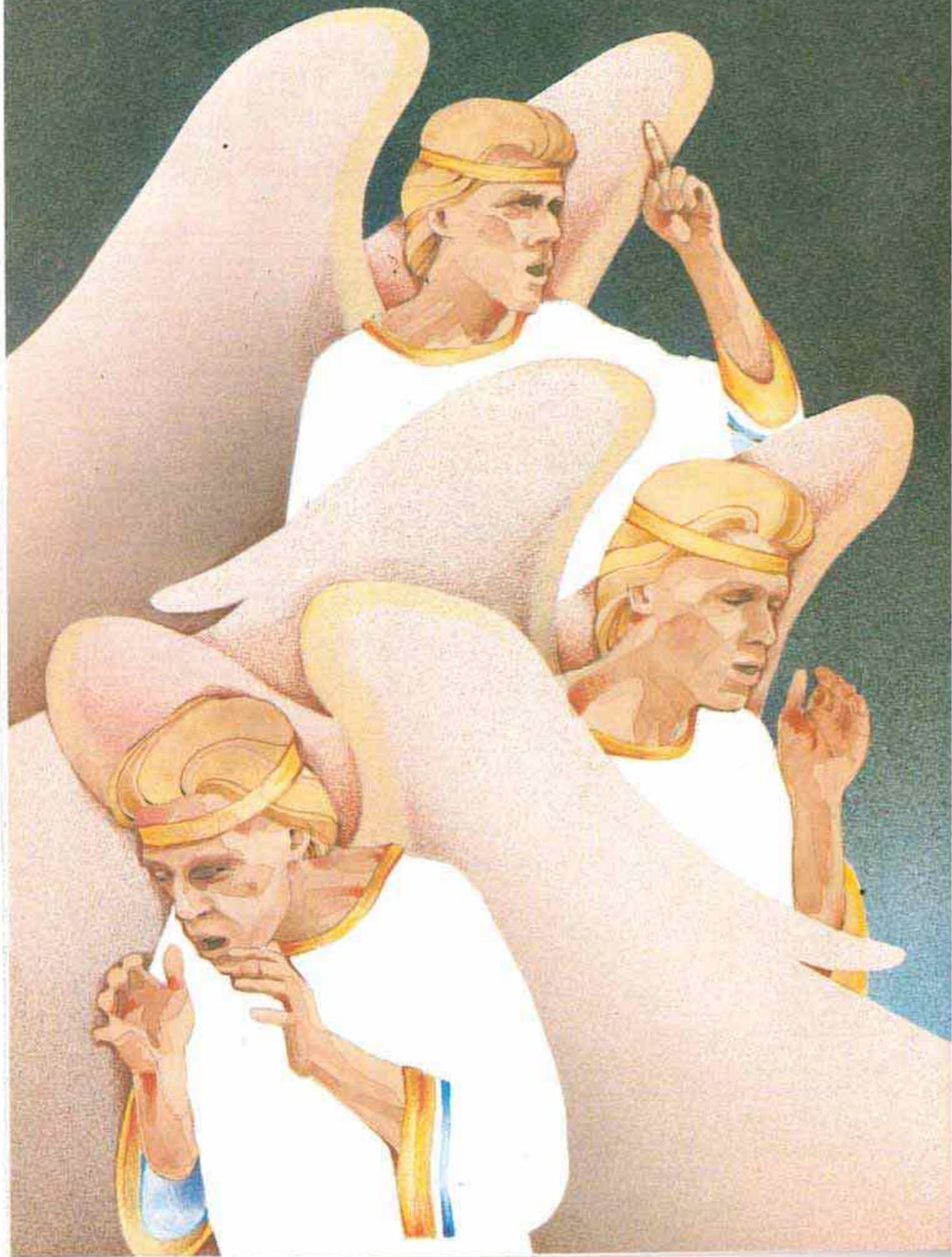
When Sunday observance is enforced by law, *then* the issues will be clearly drawn between the religion of God and that which comes from man. Only then, with the issues thus clearly drawn, will Sunday observance become the mark of the beast. Those who then accept this mark will also accept the "name," or character, of the beast and the "number of a man." This number, 666, is eminently man's number. Six falls short of seven, the number of completeness and perfection. While the seventh-day Sabbath is God's own sign of His completed work, the number six represents that which falls short.

Only those who accept God's mark, the Sabbath—the sign of His authority as Creator and Rightful Sovereign of earth—and who trust fully in the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ will escape the great delusion connected with the mark of the beast.

Revelation 12 and 13 present Satan on the offensive, deceiving all mankind and gathering his forces for the great final battle between himself and Christ. Through the false lamb (Revelation 13:11-18), Satan will bring about his supreme deception as he exalts the religion arising from the creature over that which comes from God.

Revelation 14 presents a decided contrast, for it describes the *True Lamb*, Jesus Christ, and His followers, the 144,000, the "remnant" against whom Satan will war (see Revelation 12:17).

This chapter brings together three great Old Testament themes connected with God's covenant: the final judgment, or antitypical Day of Atonement; the gathering of Israel and the nations to the final eschatological war; and the promise of a bounteous harvest following the latter rain, which ripens the seed to perfection. These themes also converge in the Book of Joel, upon which much of Revelation 14 is based.



Chapter 14

And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred and forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. 2 And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a

great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: 3 And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. 4 These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the

Mankind is warned about the judgment time

Chapter 14:1. The Old Testament often refers to God's promise to gather His people to Mount Zion, the site of His sanctuary, and thus deliver them from the nations seeking to destroy them (see Joel 2:15, 32; 3:2; Zephaniah 2:1; 3:8; Zechariah 12:8, 9). Revelation 14:1-5 presents these promises from a Christ-centered viewpoint. Jesus Christ is the Power who will gather Israel in the final conflict to His sanctuary.

Jesus declared of Himself, "If I be lifted up from the earth, [I] will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32; cf Jeremiah 23:1-8; 31:10, 11). The Book of Hebrews indicates that Jesus is not gathering men to a literal mountain (Mount Sinai) but to the heavenly "mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Hebrews 12:18-24; cf Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 3:15). Thus the 144,000 are *Christians* who follow by *faith* the Lamb, Jesus, as He mediates for them in the heavenly sanctuary during the judgment (verses 6, 7; cf Revelation 11:19; Hebrews 10:19).

The Book of Revelation elsewhere describes the 144,000 as those who receive a special seal from God in their foreheads to protect them during the time of the seven last plagues, when Jesus will have finished His intercession for man (see Revelation 7:2; 15; 16). Here the seal is depicted in connection with the 144,000 having God's *name*—a symbol of His character, or glory—in their foreheads. Thus the 144,000 especially reflect the character and glory of God (cf Revelation 3:12; 7:2; 18:1; Isaiah 4:2-5).

Verses 2, 3. The group that follows Jesus in the final judgment will have an experience no other group has ever had, for they will live through the pouring out of the seven last plagues (Revelation 15 and 16) without an intercessor and protected only by the seal of God. The victory that Christ has brought to them will call forth the deepest gratitude on

their part.

Verses 4, 5. The 144,000 are referred to as "virgins" because they refuse to have relations with the immoral women, Babylon and her daughters (see Revelation 17:1-5). Like the five virgins mentioned by Christ in one of His parables, they follow the Bridegroom (the Lamb) in to His marriage ceremony (see Matthew 25:1-13; cf Revelation 19:7-9).

The ancient Israelites gathered the first part, or "firstfruits," of their ripened harvest at the end of the year and presented it as a special offering to God (see Deuteronomy 26:1-11; Leviticus 23:10, 17). The 144,000 are the firstfruits of the harvest of the earth in the sense that they receive the perfecting latter rain of the Holy Spirit that ripens them before the actual harvest of the earth (see verses 15, 16; cf James 5:17; Joel 2:23-27). Thus, at the close of probation, before He pours out the seven last plagues, God will bring His people to the point where they will reflect the image of Jesus fully. In every sense of the word they will be *true* Israelites, faultless before God's throne (cf John 1:47).

The 144,000 represent Jesus' answer to the work of the false lamb described in Revelation 13. Both groups of followers—God's and Satan's—have a mark, or seal, and carry the name of their lord. The three angels' messages presented in verses 6 to 12 explain *how* God gathers His remarkable group together.

Verses 6, 7. The good news of God's love for man has been preached in every age, but the first angel of Revelation 14 presents a part of God's everlasting gospel, or Good News, that could be understood only near the close of history when He would begin His special work of judgment on mankind.

The key to understanding the judgment brought to view by the first angel is found in the everlasting gospel that

God has reconciled mankind to Himself through the death of Jesus Christ. The Bible declares that all men have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. But the Good News is that the divine Son of God became one with us, and though He Himself never sinned, He voluntarily accepted our guilt and the punishment we deserve for separating ourselves from God. Jesus died that we might live. On the cross He made a perfect and complete atonement, a sacrifice sufficient to cover every sin and reconcile all men to God (Isaiah 53:5, 6).

Then after His resurrection, *having already obtained eternal redemption for every man*, He ascended to heaven to present before His Father the efficacy of His sacrifice and the perfect righteousness He had wrought out for us (Hebrews 9:12).

Because of this the New Testament clearly teaches that men can be "justified" before God, or counted as righteous, *solely* on the basis of Christ's infinite merits, His perfect righteousness. In recognition of the faith of those willing to trust in Him alone for justification before God, Christ sends His Holy Spirit to dwell within their hearts and make effectual in them the salvation He has wrought out for them on Calvary (Ephesians 1:12, 13; Acts 2:38). Thus, whenever a person accepts Christ as his righteousness, he will experience a change in his life. True justification is always made evident by good works, in keeping the commandments of God.

This is the essence of the everlasting gospel: Man is justified before God solely on the basis of the perfect merits of Christ alone. To those who will receive Him in this way, Christ will impart His righteousness. And the believer thus becomes a true worshiper of God the Creator.

The sanctuary and its services indicate that Christ's mediation for us has two phases. He began the first phase of His

Three angels proclaim their messages

firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. 5 And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

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, 7 Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and

earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.

8 And there followed another angel, saying, Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication.

9 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, 10 The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without

mediation for us when He ascended to heaven in AD 31. At that time He entered the *holy place* of the heavenly sanctuary to give *forgiveness and reconciliation* to men. Thus His mediation in the first part of the sanctuary showed His death on Calvary to be sufficient to cover the guilt of men and give them forgiveness.

But the Bible clearly teaches that it is possible for men to turn away from God after receiving forgiveness (see John 15:5, 6; Ezekiel 18:20-24; Hebrews 10:28, 29). Also, though Christ forgives the sins of men when they confess them, there still remains a record in certain "books" in heaven (Daniel 7:10; Malachi 3:16; Psalm 56:8).

In AD 1844 Jesus Christ entered the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary for the purpose of blotting out these records so that His people might have a full title to heaven, completely free of any encumbrances. His work for His people in the judgment involves at least four aspects.

1. Just as God had the ancient Israelites gather about the earthly sanctuary

once each year for the Day of Atonement, or day of judgment, so He is now—through the presentation of the three messages of Revelation 14—inviting His people to gather about the heavenly sanctuary and enter by faith in Christ into the most holy place and receive the benefits of His mediation.

And just as God specified certain things for the ancient Israelites to do when they assembled for the Day of Atonement, so the first angel calls upon those living during the time of the true judgment to "fear God, and give glory to him." Those who worship the beast described in Revelation 13 will give glory to man, but those who understand the everlasting gospel will give praise and honor and glory to God alone.

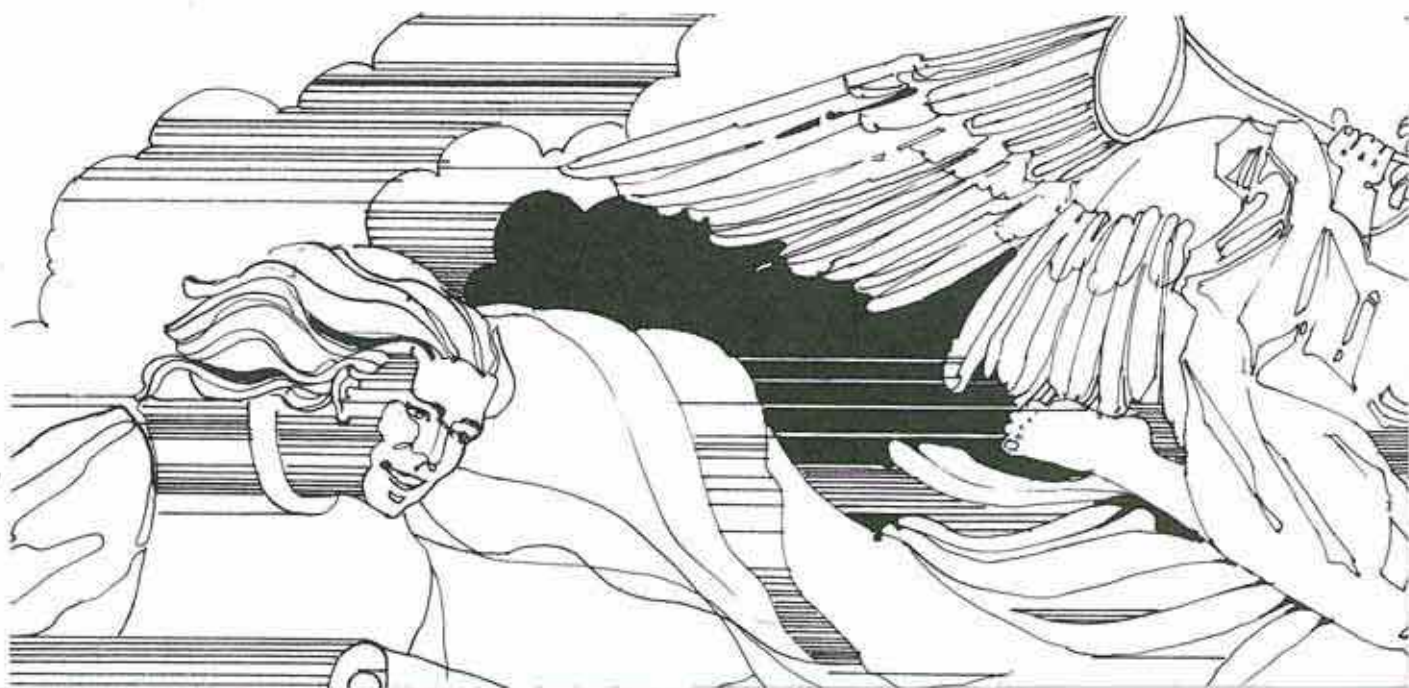
In addition, the first angel calls upon those preparing for the judgment to "worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and fountains of waters." Since the judgment began in 1844, almost the entire Christian world has abandoned the great foundation of Christianity, the truth that God created all things and that He alone is the source

of life.

The words "worship him that made heaven, and earth" are based on the fourth commandment of God's eternal law of love, which invites men to join the Creator in His Sabbath, or rest. On the seventh day of Creation, the Bible says, God "rested, and was refreshed." He looked upon His perfect work and felt satisfied. (See Genesis 1:31; 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; 31:17.) The angels who looked upon His perfect work shouted for joy (Job 38:7).

2. Christ's work in the judgment also involves an investigation of the lives of all who have ever professed to serve Him throughout human history. During this investigation Christ and His Father will compare every thought, word, and deed of these individuals with the perfect requirement of the law of love (see Daniel 7:10; Malachi 3:16; James 2:12).

3. In this pre-Advent judgment Christ will either "blot out" the records of the individual's sins or his name from the book of life. Those who have refused to trust fully in Christ alone, who have failed to confess all their sins and receive



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: 11 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.

12 Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the

faith of Jesus. 13 And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

14 And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle.

15 And another angel came out of the temple,

How Jesus will harvest the earth

forgiveness, will have their names blotted out of the book of life (see Revelation 3:5; Ezekiel 18:24; Exodus 32:33).

But many will have repented of their sins and by faith claimed Christ's perfect sacrifice as their only source of justification before God. God will count these penitent ones fully worthy to be in His eternal kingdom. Jesus will then blot out the records of their sins through the merits of His atoning sacrifice, bringing to a complete fulfillment the new covenant promise: "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" (Jeremiah 31:34; see also Jeremiah 50:20 and Isaiah 4:2, 3). This work of atonement by judgment will thus remove the false from the book of life and will clear all the genuine followers of God before the unfallen beings of the universe.

4. In conjunction with His work of blotting out the record of sin, Christ will bestow His Holy Spirit in its fullness upon the living who have followed Him by faith into the most holy place and accepted His mediation for them (see Acts 3:19). And He will clothe all His

faithful ones with His own righteousness, so that He can present them to His Father "a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Ephesians 5:27; see also Zechariah 3:1-5 and Revelation 14:1-5).

Verse 8. The second of the three messages in Revelation 14 points out that "Babylon is fallen." When ancient Babylon rejected God, He announced to its leaders, "You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting" (Daniel 5:27, RSV). Shortly thereafter the Medes and Persians attacked the city of Babylon and overthrew its kingdom.

In John's day the actual city of Babylon lay in ruins. But because of the special role Babylon had played in oppressing His people in Old Testament times, God used the symbol of Babylon to show John how Satan would try to destroy His people near the close of history through a corrupt church (see Revelation 17).

As ancient Babylon rejected God, so much of the professed Christian world is rejecting Him today, if not in name, certainly in their actions. Those who reject

the first angel's message can only fall lower and lower. According to the second angel, when the churches of Christianity will unite themselves fully with the world, then the fall of Babylon will be complete.

Then God's people will sound the second angel's message with great power (see Revelation 18:1-3). The undiscerning will fail to recognize Babylon's fall, seeing in the union of church and state something good. But those who have entered by faith into the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary will realize the nature of sin in the light of the cross, and they will speak out with great power against the corruption of Babylon.

In particular they will expose Babylon's erroneous teachings, her "wine" that she induces all nations to drink. Among other things, this wine includes the teaching that Sunday is sacred and that man has an immortal soul by nature. The first error forms a bond between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, and the second connects both with spiritualism.

The concept of the immortality of the



Illustration by Helcio Deslandes

The harvest is ripe

crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. 16 And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped.

17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, he also having a sharp sickle.

18 And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in

thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. 19 And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. 20 And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles, by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs.

soul is completely antagonistic to the Bible teaching that God alone has immortality and man may receive eternal life only by receiving Jesus Christ (1 Timothy 6:15, 16; 2 Timothy 1:10). Satan deceived Eve by telling her, "Ye shall not surely die" (see Genesis 3:1-4 and compare Ecclesiastes 9:5; Romans 6:23; Malachi 4:1). And in the final conflict many who refuse to trust in the Word of God will fall for the same deception.

Verses 9-12. The third of the three final messages follows as a direct result of the first two and presents the full and final revelation of Jesus Christ, His perfect justice and mercy. When this message has polarized humanity, opportunity for salvation will close, the plagues of God's wrath will fall (Revelation 16), and Jesus will then come again to take His people back with Him to heaven.

The third angel presents a startling message, one designed to arouse men to the decisive issues at stake in the final conflict between Christ and Satan. It presents the most fearful warning ever sounded before mankind. The imagery it uses is based on Revelation 13. Whoever worships the beast (the papal system) and his image (the end-time union of church and state in America) and receives the beast's mark (the sign of his ecclesiastical authority—Sunday) while understandingly rejecting the Sabbath (the seal of God's authority) must "drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture."

So important is this warning that nearly the whole next section of the Book of Revelation is devoted to explaining it. According to Revelation 15:1, God will send His wrath upon those who support the beast. This will be in the form of seven great devastating plagues that will come unmixed with mercy, for those who reject the three angels' messages will clearly align themselves against Jesus Christ, so that He will no longer be

able to cover them with His mercy.

The third angel ends his message with the words: "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus."

In these few words the third angel summarizes the everlasting gospel in the light of the judgment. The "saints," or holy ones, in the final crisis will be those who have placed their complete faith in (as the original Greek may read) Jesus and His perfect righteousness. In response to their patient endurance He will send the fullness of His Holy Spirit to finish the work of grace in their lives and seal His law in their hearts (see James 5:7; Hosea 6:3; Hebrews 8:10-12). Thus God will seal His people through the third angel's message.

Those who receive this message in its fullness will overcome the beast and his image, and Christ will deliver them from the murderous intentions of Satan (see Revelation 15:2; 12:17).

The final verses of Revelation 14 present two harvests, that of the wheat (verses 14-16) and that of the "vine of the earth" (verses 17-20). The prophet Joel, who saw a similar scene, declared, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great" (Joel 3:13).

Verses 14-16. On several different occasions Jesus used the figure of the harvest to teach His disciples about His second coming. "The field is the world," He said, and "the harvest is the end of the world" (Matthew 13:38, 39).

Near the close of His ministry as man's Advocate in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary, Jesus will send the Holy Spirit in great power to those who accept His three final messages (verses 6-12). Like the "latter rain" coming at the end of the season, this impartation of the Holy Spirit will "ripen" the

remnant church, the 144,000, bringing its members to complete perfection of character (Joel 2:23-32; James 5:7; Revelation 14:12). And then when Christ has perfectly reproduced His character in His people, He will come to claim them as His own, part of His eternal kingdom. "I will come again," He has promised, "and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:3).

Verses 17-20. Those who refuse God's gracious invitation to have a part in the harvest of the wheat are described as the "vine of the earth," and they too will be harvested.

When men have sealed their own destinies by rejecting the love of God and accepting Satan's spurious counterfeit, Christ will come to vindicate His holy law. Justice requires the death of those who transgress God's law; and those who refuse to accept Christ's death for them must bear the penalty themselves. At His second coming Christ will destroy the wicked, and their blood will cover the earth (Joel 3:13; Jeremiah 25:30; Isaiah 63:1-6).

Only those outside the "city" will meet this terrible end. Those who have followed Jesus, the Lamb, by faith into the city of New Jerusalem and gone with Him into the most holy place of the heavenly temple on Mount Zion (see verse 1; Hebrews 12:18-24) will escape the terrible judgments upon the wicked. Who will accept His gracious invitation?

How can a God of love destroy those whom He has created? Revelation 15:1 to 19:10 explains more fully *how* and *why* God will punish those who have rebelled against Him. In addition, these chapters also explain why the message of the third angel of Revelation 14 is so important.

Chapter 15

And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. 2 And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. 3 And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of

saints. 4 Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.

5 And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened: 6 And the seven angels came out of the temple, having the seven plagues, clothed in pure and white linen, and having their breasts girded with golden girdles. 7 And one of the four beasts gave unto the seven angels seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, who liveth for ever and ever. 8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

**The saints
praise Jesus for
delivering them**

Chapter 15:1-4. Before God showed John how He would punish the wicked who accept the mark of the beast, He first let him see again the 144,000, who, by accepting His help, would triumph over the beast, his image, his mark, and the number of his name. Victory is assured for all who will trust in Christ. As John said, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1

John 5:4). The victory of the 144,000 is God's final demonstration of the power of the everlasting gospel, at the center of which is the great living truth of righteousness by *faith alone*. Christ has *already* won the victory over sin at Calvary. It is *His* victory, but we may accept it as ours by faith. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57, RSV). The 144,000 will sing the song of Moses (see Exodus 15:1-19) and the song of the Lamb, Jesus.

Verses 5-8. When Jesus finishes His mediation for His people and leaves the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary (the place referred to in verse 5), His mercy will no longer stand between God and man. The period when humans can choose between salvation and damnation draws to a close as Christ declares, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Revelation 22:11). Then no man will be able to "enter" the heavenly temple by faith and find salvation, for all will have clearly decided whom they will serve: Christ or Satan. During the great time of trouble brought on by the seven last plagues, God will protect and deliver His people, though Satan will attempt to destroy them (Daniel 12:1; Psalm 76:8, 9; Zephaniah 1; 2:3; Ezekiel 9; Revelation 7:1-3; Isaiah 26:20, 21).

The judgments under the seven last plagues closely resemble those described under the seven trumpets (Revelation 8; 9; 11:15-19). However, the two series differ in at least three important aspects. First, the trumpets are partial judgments that affect only one third of

mankind, but the plagues are much wider in scope and affect more of the wicked. Second, the trumpets cover long periods of time, but the plagues come in "one day" or "one hour"—in other words, very quickly (cf Revelation 9:5, 15 with 18:8, 10). Third, the trumpets begin from the *holy* place of the heavenly sanctuary, while the plagues are associated with the *most holy* place (cf Revelation 8:2-5 with 15:5-7).

When will these plagues come? They will follow both the mark of the beast and the third angel of Revelation 14, who presents God's last merciful invitation to those in Babylon (cf Revelation 13:16, 17; 14:9, 10; and 16:2). Hence they come after Jesus finishes His mediation for mankind and before He returns to earth (see chapter 16:1-15).

God will pour out the plagues like a drink of fiery, hot wine "without mixture." John declared that in these plagues "is filled up the wrath of God" (Revelation 14:10; 15:1). They will come swiftly and suddenly, *unmixed with mercy*.

Revelation 17 and 18 further explains *why* God sends these terrible judgments. According to Revelation 18:4 they are *Babylon's* plagues. God sends them to punish her for planning to kill His people (see Revelation 16:6; 13:15; 17:6). Through His judgments upon Babylon God will deliver His remnant from the hands of Satan's wrath.

The plagues themselves resemble those God sent upon Egypt, when He delivered the Israelites under Moses (see Exodus 7 to 12). As with the other series of sevens in the Book of Revelation, the last three of the plagues seem to be of a different character than the first four.



"I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast . . . stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God" (Revelation 15:2). This version of an ancient harp (the "nebel"), reconstructed here and on exhibit in the music museum at Haifa, Israel, is but a faint shadow of what God has planned for heavenly music.

Chapter 16

The seven last plagues are poured out

And I heard a great voice out of the temple saying to the seven angels, Go your ways, and pour out the vials of the wrath of God upon the earth. 2 And the first went, and poured out his vial upon the earth; and there fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image.

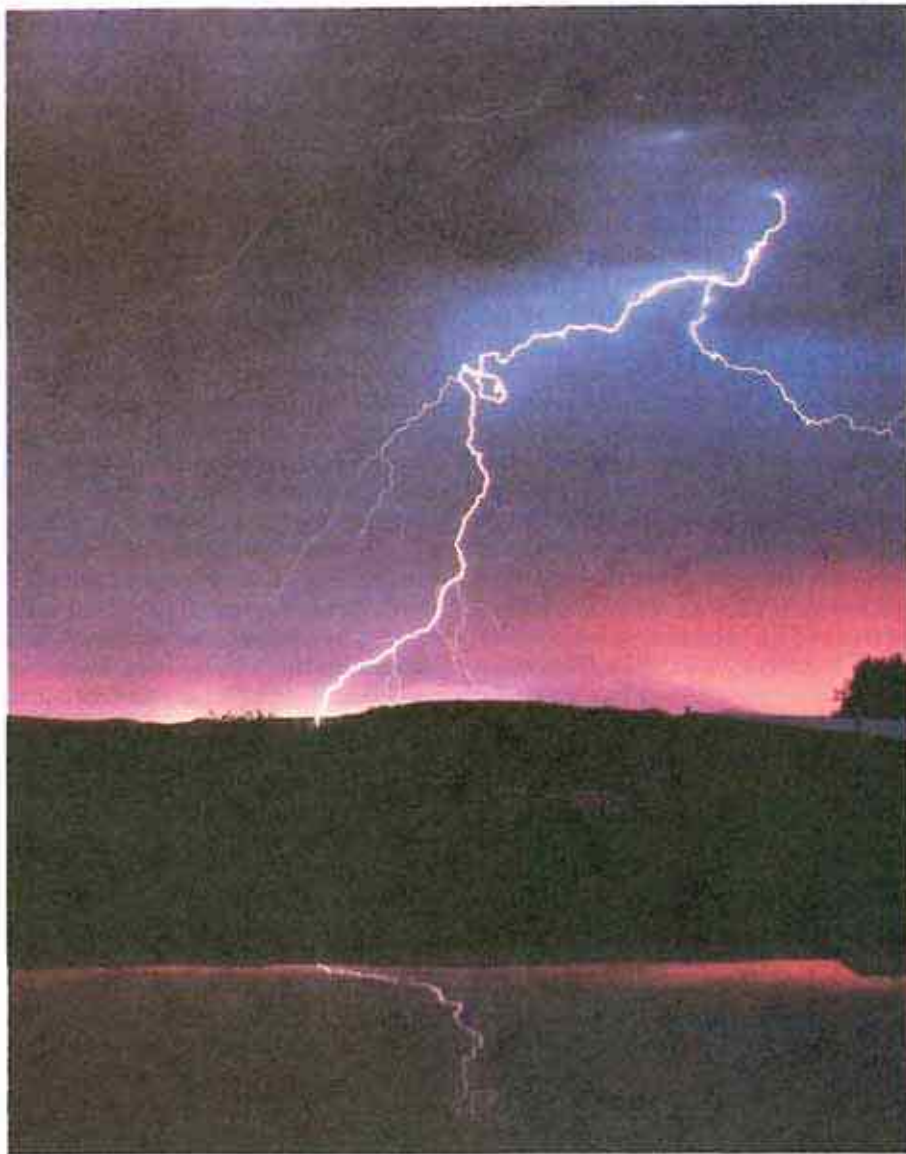
3 And the second angel poured out his vial upon the sea; and it became as the blood of a dead man; and every living soul died in the sea.

4 And the third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they

became blood. 5 And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. 7 And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are thy judgments.

8 And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun; and power was given unto him to scorch men with fire. 9 And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues; and they repented not to give him glory.

10 And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, 11 And blasphemed the God of heaven



Chapter 16:1-11. Each plague holds great significance, each counteracts a different aspect of Babylon's great power. The mark of the beast mentioned in Revelation 13 will come in conjunction with a great spurious religious revival that will use miraculous power to deceive men. But the first plague will show how defenseless this power is against God.

During the plagues, though they may show outward "repentance," men will not truly repent of their sins, because the decree will have already gone forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: . . . and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still" (Revelation 22:11). Under the fifth plague a universal darkness will cover the kingdom of the beast of Revelation 13:1-10. The power that claimed to have so much light from God will then grope in darkness. At this time those with the mark of the beast will still be feeling the pain from the first plague, thus showing that these final plagues will come in a very short period.

The sixth and seventh plagues sum up the conflict of the ages. During the sixth plague, Babylon, the great system of apostate religion, will lose its popular support, and then during the seventh plague God will destroy wicked Babylon and all those who have sided with Satan.

"And there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done. And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings" (Revelation 16:17, 18).

Photograph by Four By Five

because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds.

12 And the sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates; and the water thereof was dried up, that the way of the kings of the east might be prepared. 13 And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty. 15 Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. 16 And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.

17 And the seventh angel poured out his vial

into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, it is done. 18 And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. 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. 20 And every island fell away, and the mountains were not found. 21 And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great.

God destroys wicked Babylon

Verses 12-16. The imagery used to describe the sixth plague is borrowed from the Old Testament. Because the word *Armageddon* sounds somewhat like Megiddo, the name of a valley in Palestine where many important wars were fought in Old Testament times, some have mistakenly concluded that at the close of history a literal battle will be fought in the valley of Megiddo. The term *Armageddon*, however, is clearly symbolic, for it is an invented name. The Hebrew prefix *Har* (Ar) means "mountain" and not "valley," and apparently refers to the figurative mountain, i.e., Mount Zion, upon which the 144,000, God's last-day people, are "gathered" (see Revelation 14:1-6). The word *Armageddon* is used to symbolize the final struggle between good and evil, the last moral and religious crisis in the history of mankind before Christ's second coming.

In the final controversy between good and evil, God will allow Satan to gather his forces against this figurative mountain, Har-mageddon, that is, against God's people. But the sixth plague will frustrate Satan's attempt to place himself above the Creator, for during this plague God will dry up the "great river Euphrates."

One of ancient Babylon's prime sources of strength and prosperity was its strategic location on the Euphrates River (see Jeremiah 51:13). Over five

hundred years before the time of Christ, God punished haughty Babylon by allowing the Persian king Cyrus to conquer it. Cyrus and the kings with him came from the east (see verse 12) and captured Babylon by diverting the waters of Euphrates (see Isaiah 41:2; 45:1; 46:11; Jeremiah 50:38; 51:36).

The "Babylon" referred to throughout Revelation is an apostate religious system that sits, as did ancient Babylon, upon "many waters." These waters represent the many "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" (Revelation 17:15) that support wicked Babylon. When they suddenly awaken to the fact that Babylon has deceived them—an awakening that will occur too late to do them any good—then they will stop supporting Babylon, and her waters will be "dried up."

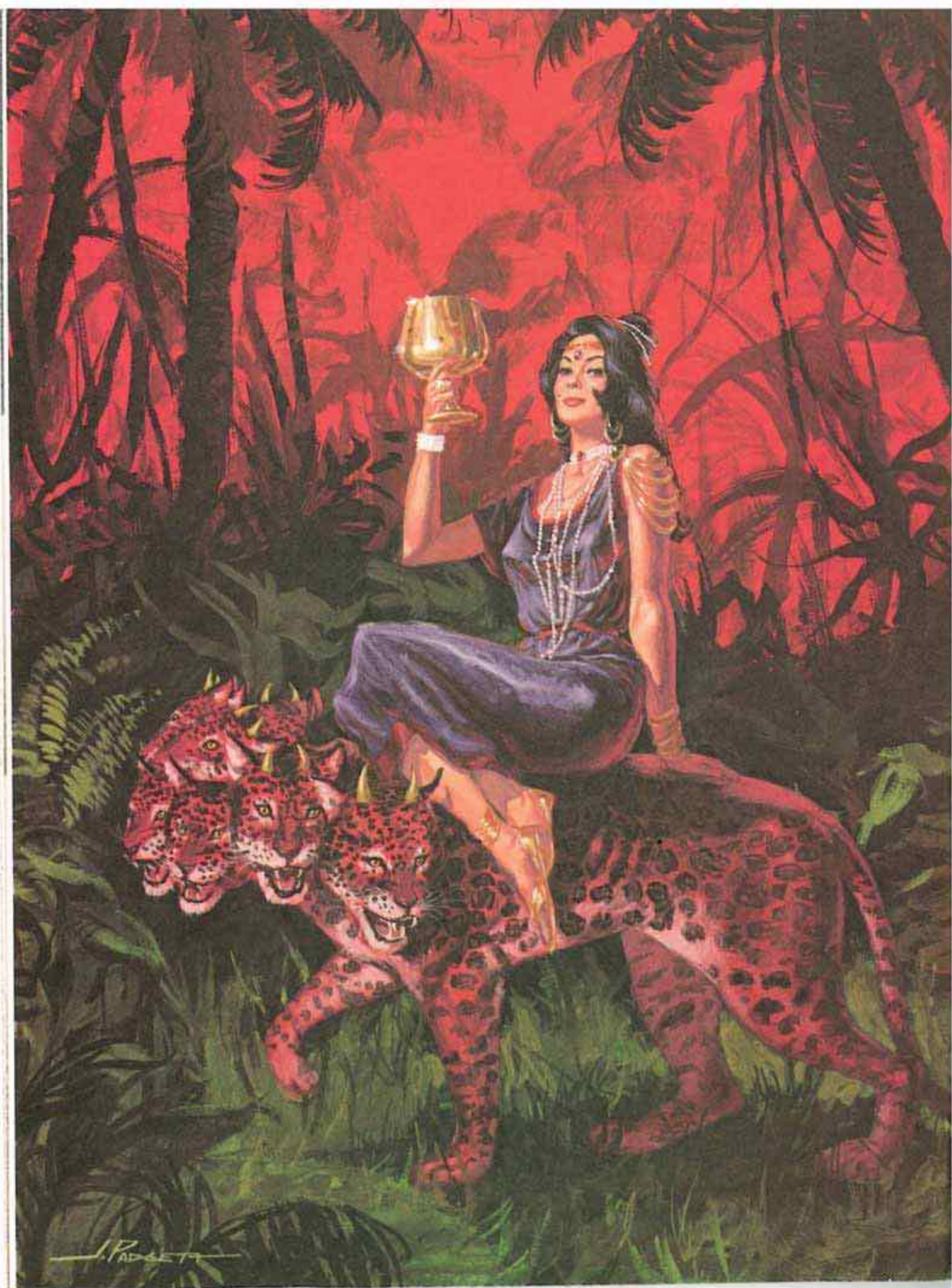
Verses 13, 14, and 16. These verses present a flashback, showing how Babylon secured her power prior to the sixth plague. The dragon (non-Christian systems through whom Satan works), the beast (the papal system), and the false prophet (erring Protestant systems) will be manipulated by the unclean spirits of devils. The religious community in

America in particular will seem to experience a great spiritual revival shortly before the nation establishes a church-state union (see Revelation 13:14, 15). The prophecy suggests an end-time confederation of the religious forces of the land—professed Christians and non-Christians—linked with spiritualism.

In view of the terrible consequences of this ecumenical union, Jesus has counseled His people to watch and not be deceived (verse 15).

Verses 17-21. At the darkest point in earth's history God will deliver His people. The Creator Himself will declare, "It is done." According to the prophet Joel, "the Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel" (Joel 3:16; see also Isaiah 30:29, 30; Jeremiah 25:30; Hebrews 12:26).

The great, haughty Babylon will then collapse. As they see Jesus returning to the earth, the wicked will flee from His presence (cf verses 19 and 20 with Revelation 6:14-17; Isaiah 2:10-12, 20, 21). Great hailstones weighing a "talent," or about fifty-seven pounds, will devastate the whole earth (see Ezekiel 38:18-23). The universal carnage and destruction under the seventh plague will bring an end to those who have spurned the love of God. God will reward them with the punishment of death that they have decreed upon His people.



Chapter 17

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: 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.

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

7 And the angel said unto me, Wherefore didst thou marvel? I will tell thee the mystery of the woman, and of the beast that carrieth her, which hath the seven heads and ten horns. 8 The beast

An angel explains the mystery of Babylon

Chapter 17:1, 2. So important are the sixth and seventh plagues that God sent one of the angels who brought these plagues to explain them more fully to His servant John.

Verses 3-7. Though the angel promised to show John the "judgment of the great whore," he instead showed him, first, the *reasons* for this judgment. Babylon will be destroyed because of its own course of action.

These verses parallel in many respects Revelation 13:1-10, which depicts the papal system. There, however, God represented the church and the state blended into one symbol, while here He has pictured the two in terms of distinct symbols. A woman in symbolic prophecy represents a church; an impure woman portrays an impure church. Babylon is shown here as an eminently impure institution. Rich, proud, corrupt, it represents Satan's final supreme instrument of deception.

Verses 8-11. These verses describe in highly symbolic language the history of the beast (which seems to represent here the power to coerce and persecute) and that of the beast's seven heads (successive kingdoms that have used this power).

Revelation 13 presents the same picture as verse 8. There John described the beast being "wounded," a parallel to the "was" period; and then sometime later having its wound healed, a parallel to the "shall ascend" period (cf Revelation 13:8 and 17:8). Since the wounding of the beast occurred at the end of the 1260 years, the first five heads are those presented in the Book of Daniel and in Revelation 13:1-10: (1) Babylon, (2) Medo-Persia, (3) Grecia, (4) imperial or pagan Rome, and (5) the civil power of papal Rome.

Rome has frequently been identified as the City of Seven Hills, from classical times down to contemporary time (Horace Carmen Saeculare 7; Virgil Aeneid vi. 782-784; Cicero Letters to Atticus vi. 5; etc.). Consequently the angel used this description to positively identify Rome as the power discussed in chapter 17. "Here is the mind which hath wisdom," the angel says. "The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth" (verse 9, emphasis supplied).

Illustration by James R. Padgett.

Photograph by National Catholic News Service



They that dwell on the earth shall wonder

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

9 And here is the mind which hath wisdom. The seven heads are seven mountains, on which the woman sitteth. 10 And there are seven kings:

five are fallen, and one is, and the other is not yet come; and when he cometh, he must continue a short space. 11 And the beast that was, and is not, even he is the eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth into perdition.

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. 13 These have one mind, and shall give their

The sixth head presents a paradox, for during the time it reigns, the beast "is not." This condition fits exactly what has happened since 1798 when atheistic France during its revolution wounded the beast by taking away from the Roman Catholic Church its civil power. The important point to this prophecy is this: The beast "shall ascend" to power again, and the church will then use its power to persecute the true people of God.

Verses 12-14. According to Revelation 16:13, 14, 16, the three great forces of evil (Papacy, apostate Protestantism, and spiritualism) will gather the "kings of the earth, and of the whole world" together in a final attempt to destroy God's people. Revelation 17:12 explains these "kings of the earth" as "ten kings" who will unite and support the beast during its resurrected stage in its war against the "Lamb," Jesus (cf verse 14 with Revelation 19:11, 19).

By supporting the beast, they will heal its "deadly wound," and then the harlot Babylon will no longer be a "widow," but a queen ruling over the kings of the earth (cf Revelation 13:3, 8; 17:8; and 18:7). This church-state confederacy will have one mind or purpose—to war against the Lamb, to destroy His people, the remnant. But God has promised that the Lamb will overcome the beast (see Revelation 12:17; 13:15).

Verses 15-17. One of Babylon's supposed sources of strength will be the "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues" supporting her. But verse 16 shows how Babylon will suddenly lose its support. The many "waters" upon which it sits will dry up under the sixth plague. As the ten kings suddenly realize that Babylon has deceived them, they will turn upon the church and its leaders. This is the divine explanation of the drying up of the Euphrates mentioned in Revelation 16:12 (see Jeremiah

25:30-38; Ezekiel 38:18-22; Zechariah 14:12, 13). God will allow the nations of the earth to unite in support of Babylon for a short period to show the outworking of the mystery of iniquity, but when the sixth plague comes, He will deliver His people.

Verse 18. In one short sentence the angel explained to John the "mystery" of the woman Babylon. Babylon is the "great city" that reigns over the kings of the earth. Here is the nature of Babylon: a willingness to compromise the pure principles of truth in order to obtain political and religious control of the earth.

Revelation 18 points to the time when nominal Christianity, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, will have completely fallen. Verses 1-4 of this chapter describe the final presentation of the threefold message in its most intensified form. This message is the last God will ever give to the world.

The mighty angel who brings it will lighten the whole earth with his glory, perfectly fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, who said, "Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick

darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you" (Isaiah 60:1, 2, RSV).

The great light that will lighten the earth in the final controversy is the revelation of the righteousness and perfection of Christ, the sin-pardoning Saviour. It will invite men to behold Him who takes away their sins as He, in the most holy place of the heavenly

Pope John Paul II, head of the 600-million-member Roman Catholic Church, pronounces his pontifical blessing upon the crowds assembled in St. Peter's Square in the Vatican City.



Photograph by National Catholic News Service

power and strength unto the beast. 14 These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful.

15 And he saith unto me, The waters which thou sawest, where the whore sitteth, are peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues. 16 And the ten horns which thou

sawest upon the beast, these shall hate the whore, and shall make her desolate and naked, and shall eat her flesh, and burn her with fire. 17 For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled. 18 And the woman which thou sawest is that great city, which reigneth over the kings of the earth.

**The waters
represent
many people**

sanctuary, ministers the benefits of His perfect sacrificial atonement on the cross.

It is God's glory to give. And His final gift to His people will be a full impartation of His Holy Spirit to bring them to complete perfection of character and prepare them to live during the time of the plagues without an intercessor. The

Spirit working in the remnant will glorify Christ, showing the efficacy of His perfect sacrifice for man on Calvary (John 16:13, 14).

Thus God will empower His people to present the startling message, "Babylon is fallen!" That which alone can reveal sin is the cross of Calvary. And only those who have seen the cross reflected

in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and have realized how God abhors sin, yet loves the sinner, can present this penetrating message.

The convicting power of the Holy Spirit will pierce through the darkness that shrouds fallen Babylon, and many will respond to the voice of Christ entreating them to "come out of her."



Chapter 19

The saints sing a triumphant song of praise

And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: 2 For true and righteous are his judgments: for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. 3 And again they said, Alleluia. And her

smoke rose up for ever and ever.

4 And the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. 5 And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great.

6 And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. 7 Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath

Chapter 18:5-24. Beginning with a solemn statement, "God hath remembered her iniquities," John describes the tragic fate of Babylon. The path of compromise and sin that at first seemed so wide and inviting to her has led her to destruction.

Chapter 19:1-4. Responding to the call in Revelation 18:20, all those dwelling in heaven will join together in a mighty chorus of praise to God for His justice and mercy in destroying Babylon, "the great whore." As they sing "Alleluia" (meaning "praise be to God") again and again, those nearest God's throne will swell the chorus till all heaven resounds in praise to the Creator-Redeemer (cf Revelation 4).

Verses 5, 6. In the great day of redemption and deliverance from Babylon, which is soon to come, God's people will respond with the deepest gratitude to His mercy in delivering them.

Verses 7-9. Both the Old and New Testaments present the marriage institution as a symbol of Christ's sacred relation to His kingdom (Isaiah 54:5, 6; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25-33). Revelation 21:2 identifies the bride of the Lamb, Jesus, as the "new Jerusalem," the center of God's government and the home of the redeemed. According to Daniel 7, Christ receives the right to rule His kingdom, the New Jerusalem, at the end of His priestly ministry for man in the heavenly sanctuary. Thus Christ's reception of His kingdom constitutes His "marriage." It is by faith that the remnant church "goes in" with Him into the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary for this marriage ceremony (see Matthew 25:1-13).

After the marriage ceremony Christ

will return from the wedding to our earth and take His people with Him to heaven. Then will come the marriage feast, the "marriage supper of the Lamb." By receiving Christ's righteousness the inhabitants of New Jerusalem, the saints, are "made ready" for their part in this great feast that He will celebrate with them in heaven. This righteousness resembles a garment woven in the loom of heaven and contains not one thread of human devising. It comes not by any works on their part but as a gift, granted to them by Christ, free for the asking (see Isaiah 55:61:10; Matthew 26:26-29; Romans 3:19-26; Zechariah 3).

Verse 10. Overcome with inexpressible joy, John fell at the feet of the angelic messenger. But the messenger directed him to God as the source of the wonderful provisions he had presented before John. Like John, he too was simply a fellow worshiper before God's throne.

Verse 11 of chapter 19 begins the final section of Revelation. This section moves quickly from one scene to another. In several ways its structure closely parallels that of the previous section (Revelation 15:1-19:10). Both sections record sevenfold visions: Chapter 16 describes seven judgments to fall on Babylon, while chapters 19:11 to 21:8 describe another seven judgment scenes, each of which begins with "I saw" (see Revelation 19:11, 17, 19; 20:1, 4, 11; 21:1).

Both sevenfold visions have appendices, supplementary remarks by one of the seven angels bringing the plagues (cf Revelation 17:1 with 21:9). Both scenes so awed John that he fell down to worship the angel, and both end with the angel telling John not to worship him, that he too is only a creature (cf Revelation 19:10 with 22:9). But while the next

to the last section focuses specifically on the tragic end of Babylon, the final section summarizes all the major events in the final part of the great controversy between Christ and Satan and focuses on the wonderful future Christ has prepared for His people.

Verses 11-16. As John watched he saw an amazing sight: Jesus Christ, the Faithful and True Witness who had pleaded so eloquently with His Laodicean church (see Revelation 3:14) to accept His love, now appeared before him in a strange new role. Following the judgment of Babylon and the seven last plagues, Jesus will return to earth to "judge and make war," to destroy those who have openly rebelled against God and His law of love. Yet even as Christ destroys, He will act righteously, with His only motive, love (cf Psalms 2; 11:4; 45; Revelation 14:14-20).

This is the second advent, or coming, of Christ foretold by Bible writers. His people who have long awaited His coming will greet Him with joy, while the wicked try to hide from His presence. As He destroys the wicked, He resurrects those who have died trusting in Him, and then He will take them to heaven, along with His people who have lived through the plagues (John 14:1-3; Acts 1:9-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; Revelation 6:15-17).

Christ is identified here by three names, each symbolizing a different aspect of His character. The first, "Faithful and True," has to do with His divine nature, which no creature can fully comprehend. The second, the "Word of God," presents Him as the perfect expression of God's thoughts. The third, "King of kings, and Lord of lords," explicitly presents Him as fully God, worthy of worship and praise.

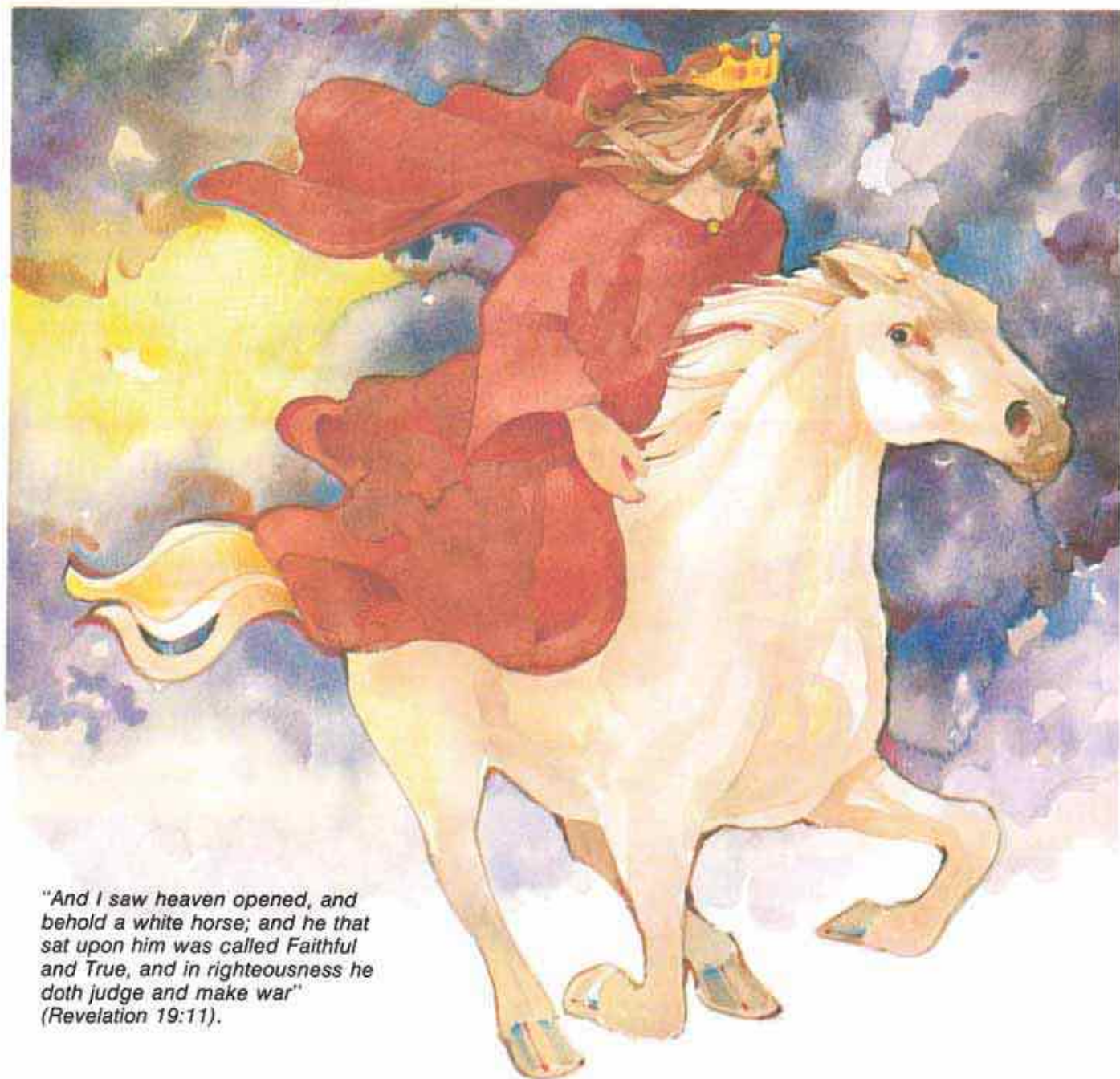
made herself ready. 8 And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.

9 And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God.

10 And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron:

**Jesus Christ
comes to
deliver His
people**



"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war" (Revelation 19:11).

King of kings, Lord of lords

and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.

17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat of the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.

19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

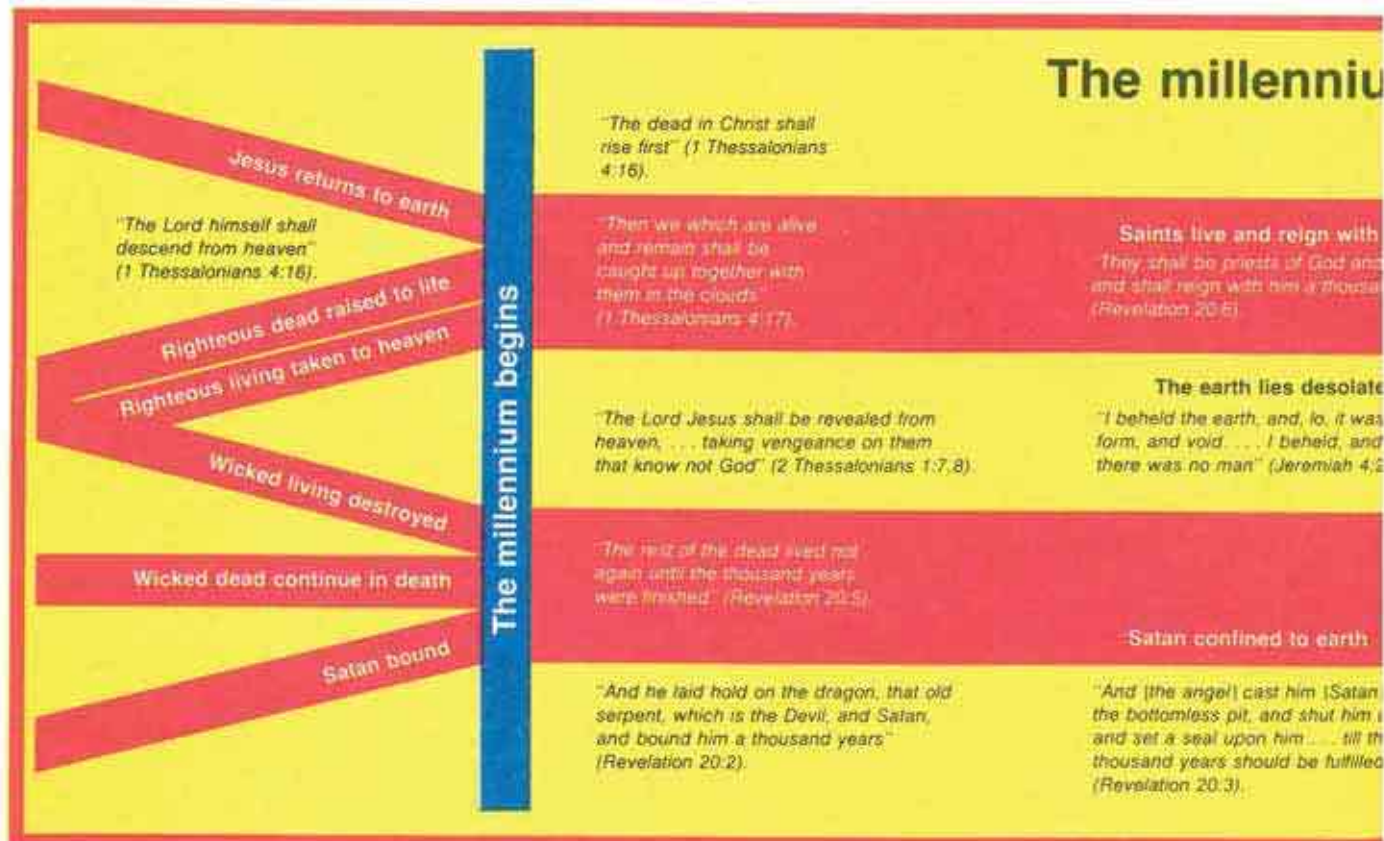
Verses 17, 18. As Christ returns to our earth, following the gathering of the wicked forces to war against Him (verse 19), an angel will call upon all the scavenger birds to gather for such a feast as they have never known before. No matter how powerful, how rich or poor, all who refuse the gracious invitation to the marriage supper of the Lamb will be among those devoured by the scavengers when Jesus comes (cf Ezekiel 39:17-20 and Revelation 6:14-17).

Verses 19-21. The third judgment scene in this final series pictures the whole satanic host gathering together for the battle of Armageddon (see Revelation

16:13, 14). The forces of evil described in chapters 13 and 17 will confederate in one great final attempt to destroy Jesus Christ and His remnant church (cf Revelation 17:14; 12:17). Only two classes of people will then exist upon the earth: (1) those united with the beast of Revelation 13:1-10, and (2) those united with Jesus (see Revelation 13:8).

Those who have rebelled against Christ will be destroyed by the brightness of His coming (see Isaiah 11:4; 63:1-6; 64:1-3; 66:15, 16; Jeremiah 25:30-33; Psalm 50:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:8). The earth will then become a depopulated wasteland, for Christ will take His people with Him back to

heaven, leaving only the bodies of the wicked behind for the scavengers to feast upon (see Revelation 20:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; John 14:1-3; Jeremiah 4:23-27; 25:33). Thus Christ's second coming involves a complete destruction of the wicked. He has especially warned His people not to be deceived about His coming (cf verses 17, 18, 21 with Matthew 24:26-28). There will be no second chance for the wicked during the millennium described in the next chapter. All must now decide before Jesus comes again which supper they will attend—the marriage supper of the Lamb or God's supper of death.



Chapter 20

And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. 2 And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, 3 And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.

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. 5 But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.

7 And when the thousand years are expired,

Satan spends 1,000 years in prison

When Christ destroys the wicked at His second coming and takes the righteous to heaven, He will leave the earth a desolate waste. Then will begin a thousand-year period known as the millennium. The popular idea that during this period Christ will rule over the nations of the earth and all will be peace has no foundation in God's Word. Notice how Revelation 19 and 20 describe the events that will occur in conjunction with the millennium. First, *before* the millennium begins—

1. Christ will return to earth at the

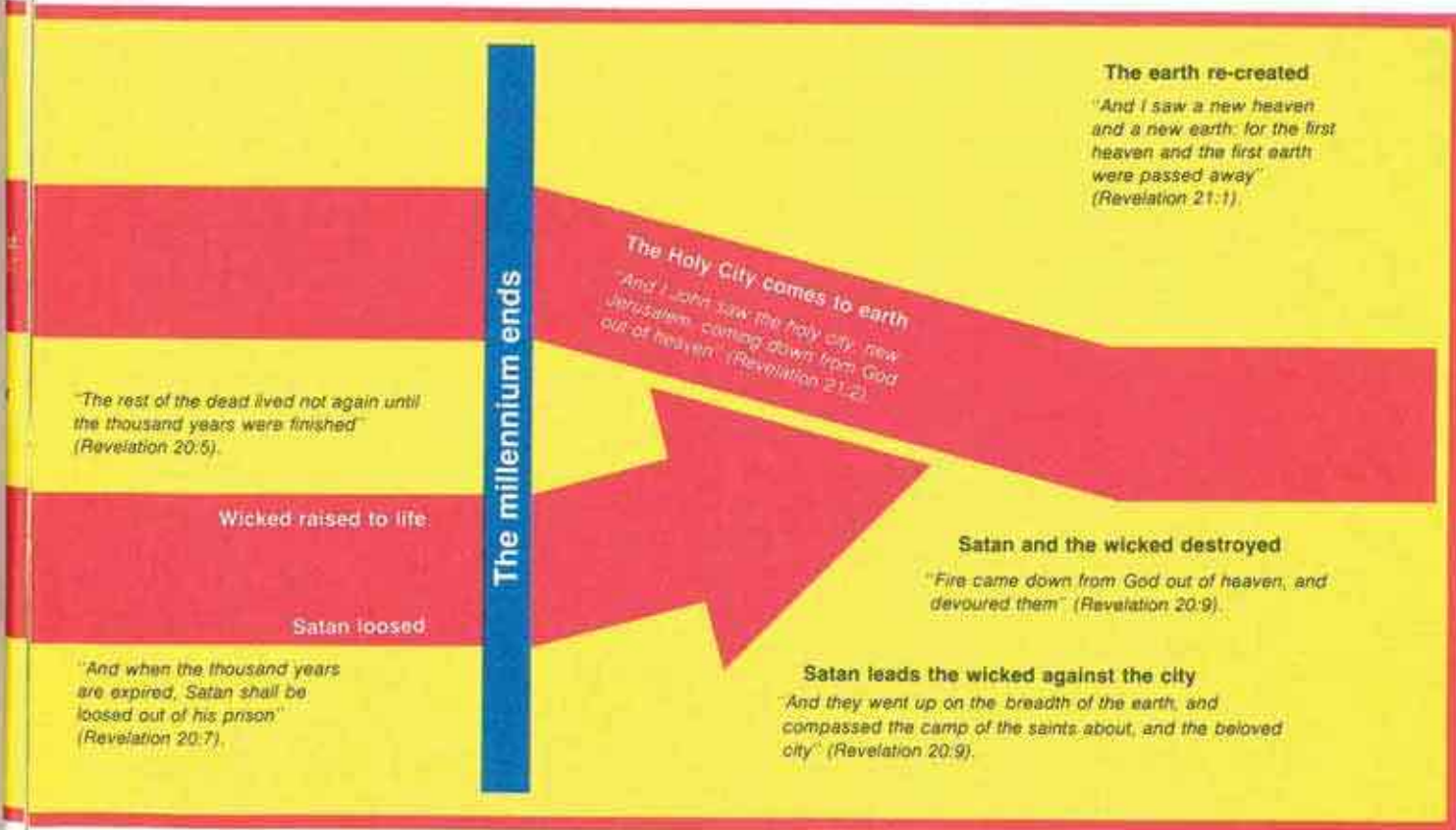
end of the seven plagues (Revelation 19:11-16).

2. He will destroy *all* the wicked at His coming (see comments on Revelation 19:17-21).

3. He will then bind Satan to the desolate earth, which will become, as it were, a "bottomless pit." With all his followers dead, Satan will be able to "deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled" (Revelation 20:1-3; see also Isaiah 24:19-22 and Jeremiah 4:23-26).

4. When He destroys the wicked,

Christ will bring to life again those who have trusted in Him (Revelation 20:4). This is what the Bible refers to as the "first resurrection," or the "resurrection of life" as Christ called it (Revelation 20:5; John 5:28, 29). At the same time He will also change the bodies of those who have lived through the seven plagues and give both groups the gift of immortality (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55). Christ will then take His people back with Him to *heaven* (see John 14:1-3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17).





**"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief
in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass
away with a great noise, and the elements shall
melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the
works that are therein shall be burned up."**

2 Peter 3:10

Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, 8 And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. 9 And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. 10 And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

11 And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven

filed away; and there was found no place for them. 12 And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. 14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. 15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire.

The end of the great controversy

During the millennium there will be two scenes of action.

5. On earth Satan will be bound by a "chain" of circumstances. During the millennium, with no one to tempt and time for reflection, he will contemplate what his rebellion against God has wrought (Revelation 20:1-3, 7).

6. In heaven the saints will judge the wicked (Revelation 20:4; see also 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3). Thus God will reveal His perfect justice by allowing those who have been tempted and know the power of sin to join with Him in reviewing His merciful dealings with men and settling on the rewards due the wicked for spurning His self-sacrificing love. The redeemed, including those who have a part in the first resurrection, will live forevermore with Christ (Revelation 20:6).

At the end of the millennium:

7. Christ and the saints will return to the earth (Revelation 20:9; 21:1, 2).

8. Christ will then bring to life the "rest of the dead"—the wicked ones He

did not resurrect at His second coming (Revelation 20:5). Notice how the sentence describing this second resurrection, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," is placed parenthetically in the middle of the description of the first resurrection (see also verse 13 and John 5:29).

9. Satan will then be set loose for "a little season," during which he will deceive the wicked into making one last futile attempt to destroy Christ and His people (Revelation 20:3, 7-9; see also Ezekiel 38:16).

10. Suddenly God will halt the attempt of the wicked to destroy His people and bring them before His throne for the final judgment (Revelation 20:11-14). As the wicked finally realize that God has treated all men justly, they will bow before Christ in recognition of His right to rule as Lord of all (Philippians 2:10, 11).

11. Then in mercy God will finally destroy the wicked with fire from heaven (Revelation 20:9, 14, 15). The original Greek for the phrase "for ever and ever" (verse 10) means simply as long as something lasts. Compare Jude 7, which de-

scribes the city of Sodom being burned with "eternal" fire, and Lamentations 4:6, which pictures the city being destroyed in "a moment." The Bible clearly indicates that the punishment for sin is death, cessation of existence, not an eternal life of torment (see Malachi 4:1; Psalm 37:10, 20). Thus the cleansing fires from God will destroy all that sin has corrupted and leave the universe free of sin and sinners.

12. Finally, when God has cleansed the earth, He will make all things new before the very eyes of the saints (2 Peter 3:12, 13; Revelation 21:1). In this manner God will restore to man all that which Adam lost through sin. And throughout eternity the redeemed will praise the Lord Jesus Christ for His self-sacrificing love that has delivered them from sin and death.

Chapter 21

God finally dwells with His people



And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. 2 And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. 4 And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

5 And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. 6 And he said unto me, it is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. 7 He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. 8 But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall

Chapter 21:1-8. Following the destruction of Satan, his evil angels, and the wicked humans from throughout earth's history in the lake of fire (which cleanses and purifies the earth from all trace of sin), John sees "a new heaven and a new earth" (verse 1). The word *new*, as used here in the original Greek, means "new in quality," or "renewed," rather than new in point of time. By employing this word, John is probably emphasizing the idea that the new heavens and earth will be created from the purified elements of the old, and thus they'll be new in quality, different. This great event will fulfill God's promise to make all things new (see Isaiah 65:17; 66:22; 2 Peter 3:13).

The capital of the earth made new will be "the holy city, new Jerusalem," a city quite different from the Jerusalem now in Palestine, indeed from any city constructed by man, for the New Jerusalem is God's city, perfect in every way. It will come down from God, its Divine Architect, out of heaven at the end of the

have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.

9 And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. 10 And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. 11 Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal; 12 And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: 13 On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. 14 And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

15 And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the gates thereof, and the wall thereof. 16 And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. 17 And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. 18 And the building of the wall of it was of

jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. 19 And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; 20 The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. 21 And the twelve gates were twelve pearls: every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

22 And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. 23 And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. 24 And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. 25 And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. 26 And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. 27 And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life.

John sees a new city

thousand years (compare Galatians 4:26; Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; Zechariah 14:3-11).

John lists four specific elements that God will forever banish from the new earth: death, sorrow, crying, and pain. Under these four headings lie virtually all the grief and heartache that mankind has experienced since the introduction of sin. Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, claimed, "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1 Corinthians 15:26). When the earth is made new, humans will no longer experience grief, death, pain, or crying. Their experience in the new earth will parallel and exceed that of Adam and Eve in their Garden home.

In verse 8, John lists a few of the types of people who will not be permitted into God's new kingdom. They will be annihilated in the lake of fire and no trace of their passing will remain (Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13).

Verses 9-27. One of God's angels takes John in vision to a mountain overlooking the New Jerusalem, the center and

new headquarters for God's eternal kingdom. The abiding presence of God Himself provides the glory that shimmers from the city ("God himself shall be with them, and be their God" [verse 3]).

Its overall radiance is like that of "a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (verse 11), possibly a translucent green or gray-blue color. According to the angel it has an overall measurement of 12,000 furlongs, or about 1,380 miles (2,200 kilometers). If this measure refers to the circumference, it would make the New Jerusalem equal in size to the state of Oregon, with walls 345 miles (550 kilometers) long on each side.

Some have wondered at the size of this city when the text mentions that the length, width, and height are equal. However, the Greek word for equal, *isos*, also carries a meaning of "proportionate" (see 2 Corinthians 8:13, 14), which most likely is the thought expressed here for the city height rather than an identical measurement to that of the wall's width and length.

The city sits on twelve different-colored foundations (verses 19, 20). And although neither ancient sources nor modern scholars agree as to the identification of the stones John mentions, the colors likely include: translucent sky blue, bright green, red, yellowish-gold, sea green, yellow, apple green, and purple.

When Adam and Eve sinned, they were driven from the presence of God. The earthly sanctuary of the Old Testament became the symbolic dwelling place of God. However, in the new earth, God will again dwell with humans, and we will no longer need a structure to symbolize His presence. Hence John records, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (verse 22).

Chapter 22

**God invites all
to accept His
perfect gift**

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 2 In the midst of the street of it and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: 4 And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. 5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.

6 And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent his angel to shew unto his servants the things which must shortly be done. 7 Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.

8 And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. 9 Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.

10 And he saith unto me, Seal not the sayings

of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. 11 He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

12 And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. 13 I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. 14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. 16 I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star.

17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

20 He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Chapter 22:1-5. Everything about the New Jerusalem will reflect the glory and character of God. Not only will the city be a work of beauty but also, when placed on earth, it will be an eternal monument to His infinite love for a fallen race.

The tree of life (verse 2) is the same tree that God forbade Adam and Eve to have access to after their sin (Genesis 2:9; 3:22-24). God endowed this tree with a supernatural element that would sustain life indefinitely. As long as hu-

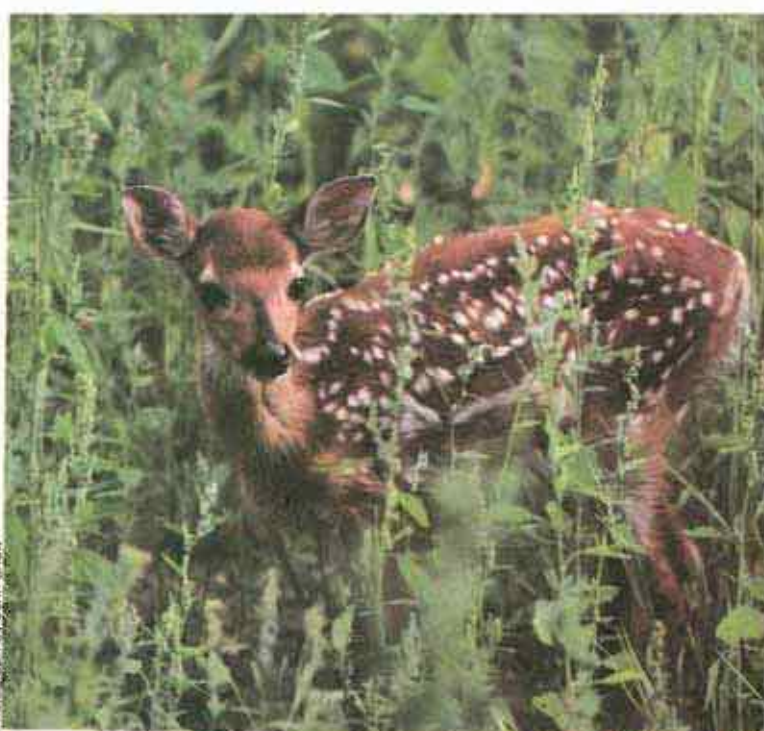
mans have access to the fruit of this tree, they will never again experience death.

Verses 6-21. The conclusion to Revelation is God's challenge to all to come and drink from the heavenly water of life (verse 17) and find joy unequalled here on earth since the beginning of time. Throughout ceaseless ages, those whom Jesus has rescued from sin, death, and disease will study the plan of redemption, the revelation of Jesus Christ.

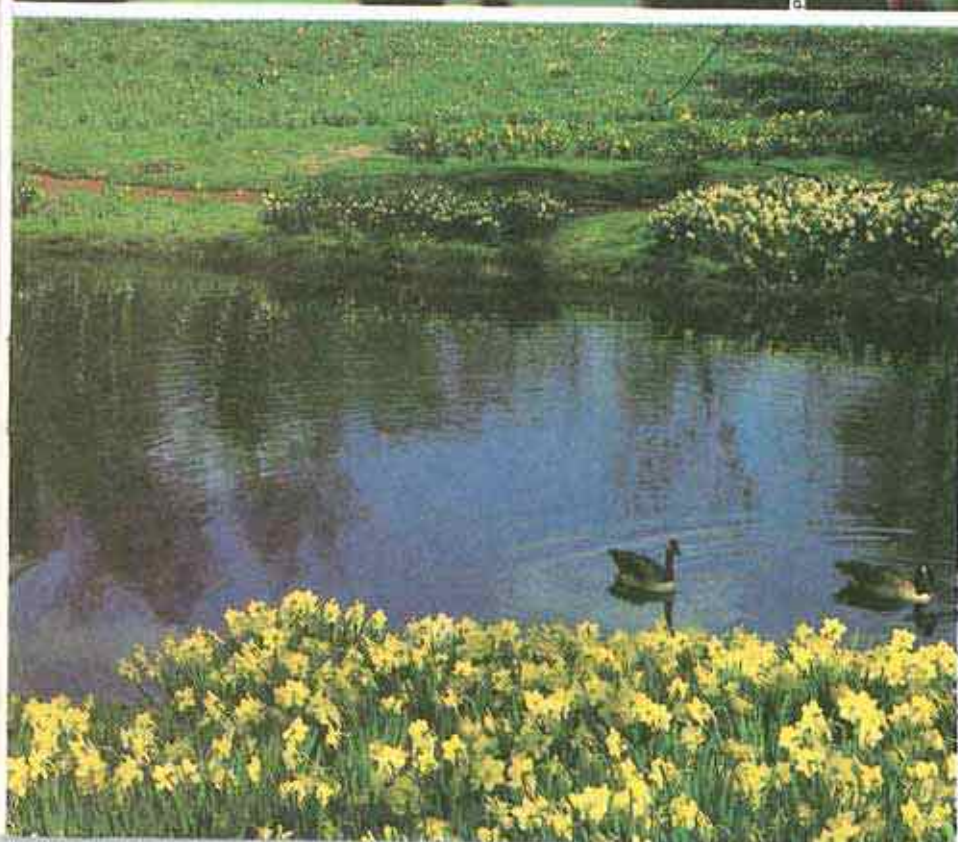
"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea" (Revelation 21:1). "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isaiah 11:6). "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).



Photograph by John Shaw



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Conclusion

Through the pages of this magazine you have not only witnessed God's hand leading and directing the great events of the past twenty-five hundred years—from Daniel's time in 600 B.C. through our own days—but you have also gained a new understanding of the events yet to transpire before the end of time and read John's description of a new heaven and a new earth.

In addition, through the fulfilled prophecies of these two great books of the Bible, you have discovered three significant facts: (a) that God, who knows the end from the beginning and who can predict the major events of history far in advance, does indeed exist and cares about what happens to His people on Planet Earth; (b) that the archfiend of the universe, the devil, will employ any means or agency at his disposal in an attempt to thwart the plans of God in the battle for the minds and loyalties of humankind; and (c) that the inevitable outcome of this age-long controversy between the forces of good and the powers of evil will be the return of Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, the complete annihilation of the wicked of all ages in the lake of fire that will cleanse the earth from all trace of sin, and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom.

The decision you face now is whether to align yourself and the remainder of your life on the side of good or on the side of evil, with the powers of heaven or with the forces of Satan. In the final analysis no middle ground can exist. "He that is not with me is against me," Jesus said, in Matthew 12:30. You must actively *choose* to become a follower of this soon-returning King.

Remember, Jesus, the originator of Revelation, said in the final chapter (22:7-12, italics supplied), "Behold, I come quickly: *blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book*, . . . and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be."

Let our prayer be the prayer of John as he finished writing his book, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (verse 20).

Ralph Blodgett,
issue editor

**"And, behold, I come quickly;
and my reward is with me, to give every man
according as his work shall be."
Revelation 22:12**

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